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SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE NEW BLACK:
A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF LUXURY BRANDING DISCOURSE

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Social Media is the New Black:
A Social Semiotic Analysis of Luxury Branding Discourse

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Esterina Nervino

To my mum, my sisters, and Ewa

ABSTRACT

Luxury has always been defined by its properties of exclusivity, uniqueness, scarcity, high quality, and limited access (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). Semantically, these properties are bound together as a privilege for the very few that could afford it. However, in the 21st century the aura of rarity of luxury appears eroded and its goods originally destined for an elitist market popularized.

The aim of this study is to understand what is conceived as luxury in the 21st century based on an investigation into its semiotic construction as a product of its time. The study examines how luxury branding discourse, as discursive representation of brand identity and values, is constructed in the social media, and how the hosting platform enables and constrains its production and distribution (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

The dataset was a multimodal corpus of 597 corporate Facebook posts with still images and text retrieved from the timeline of the official corporate Facebook pages of three European brands namely *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *Louis Vuitton* during the year 2015.

The study adopts an empirical approach based on social semiotics to investigate the semiotic choices made by the three luxury fashion brands to construct their branding discourse. The multimodal analysis focuses on the medium-specific features that construe corporate Facebook posts as hypertextual advertisements, photographs into their representational and interactional meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006), textual captions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and their interplay with visual elements (Martinec & Salway, 2005), and the multisemiotic construction of socio-semiotic processes (Matthiessen, 2015) and intertextuality.

Findings show that the branding discourse in the social media dilutes the exclusive features of luxury by promoting a wider access to information and goods and create a clash of abundance and rarity in which exclusivity is artificial. Corporate Facebook posts become visual merchandising displays of luxury goods disposed as if they were part of an art exhibition. Photographs semiotically construct the products as affordable based on the reduction of social distance between the brand and the potential consumer. Captions boost the integration across media, introduce the seasonal products, and engage the readership with an invitation for either a virtual or physical consumption of information and products.

Overall, the semiotic construction of luxury branding discourse was construed as the product of adaptation to the social media ecosystem. It has generated hybrid discursive practices and the evolution of the definition and stratification of luxury. The three brands, embracing digital transformation, are repositioned in the market as *connected brands* framing *aspirational luxury* pushed by the commodification of discourse and goods. Concisely, this further stratification within luxury goods market entails an ephemeral egalitarian access.

The study is significant as it has met the need for a social semiotic approach to branding discourse and re-defined luxury as a product of the 21st century. It contributes to the methodological development of frameworks for the analysis of digital multimodal artefacts. It has important managerial implications for corporate communication practitioners in the luxury goods market because it provides insights into their semiotic choices and consequences, and pedagogical implications because of the wealth of analyzed authentic multimodal texts that can be included in the teaching material for corporate communication.

Publications arising from the thesis

Nervino, E. (2018). Luxury fashion brands online: when language matters. Facebook posts and brand identity. In Giordano, W., Garzone, G. (Eds). *Discourse, communication and the enterprise: where business meets language.* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne (UK).

Nervino, E. Corporate Facebook posts as hypertextual advertisements: A social semiotic approach. (Manuscript to be submitted to *International Journal of Advertising*).

Nervino, E. Exclusivity 2.0: A new discursive stratification of luxury. (Manuscript to be submitted to *Journal of Business Research*).

Nervino, E. From advertising billboards to social media galleries: The multimodal journey of fashion photography. (Manuscript to be submitted to *Journal of Visual Communication*).

Nervino, E. Branding luxury on social media. A social semiotic analysis of site-specific multimodal discursive practices. (Manuscript to be submitted to *Social Semiotics*).

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the present study and it is organized as follows: Section 1.2 introduces the key concepts of the study, which also appear in the title of the project; Section 1.3 presents the background information for the study; Section 1.4 describes the rationale including the reason for choosing luxury fashion in the social media as instance of luxury in the digital era; Section 1.5 defines the research scope; Section 1.6 presents the research aims and questions, which drive the present study; Section 1.7 explains the research significance; Section 1.8 provides and outline of the research project.

1.2 The key concepts of the present study

The title of this research project is *Social Media is the New Black: A Social Semiotic Analysis of Luxury Branding Discourse*. It is divided into two parts. The first part *Social Media is the New Black* is based on the popular snowclone 'X is the new black'. It connotatively associates 'black' with 'being in fashion', and thus positioning the statement 'social media is the new black' as the result of viral discourse promoted by the media. This first part introduces the research background of the study that presents social media platforms as disruptors of the *modus operandi* of luxury brands. Social media platforms are used in the luxury goods market for corporate communication purposes. They are incorporated into the branding and marketing strategies as result of their use in other sectors, such as lifestyle and fast-fashion. In doing so, luxury firms do not make efforts to consider enablers and constrains of those platforms and take the risk of diluting the aura of luxury (see Section 1.1.2 and Section 2.3.2 for a detailed

explanation); The second part of the title *A Social Semiotic Analysis of Luxury Branding Discourse* presents the methodology adopted in the study, which is social semiotics, and the nature of the dataset, which is identified as luxury branding discourse. The title also maps the key concepts of the study, namely luxury, social media, discourse, branding (and its related concepts such as brand identity, brand values, and branding discourse), and social semiotics. The concept of luxury has always envisioned properties of exclusivity, uniqueness, scarcity, high quality, and limited access (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). Semantically, all of these properties are bound together as a privilege for the very few that could afford them (Dubois & Laurent, 1998); however, in the 21st century the aura of rarity of luxury has been eroded by a series of socio-economic changes. Such changes include: world economic development, globalization of the market, growth of middle class with high purchasing power and consequent increasing demand for goods satisfied by an increment in production and distribution, and digital transformation (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016; Okonkwo, 2010; Rambourg, 2014). Those socio-economic changes, along with digital transformation in particular, have contributed to popularize goods originally destined for an elitist market, transforming luxury into a 'mass concept' characterized by democratization and overexposure (Rambourg, 2014).

The concept of luxury shifts from its conventional definition derived from texts narrating the society of the time, such as paintings, books, newspapers, and magazines to a new configuration in the digital era captured instead through tweets, *Facebook* posts, *Instagram* pictures, and live streaming, as texts of this time (Thurlow, 2015). Luxury constructed in the social media is found in the form of digital multimodal artefacts as products of the inevitable digital transformation, phenomenon that has pervaded and disrupted the *modus operandi* of nearly all business sectors.

Social media can be defined as "internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Corporate social media pages are more specifically examples of "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of relationships among admirers of a brand" (Muniz & O'Guinn's, 2001, p. 412).

The discourse shared in the social media has been investigated as a means of distinguishing brands and products from one another through the creation of an additional symbolic value based on intangible features, such as exclusivity and rarity (Bourdieu, 1984; Duchêne & Heller, 2012). Discourse features of standardization and commodification are used in the social media platforms to emphasize brands' "ubiquitous existence… across countries" that allows the "quite homogenous consumer experience hence vision" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 121). The authors explain that the same group of brands is identified as luxury across time and space, and this identity is due to the key role of that branding discourse plays positioning brands in the pantheon of luxury. Discourse has become the means to engage consumers who are aware of the "rarity" as the "precondition of luxury" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 121). For example, limited editions that represent an "abundant rarity" (Kapferer, 2012, p. 453) injected with an aura of exclusivity artificially crafted.

Discourse is at the core of luxury brand communication stemming from the "art of narrating stories" (Saviolo & Ranieri, 2014, p. 100) used by brands to please, seduce, and persuade their potential consumers. Consequently, it is necessary for professionals in such business and professional fields as marketing, advertising, public relations and communication to improve upon their multiliteracy competence more than their ability

to calculate revenue (Saviolo & Ranieri, 2014). In this regard, Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2016, p. 121) argue that luxury is the "reality incarnated by brands" which is constructed via branding discourse. More specifically, "branding is not merely about differentiating products; it is about striking emotional chords with consumers. It is about cultivating identity, attachment, and trust to inspire customer loyalty" (cit. Nirmalya Kumar). In marketing practice, and luxury goods market specifically, discourse is the basic unit of brand identity; therefore, it accomplishes the function of branding discourse.

Branding discourse is the result of the co-deployment of different semiotic resources used to construct brand values and identity, conveying exclusive values to forge brands with intangible features that reflect unique characteristics that explain why a customer chooses a brand instead of another. Those features, bundled together, construe brand identity. Brand identity, first theorized by Kapferer (1986), is defined as the unique identity of a firm resulted from the combinations of tangible features and intangible features. Tangible features are mainly related to the products and identified as attention to details, high quality of the fabrics. Intangible features, refer to positive associations with the brand such as exclusivity, rarity, heritage, and high social status that make the brand recognizable in the market (Kapferer, 2008) (see Section 2.2.2 for a detailed discussion).

Brands as discursive representations have been investigated through the lens of social semiotics, which focuses on the study of the use of "signs", constituted by "semiotic resources" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p.xi), their coding and decoding processes of meanings (semiosis) as well as their production and consumption in the specific social context in terms of culture, situation and practice (Hall, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2005).

Social semiotics, given the embedded property of accounting for the socio-semiotic context, in which meanings are produced and distributed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), is a useful theory to enhance the multidisciplinary nature of the research studies. The study adopts a social semiotic approach to explore the multimodal aspect of communication, where multimodality is defined as the product of the increasing attention devoted to different 'modes' or 'multimodal resources' other than language which shifted the research activities from 'monomodal' to 'multimodal artefacts' (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The advent of new technology has pushed researchers in this field to extend their interests to multisemiotic texts to explore the use of the different semiotic modes in the construction of meanings on multimedia platforms (Kress, 2010). The modes are resources to produce potential meanings based on the medium and the context where they are allocated and accomplish at distinct functions (Veloso, 2014). In this context multimodal communication is specifically the use of language, images, and medium-specific features.

1.3 Research background

The research background for this study includes an overview on luxury and its encounter with the internet. Section 1.3.1 describes luxury from a financial perspective; Section 1.3.2 explains how the internet disrupted the luxury industry; and Section 1.3.3 reports on the issues related to defining the concept of, and managing, luxury in the 21st century.

1.3.1   Is luxury an unsinkable industry?

The concept of luxury was conventionally conceptualized as exclusive, inaccessible, unaffordable, unique, and destined to fulfil the self-esteem need of the happy few

(Maslow, 1943; Dubois & Laurent, 1998); however, in the 21st century the concept of luxury appears instable and variable (Brun & Castelli, 2013; Chandon *et al.*, 2016; Pucci-Sisti Maisonrouge, 2013). It is continuously under revision by scholars (Dubois & Laurent, 1996; Danzinger, 2005; Silverstein & Fiske, 2005; Truong, 2010; Truong &McColl, 2011; Ricca & Robins, 2012; Von Maltzahn, 2015), and even if in 2012, when luxury has become an institutionalized industry (Sun *et al.*, 2015) driven by financial interests.

Interestingly, luxury is considered unnecessary and superfluous; however, it inexplicably drives the economy of European countries, which are the major producers of luxury commodities (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). Kapferer & Tabatoni (2011) suggest that luxury and finance share the same dreaming attitude towards business, which lies in the unpredictability of the future of market based on the imagination and creativity that makes it an irrational place where hope drives business. Kapferer & Tabatoni (2011, p. 8) state that undoubtedly "finance is not so much about numbers; it is about emotions and dreams", and so is luxury. Luxury proposes products that incorporate the dreamlife which is the "ordinary of extraordinary people, and the extraordinary of ordinary people" (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013, p. 6). The aspiration towards a luxurious dreamlife drives the growth of the luxury business and the prices of luxury goods. These measures are "the intensity of people's desire to reach this dream" (Kapferer & Tabatoni, 2011, p. 8).

Despite the geo-political instability that has characterized the financial scenario of the 21st century, according to the report[1] of *Bain & Company*[2] (2016), the personal luxury goods market, including fashion, hard luxury, perfumes and cosmetics, has

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[1] *Bain & Company*, http://www.bain.com/about/press/press-releases/spring-luxury-update-2016.aspx [Last access 05/10/2016]
[2] *Bain & Company*, http://www.bain.com/ [Last access 05/10/2016]

been enjoying a continuous growth that will lead the sector to a rise of 2-3 percent through 2020 with an approximate € 280-295 billion in revenue. Figure 1.1 shows the fluctuation of revenue for personal luxury goods market from 1995 till 2015.
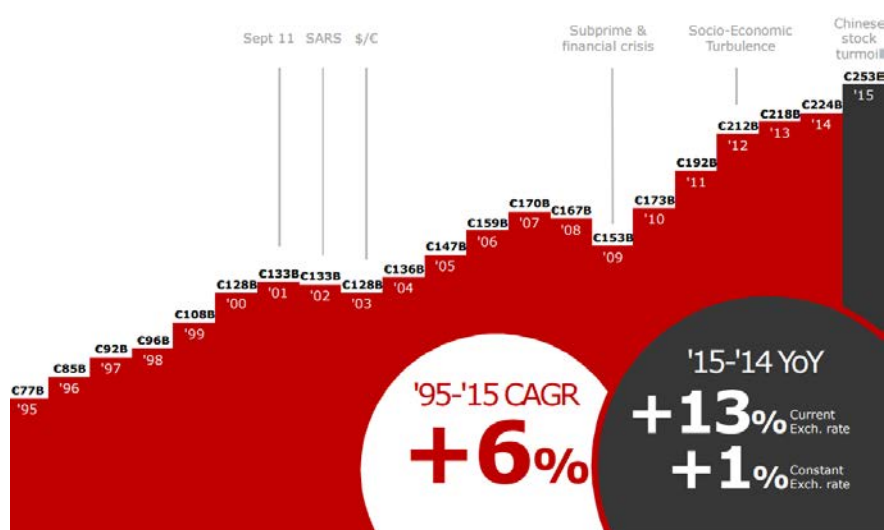
Figure 1.1 Personal luxury goods market 1995-2015 (*Bain & Company,* 2016)

Figure 1.1 reports the growth of the personal luxury goods market despite the crises that characterized the 20-year timeframe taken as reference (apart from the year of the crisis). Growth indicators, ''95-'15 CAGR + 6%' (Compound Annual Growth Rate), highlight the annual mean growth in the market for the defined timeframe. Negative values characterized only the two crises reported in the graph: the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic in 2002 and 2003 that started in the Chinese Guandong Province, spreading to other parts of Asia[3], including Hong Kong, and the sub-prime crisis in the USA, which affected the world economy. These two events signaled how socio-economic events and unpredictable events inevitably have an

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[3] *SARS Reference*, http://www.sarsreference.com/sarsref/timeline.htm [30/05/2017]

impact on the financial scenario and the consumption of goods; however, luxury lives by dreams and people do not stop dreaming even during financial hardship. Even during the financial crises in the last decades, luxury has still been considered an unsinkable industry (Okonkwo, 2010). Dreams as well as luxury have a dimension of non-accessibility and yet remaining at a close distance (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013).

The report from *Bain & Company* (2016) defines a specific agenda for luxury brands and help them to cope with socio-economic changes. It draws attention to the evolution of the concept of luxury and the erosion of its exclusivity, the necessity to "master brand content and story-telling" (*Bain & Company*, 2016) to communicate their values. It refers to the institutional discourse of luxury brands that creates distinction among brands and products (Duchêne & Heller, 2012) through the generation of additional "symbolic capital and prestige" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 121). Storytelling and other branding and marketing strategies have been explored in the business scholarship (Bastien & Kapferer, 2013; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015) and found to promote an 'anti-law marketing' attitude in comparison to other industries that is not keen to sell the products but only establish brand identity (see Section 2.2.3 for a detailed discussion).

Research on luxury printed advertisement has shown how the semiotic construction of goods and services displays them as unaffordable, and silence and emptiness characterize non-engaging attitude of brands to the potential consumers (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2006; 2009; 2010; 2012); however, with the deployment of new media, the distance between the brand and the target audience is reduced and the luxury aura is diluted (Suen, 2013).

1.3.2 Luxury and the internet: the late modernity

Professionals, and researchers, have become aware of the fundamental role of social media among other channels of communication in corporate communication, as reported in Figure 1.2.

Perceived importance for addressing stakeholders, gatekeepers and audiences
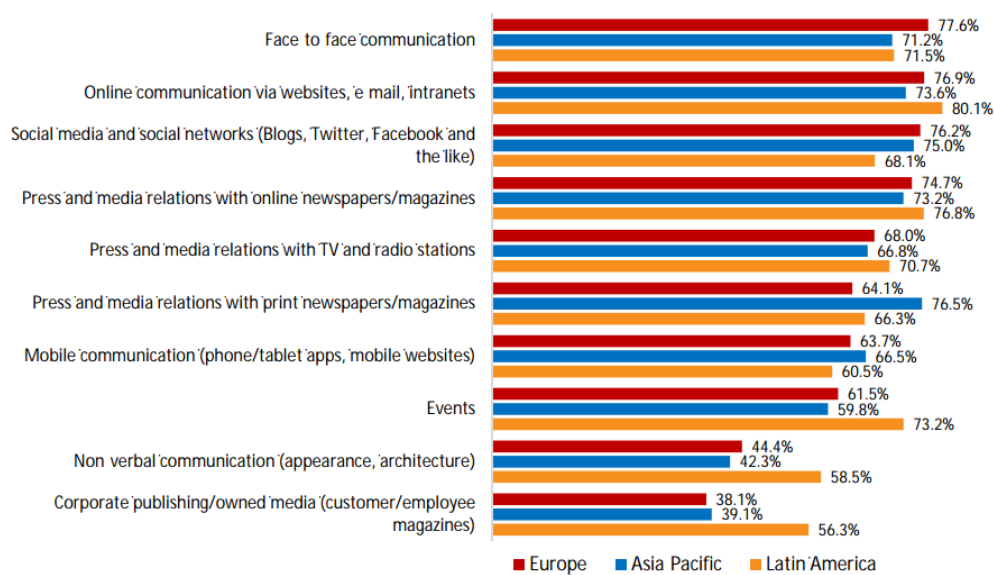
Figure 1.2 Communication channels rated by practitioners[4] (*European Communication Monitor*, 2016, p. 63)

Figure 1.2 reports the statistics obtained from a global comparison of the findings collected from the *European Communication Monitor 2016*[5] along with the newly established monitors for Asia-Pacific [6] and Latin America [7]. The *European Communication Monitor* is a transnational study on global strategic communication

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[4]:: How important are the following methods in addressing stakeholders, gatekeepers and audience to day? Scale 1 (Not important) – 5 (Very important). Percentages: Frequency based on scale points 4 5. Overall evaluation based on 4,534 respondents in 84 countries (*European Communication Monitor*, 2016, p. 63).

[5] *European Communication Monitor 2016*, http://www.communicationmonitor.eu/ [Last access 05/08/2016]

[6] *Asia Pacific Communication Monitor*, http://www.communicationmonitor.asia/ [Last access 05/08/2016]

[7] *Latin America Communication Monitor*, http://www.latincom.info/ [Last access 05/08/2016]

conducted every year since 2007 by a team of more than 2,700 professionals and academics in communication fields. Face-to-face communication still occupies the first and privileged position as the most preferred channel for corporate communication, immediately followed by online platforms such as websites and social media.

The interest is driven by the development of emerging markets and the consequent reduction of the digital divide that enhances the opportunity to reach out the future netizens (Kozinets, 2010). In this vein, social media are used to conduct cost-effective market researches without prior investment in those countries and with possibility to track the visibility of the brand (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2007; Thomas, 2007; Kim, 2017).

The luxury goods market had been suffering from an identity crisis because of the reluctance of embracing the internet and the misconception that the World Wide Web (WWW) would represent an outrage to exclusiveness (Okonkwo, 2010). Due to the advent of new technology, luxury fashion brands, for instance, started with a static front page in 2001 (Okonkwo, 2010) before building corporate websites and creating their *Facebook* pages (the first ones started in 2008), which were left unused for the first year (Nervino, 2013). Luxury brands decided to show interest in the cyberspace only when they realized that it could not be avoided; however, their first attempt in going digital exposed their controversial positions (Cocoran, 2007). The encounter of luxury with the internet has generated two different approaches: the "channel conflict" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. xviii), and the channel opportunity.

The channel conflict explains that brands, despite their engagement and interaction with the web for several years, have yet been looking at the internet with

caution and suspicion (Kapferer, 2015). The online presence of luxury shows a paradox because the features attributed to luxury, summarized by the word "exclusiveness", do not match with the characteristics of the internet which is a "mass" medium of communication where the main idea is that "one formula-fits-all" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 4). Table 1.1 compares luxury features with the internet ones in order to show that they are two opposite worlds that rarely share similar characteristics.

Table 1.1 Luxury vs. internet

Luxury	Internet
Niche clientele	Mass availability
Exclusivity	Mass accessibility
Made-to-measure	One-formula-fits-all approach
Unique appeal	Mass appeal

Source: Adapted from Okonkwo (2010, p. 4)

As far as the use of social media is concerned, luxury brands are still at their infancy stage, because of the dichotomy between the exclusiveness advocated by luxury vis-à-vis, and the mass accessibility promoted by the internet (Okonkwo, 2010). The clear contrast between the features attributed to luxury and the internet is evident in the oppositions: niche clientele versus mass availability to emphasize that luxury cannot satisfy everyone's desire but is reserved for the happy few (Dubois & Laurent, 1998); exclusivity versus mass accessibility to highlight the fact that luxury cannot be accessible to everyone; and the extremely relevant difference between luxury products that must or at least give the idea to be made-to-measure versus the one-formula-fits-all approach and mass appeal, typical of the mass media of communication. A distinction is clear in the use of the internet, what is shared is designed to be widely accessible, while for luxury, uniqueness and exclusiveness are seen as main characteristics.

The dichotomy between luxury and the internet explains why luxury brands did not feel the need to be available online and reach the mass market, because they had to deal with competitors in terms of visibility rather than quality. Luxury brands are internationally renowned and, in most cases, they do not have competitors in their own core business, like *Louis Vuitton* (*LV*) for trunks or *Hermès* for the *Birkin* bag. They do not accept the fact that in social media, their visibility might be threatened by brands considered lower in positioning for example Korean cosmetics (Rambourg, 2014); however, *LV* and *Hermès* have embraced the digital media starting with communication agencies and later internalizing the activities (Rambourg, 2014). This reluctant attitude of the luxury brands towards the internet had generated profit for communication agencies that started working on the provision of digital marketing strategies designed for the luxury goods market in order to convince the brands to externalize this obscure activity (Rambourg, 2014). This eventually aligned the strategies of luxury brands to brands from other industries.

There are still luxury brands that have decided not to join any social media and continue to remain relevant via traditional media, with the French *Céline* as an example, in order to preserve their aura of exclusivity. The only internet domain owned by *Céline* is its website, serving as a new media outlet that disseminates official news. At the same time, the brand is celebrated on new media, for instance, on *Facebook*, where its fans, who have created a fan page that has collected about 350,000 likes. Recently, this phenomenon has impacted the visual media Pinterest that hosts several accounts about luxury brands; these are created and owned by fans and characterized by user-generated content (UGC). Paradoxically, in the past luxury brands considered the internet a threat because it gave uncontrollable voice to others about the brands; this 'out of control buzz' around brands now contributes to brand e-quity (Okonkwo,

2010; Kapferer, 2015).

In social semiotic terms, the choice of brands like *Chanel*, not to use e-commerce channels to sell their products is to be interpreted as a way of preserving exclusiveness and uniqueness of the offline shopping experience. The question for luxury brands is still whether to go or not, but once a first account is created, there is no way back. So, it becomes necessary to turn the channel conflict into a channel opportunity that preserves luxury aura while establishing it globally. In both examples, the choice that *Céline* and *Chanel* made is framed by the willingness to preserve the luxury aura of the brand based on "distribution" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 6). Distribution in both social semiotics and business indicates the choice of media and channels to promote information and goods, implying the choice of a target audience and market; therefore, the choice is conceived in terms of communication and e-commerce.

A more positive approach that overcomes the channel conflict defines social media platforms as an opportunity "to see, feel, perceive and anticipate the psychological evolution of the wealthy online whether they are clients, potential clients or the wider public" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 55). The target audience of luxury fashion brands online is the wealthy segment demographically represented by millennials (see Chapter 2). Social media are construed as "fluid, individualized connectivity" characterized by interactivity (Hui & Chun, 2006, p. 1). Social media platforms have the power of putting together the interests of all the stakeholders involved in the communication process (Bhatia, 2004) and building up more "receiver-oriented" messages (Catenaccio, 2007, p. 59). Brands on social media platforms are; therefore, "new discursive identities" shaped by the "microcontent" shared on their corporate pages (Garzone *et al.*, 2007, p. 10) that is found to be "open-ended" and "perpetually unfinished" (Garzone *et al.*, 2007, p. 22).

On *Facebook*, brands are provided with the same interface of individual users and consequently called to perform the same "communicative functions" through *Facebook* posts (Lee, 2011, p. 6-7): updating people about your daily life (diary), expressing opinions and judgements and asking feedback, reporting mood, leaving away messages, initiating a discussion, addressing a specific target audience; sharing a quotation, humour or *Facebook*-related discourse regarding new tools.

Some brands have given importance to social media. One example is the action taken by YSL on Instagram in April 2016 when they changed their creative director and so deleted their previous Instagram feeds to mark the revolutionary innovation to be started (Maoui, 2016). This highlights how in these days, real life blends into social media accounts. In the new media era, every "log in" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 43) is a new birth and every medium is a different invitation to the audience to experience the brand's world. A brand that has a YouTube says "watch me"; a brand that tweets says "follow me"; those ones that post on *Facebook* say "hear me" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 46). Brands integrate several media to engage the user in their world enacting a transmedia storytelling construed through hyperlinks and more broadly medium-specific features (Jenkins, 2006; Petroni, 2011). The union of "experience" and "luxury" online creates "magnificent encounter", "indulging incident" and "extra event" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 117) and these happen in a neutral environment where both brand and user feel comfortable and at home.

1.3.3 Voices from luxury studies and luxury goods market

In order to get a better understanding of the state-of-the-art in defining luxury and make sure that the present project could have managerial implications, academics who conducted luxury studies and professionals in the luxury goods market have been

interviewed to understand the perception of the evolving scenario that has generated the impossibility to find a common definition for the concept of luxury. Interviewees were three academics and three professionals, and one academic with professional experience in advertising. All the documents, including cover letter, authorization form, open-ended questions used for the interviews and the data collected are attached in Appendix I.

The interviewees confirmed that luxury is seen as a fluid concept, which changes across time, space, culture, context within which it is created, used, and distributed. The first feature of luxury found in the answers is its unnecessary nature. It creates aspiration, it defines social status, and it has a darker side. Luxury can be related to the negative Chinese word used for luxury *she chipin* that is translated into "extravagance" (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008, p. 108). Luxury is defined as shaped by the cultural context, personal experience, and social context and discloses the possibility of developing immunity to luxury goods; however, different individuals with different backgrounds confirm the hegemony of European brands in the luxury goods market because of their heritage. The recurrent elements are exclusivity, heritage, tradition, social status and, aspirational. Interestingly, all the interviewees focus on the use of luxury consumption as a variable to investigate the social stratification (see Giddens, 1984).

Furthermore, the interviewees express that luxury has undergone changes after industrialization, modernization and the advanced capitalization in modern society, that transformed luxury in a mass concept. This massification of luxury is not well accepted from high-net-worth individuals (HNWI) who are used to be exclusive and unique consumers.

Notably, according the interviewees, European brands are widely recognized as luxury, especially French and Italian given their long-standing heritage. The brands *Gucci* and *Louis Vuitton* have the most powerful image internationally, mainly reinforced by the brand value of their respective country of origin (CoO). As explained earlier, and confirmed by the interviewees, media discourse plays an essential role in framing brand identity. Luxury, particularly, benefits from printed media, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, etc. among others, but more recently from digital media such as blogs, websites, and online sales campaigns. The narrative serves the purpose of construing lifestyle values, heritage and social benefits for the brand to persuade the consumers.

The interviewees have confirmed that the channel conflict (Section 1.1.2) is still vivid and considered to be one of the major disruptors in the luxury goods market contributing to the massification of the concept. Social media are mentioned to be one of the causes for the identity crisis faced by brands; however, the interviewees agree on a crucial aspect, once luxury brands go online, there is no way back. There is instead the issue of the luxury aura preservation, and the creation of content that represents novelty and innovation of the instant world generated by the internet. From their experience, the interviewees recognized a lack of expertise of professionals in the fast pace environment of social media, given the farsighted goals of luxury sector. They suggested that social media platforms should be used to educate future consumers to recognize authentic luxury. Social media are seen as a tool to provide knowledge about brands and their products, and a privileged path to invite millennials to experience luxury offline by engaging them with stories; however, luxury firms tend to avoid internet for e-commerce.

1.4 Rationale for the study

The encounter between luxury and the internet has been investigated in both business (Bellaiche *et al.*, 2010; Dehghani & Tumer, 2015; Dubois, 2013; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Hennigs *et al.*, 2012; Kim & Yang, 2017; Kwon *et al.*, 2016; Wierzba, 2015) and applied linguistics, specifically multimodality with a focus on tourism (Suen, 2013) and jewelry (O' Halloran & Lim Fei, 2009). In addition to those, language studies have been populated by studies on fashion magazines and their multimodal construction (Barthes, 1996), and corpus linguistics (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2013; Crawford Camiciottoli *et al.,* 2014; Faraoni *et al.*, 2015); however, none of these studies focuses on the actual conceptualization of luxury neither specifically develops a systematic framework to annotate digital multimodal artefacts in relation to brand management to understand how meanings are contextualized in the socio-economic context in which they are produced and distributed.

This study aims to fulfill the research gap in the business and socio-cultural literature about the definition of luxury in the 21st century), and also addresses the need for a new conceptualization of luxury emerging from the professional world. The study particularly focuses on the branding discourse shared by luxury fashion firms on their corporate *Facebook* pages the ultimate semiotic construction of luxury; therefore, a discursive approach is needed to understand the semiotic choices made by those brands in the process of framing their brand identity and values. In addition, the study is situated within the broad area of applied linguistics and social semiotics, and, thus, contributing to the empirical research and to development of frameworks to analyze multimodal digital media and highlighting the importance of qualitative studies supported by corpus tools in the area of digital humanities.

1.4.1 Why luxury fashion?

Luxury fashion is investigated because of its nexus with culture and society. Fashion has been defined as an "instant language" (cit. Miuccia Prada), and for Roland Barthes "fashion is a language – not an oral one, of course, but a highly sophisticated and structured visual language that allows for a personal form of expression" (Young, 2011, p.7). Fashion informs about the society, it is produced and fashion collections as cultural artefacts have raised the interest of museums like the *V&A*, and in 2017 of *Google* that has started creating digital archives (Kansara, 2017). Based on Veblen's theory (1957), luxury segment also becomes an indicator for social stratification based on consumerism and materialism (see Section 2.3.2.2).

Fashion studies intersect with gender studies, history, sociology, and cultural studies. It is the meeting point of consumer studies and body culture, as the incarnation of exhibitionism and production and consumption (Colaiacomo & Caratozzolo, 2002). Based on the assumption that "whether you are fashion-conscious or not, your clothes speak for you" (Winter & Goodman, 1984, p. 3), it is not alarming that Bernard Arnault (Young, 2011, p. 145) highlights that "politics and fashion mingle in dinners, parties, fashion shows. Let's not be hypocritical about it. [Let's] accept the fact that the two worlds are closer than most people think". This is the reason why there is increasing media coverage of political news has turned politicians into celebrities, with more news being produced about their outfits more than their statements (Young, 2011).

In gender research, from a socio-cultural and historical perspective, Christian *Dior*'s 'New Look' launched in 1947 is a socio-economic incarnation of the will of women to bloom again after the second world war. Dior explains the message behind his collection by saying (Winter & Goodman, 1984, p. 12):

> We had behind us a time of war, of uniforms, of women in the services with broad shoulders like a boxer's. I sketched flower-like women, gently curved shoulders, rounded breasts and reed-slim waists, and skirts that spread out like flower petals.

Dior used the 'New Look' to give voice to women and their desire to get back their femininity (Winter & Goodman, 1984).

From a sociological perspective, fashion studies have widely investigated how iconic fashion items such as dresses and accessories are found to be associated with metaphors of the human body in which "we <<write>> or <<draw>> a representation of the body into our cultural context" (Wilson, 1992, p. 6), and, thus, "socialise our bodies (…) transforming them" (Wilson, 1992, p. 6). Pamela Golbin (in Young, 2011, p. 7) states that "the act of dressing every morning becomes, whether consciously or not, is a declaration of stance, aesthetics, consumption, beliefs and class, identifying us as a member of a particular 'tribe'".

Luxury fashion is being attributed an additional value of contributing to the process of structuring society and construing identity through consumption. The 21st century has become an instant world characterized by uncertainty and continuous transformation that influences and is influenced by an "instant generation" (Elliott & Lemert, 2006, p. 59); therefore, the concept of "identity" turns into 'new individualism' that is shaped by two main social factors: "consumerism" and "globalization" that converge into the "want-now" (Elliott & Lemert, 2006, p. 59). This involves a continuous reinvention of the "self" through the consumption of products related to people's 'spaces' (body, house, job, food, etc.) (Elliott & Lemert, 2006, p. 59). Shopping is characterized by an attitude of "short-termism" (Elliott and Lemert, 2006, p. 60) that influences the purchase decision. In this sense, products become signs of belonging to or an aspiration to be associated with a particular group and they also

become elements of distinction and tools to construe individuals' identity and establish their public image.

This process of self-construction through consumption leads to the 'self-other concepts' theory drawn upon Veblen's theory (1957) about consumption and social status that identifies the consumption of good as the primary index to assign an individual to a particular social status. Veblen also places emphasis on pricing as the symbol of the grade of desirability of a product; therefore, the higher the price of a product, the higher the social status of its consumer. This works in luxury goods market where goods stand for *modus vivendi* (Pilelienė, 2012) and particularly affects fashion industry whose products are seen as instruments used to construct social identity (Barnard, 1996; Meinhold, 2013). The so-called ideology of consumption is constructed on commodities whose choices are mediated by the messages that the individuals receive from the media (Baudrillard,1968; Silverstone, 1981). The social aspect will frame the interpretation of the data in order to draw a relationship between discourse and brands at a general level consumption and identity construal as well as media and society.

1.4.2   Why Facebook as a source of data?

The choice of *Facebook* for this study is informed by the importance of social media to corporate communication; *Facebook*'s hegemonic power, its longer history, its high sense of adaptability, its incorporation of other platforms, and its wide range of tools for advertising, and my personal knowledge of this platform for branding purposes gained through an internship in the Advertising & Communication office of an Italian fashion firm.

Facebook was first launched in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg as a platform for

Harvard students, and later in 2006 opened to the rest of the world. By 2008, the interest in *Facebook*, had massively increased because of its potential to be used as an instrument to raise brand awareness and promote sales[8]. Among the different platforms, *Facebook* has the highest number of active accounts in the world (*Statista*, 2015).

In addition, *Facebook*'s development is driven by the needs of its corporate users and it is desgined to meet the new market's demands. Since 2006, *Facebook* has been updating its functions and offered its users different tools to create their shareable content. As of 2015, the year of the collection of the data, *Facebook* could host different types of semiotic resources: textual resources in the forms of wordings; hypertextual elements such as hyperlinks, tags, hashtags; and visual resources in the form of still images, GIF, videos. It could host all types of multimodal texts, differently from other social media that were projected with specific purposes. Hence, *Facebook* offers the oppotunity to investigate semiotic choices as motivated choices embedding precise strategies for tarketing markets.

Besides offering advertising services, *Facebook* has also developed management services for companies. *Facebook Workplace*[9] is one of the last products of *Facebook* development. It was launched in October 2016 as a management platform to facilitate multinational companies in their cross-branch projects. The choice of *Facebook* was also motivated by the fact that it is a company with high purchasing power able to incorporate other social media such as *Instagram*, already bought in 2012, and *WhatsApp* in 2014.

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[8] *Facebook*,
https://www.facebook.com/business/goals/build-awareness/ [Last access 26/08/2015]
[9] *Facebook Workplace*, https://workplace.fb.com/ [Last access 23/10/2016]

1.4.3 Why a discursive approach?

The study is innovative given the discursive approach it adopts to examine the discursive representations of luxury in the digital environment. This approach aims to re-conceptualize and highlight how discourse constructs brand identities, conveys brand values, and connects brands with aspirational and potential consumers.

The term 'discourse' in this study is used to identify the instances of texts, multimodal in nature, in a specific context of use (Matthiessen, 2014), but also in a broader sense, which takes into consideration references to other texts and the influence of the professional culture (Matthiessen, 2014; Bhatia, 2017). Discourse defines the semiotic construction of meanings disseminated in the social media in the form of textual resources, medium-specific features such as hyperlinks, tags, hashtags, visual resources (still images), and all the signs that contribute to the production of the multimodal texts examined. The word 'discourse' occurs with 'branding' to highlight the communicative purpose of the multimodal texts analyzed, and implies that it is not a finished product but an ongoing process that starts from design, goes through production and distribution, and then undergoes a re-semiotization after being decoded by the recipient (Hall, 2006; Iedema, 2011; 2003).

1.5 Research scope

The study focuses on the area of corporate communication and explores digital multimodal texts in the luxury goods market. The research is an investigation of the semiotic construction of luxury instantiated through the branding discourse spread in social media by three luxury fashion firms. More specifically, the study is a social semiotic analysis of a multimodal corpus comprising 597 corporate *Facebook* posts

collected from the official institutional *Facebook* pages of *Burberry* (N=164), *Gucci* (N=305), and *Louis Vuitton* (N=128). Each of the three firms constitutes a sub-corpus. The three brands were selected based on their global brand awareness, according to the international ranking *Best Global Brands 2016* reported in *Interbrand* (see Chapter 3). The corporate *Facebook* posts were collected from 2015, because the year was a most mature stage of digital branding strategies in the luxury goods market at the time of the data collection (Li, 2015). The number of brands and social media platforms were limited to three and one respectively because of the time required to annotate multimodal texts. The 597 posts were, thus, a manageable number to attain the purpose of this research. Besides, site-specific discursive practices do not show a higher degree of diversity across brands, but it is instead identified within the branding strategies and; therefore, the dataset consists of posts collected from one year.

The data analysis is limited to the construction of brand identity and does not include an analysis of user-generated content (UGC) which has been extensively investigated in business studies (see Chapter 2). Also, it does not incarnate the institutional voice of the brands, but instead its perception by the audience and the contribution to brand image. The multimodal data analysis includes the investigation of the layout units of the *Facebook* platform, medium-specific features, textual resources, and visual resources. The visual resources are explored in the form of still images to elaborate a systematic approach to fashion photography that can be used to investigate other types of visual resources such as GIF, videos, live streaming, and future evolutions.

The dataset for this study includes a corpus of corporate *Facebook* posts retrieved from the corporate *Facebook* pages of three luxury fashion firms namely *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *LV*. From a social semiotic standpoint, these pages constitute a multimodal

corpus containing instances of institutional branding discourse used to construct the brand identity and values of the brands. The instances of brand identity construction and brand values in the *Facebook* pages are expected to reflect brand vision, culture, and core values reported in the corporate websites of the three brands.

The multimodal discourse analytic approach was developed at both macro- and micro-levels of analysis to bridge the semiotic construction of luxury and its conceptualization in market and society. At the macro-level, discourse is investigated using the annotation scheme to categorize the identity construction and marketing strategies explored by *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *LV* (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). At the micro-level, the analysis focuses on the individual semiotic resources. The analysis focuses on the identification of the layout units of corporate *Facebook* posts (Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014), medium-specific features used to perform integration among platforms (Petroni, 2011), textual resources, and visual resources in the form of still images scrutinized in their representational and interactional meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). The intersemiotic relation between textual and visual resources (Martinec & Salway, 2005) is explored, along with their orchestration with the layout units and medium-specific features characterizing discourse on the *Facebook* platform.

Additionally, intertextual and interdiscursive constructions through textual and visual resources are investigated. The categorization of the socio-semiotic processes performed by the three luxury fashion firms, namely *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *LV*, in the process of production and distribution (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) of their branding discourse is conducted through the application of the registerial cartography (Matthiessen, 2015).

1.6 Research aims and questions

The aims of this research project are:

1) to determine what is conceived as luxury in the 21st century based on its semiotic construction;

2) to investigate how the medium of communication chosen to spread the branding discourse enables and constrains the division of the semiotic labour;

3) to identify the site-specific discursive practices performed by the three luxury fashion firms selected for this research project.

In order to achieve the aims of this investigation, three research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1) How are different semiotic resources on the *Facebook* posts of luxury fashion firms used to construct their brand identity and values?

2) How do the different semiotic resources interact with each other in the production of branding discourse on the *Facebook* platform?

3) What are the socio-semiotic processes that frame the branding discursive practices of the corporate *Facebook* posts?

The three research questions are interdependent with each other. Once the analysis of the individual semiotic resources has been conducted and the first research question is answered, the findings are further explored to answer the second and third research questions. If the first research question investigates the semiotic resources individually and examines their semiotic labour, the second research question analyzes their site-

specific interplay in the construction of meanings. The third research question focuses on the socio-semiotic processes articulated through those resources and unpacks the configuration of branding discursive practices.

1.7 Research significance

The study is significant as it responds to the need for a re-definition luxury in the 21st century based on its semiotic construction. It accounts for the use of social media to produce and distribute branding discourse which conveys the brand values and establishes the brand identity. The study entails the connection between discursive representations of luxury and its positioning in the market. A major contribution of this study lies in its adoption of a multidisciplinary approach, comprising social semiotics and brand management. The branding discourse is construed in this work as the realization of the branding strategies aimed at building brand identity and values in the digital environment. It is investigated through a holistic and systematic analysis supported by corpus tools.

The study proposes a discursive approach to the conceptualization of luxury in the 21st century and it contributes to luxury studies because it provides a new definition of luxury. The findings of this study concerned with the development of the luxury concept will contribute to the business and socio-cultural scholarship. It will be useful for professionals in corporate communication and the luxury goods market, as it informs them about the implications of their semiotic choices.

Additionally, the study will provide a good amount of analysed authentic multimodal texts, and have important implications for the learning and teaching of corporate communication in the university, and in-house corporate communication

programmes.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the theory of applied linguistics by enriching the discussion on the coinage of the term appliable linguistics that refers to a research approach that bridges theoretical and applied linguistics (Halliday, 1964; Matthiessen, 2014). Appliable linguistics highlights the fact that it is not possible to discern theory from application because when investigating situated discourse, theory is necessary for the analysis, and at the same time empirical studies validate and empower the theory with evidence to promote replicability.

The methodological significance of the study builds on the need for the development of analytical frameworks to investigate digital multimodal texts based on empirical research and to map out the division of the semiotic labour among different semiotic resources. The research methodology adopted in this study addresses these two methodological issues.

1.8 Outline of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the research project. It provided an overview on the study, highlighted research background and explained the rationale, presented the kind of data that were collected, and motivated the discursive approach adopted. Additionally, the aims were outlined together with their significance. Chapter 2 focuses on the historical evolution of the concept of luxury and the branding strategies used to construct brand identity and values. It reviews studies on branding discourse and social media in the area of business and applied linguistics and explores social semiotics and multimodality as theoretical and analytical frameworks. The literature review eventually ends up in advertising as the closest *genre* resembling the digital multimodal artefacts examined. Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter and it presents

the theoretical and analytical frameworks derived from the studies reviewed and their adaptation to the dataset. This chapter describes the data collection procedures and presents the development of a multi-framework for the data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the findings in relation to the aims and research questions. Chapter 5 concludes the research project by summarizing the achievement of the study's aims and presenting the key-findings, the contribution and implications, as well as the limitations and future research. It ends with the author's personal reflection on luxury after the research journey.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews research studies on luxury, social media, and advertising from different disciplines, namely brand management, marketing, applied linguistics, and socio-cultural studies. Section 2.2 presents the concept of luxury across time and space, and introduces the concept of brand identity and values along with the strategies adopted to communicate them. Section 2.3 focuses on the digital landscape and the ways luxury brands make use of it, and reviews studies that investigate this relationship. Section 2.4 reviews the social semiotic approach in its application to discursive representations of luxury and the methods proposed by different studies to investigate similar artefacts. Section 2.5 summarizes the whole chapter linking up the different concepts, which are used for the theoretical and analytical framework for the present study.

2.2 The art of managing luxury fashion brand identity and values

This section reviews the key concepts of luxury fashion brand management that define brand identity and values. It is divided into sub-sections: Section 2.2.1 describes the concept of luxury and its features across the centuries, Section 2.2.2 presents brand identity in relation to financial value, and Section 2.2.3 introduces the branding and marketing strategies adopted by luxury fashion brands to craft their brand identity and values.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing luxury across time and space

The "What is Luxury?"[10] exhibition hosted at the world renowned *Victoria & Albert Museum* in London from 25 April to 27 September 2015 in partnership with the *Crafts Council* was a sign of the increasing interest towards luxury in the past few years. Additionally, a legitimization of prestige and history was the inclusion of Moët Hennessy Champagne properties into the UNESCO heritage sites listed in 2015[11]. This awards luxury goods market the title of 'art influencing mankind'; however, luxury is a very challenging concept to be delimited (Brun & Castelli, 2013; Chandon *et al.*, 2016; Pucci-Sisti Maisonrouge, 2013). It is continuously evolving, being the product of its times, and inevitably varying with time (Dubois & Laurent, 1996; Danzinger, 2005; Silverstein & Fiske, 2005; Truong, 2010; Truong &McColl, 2011; Ricca & Robins, 2012; Von Maltzahn, 2015).

Starting from a pure etymological meaning, the term 'luxury' comes from the Latin words *luxuria* and *luxus* indicating "abundance, sumptuous enjoyment"[12].; however, this definition does not fully cover the evolution of luxury across time and space (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Historical evolution of the concept of 'luxury'

HISTORICAL PERIOD	ATTRIBUTED MEANING FOR THE CONCEPT
From the Ancient times till Middle Age	Luxury as splendour; it recalls the holy emblem of gods and kings; luxury objects offered to gods to get mercy;
Renaissance	At Louis XIV's court luxury stands for glitz, flaunt; profane concept;
17th century	Luxury as private and moderate pleasure; elegance and details;
19th century	Unnecessary; superfluous;

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[10] *Victoria & Albert Museum*, http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/what-is-luxury/ [Last access 08/05/2017]

[11] *Luxury Daily*, http://www.luxurydaily.com/moet-hennessy-champagne-properties-added-as-unesco-sites/ [Last access 08/08/2015]

[12] *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/111515?redirectedFrom=luxury#eid [Last access 05/08/2015]

20th century	Expensive; sumptuous; delicate;
80s – 90s	Social status; display; aspirational;
2000-2010	Social status; display; aspirational; (emerging markets)
	Personal identity; emotions; self-confidence; affection; reward; (developed countries)
From 2010 till now	Boundaries of luxury blurred

Source: Adapted and translated from Gille Lipovetsky, Elette Roux, 2003 (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2007, p. 9)

Arguably, the definitions summarized in Table 2.1 are the results of the analysis of texts, ranging from fictional to any popular cultural artefacts across centuries that captured the social stratification of the society by emphasizing what was conceived as luxury (Dubois & Laurent, 1998; Giddens, 1984; Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003). Across time and space, luxury shifts from holy to profane, from flaunt and sumptuous to a more minimal and sober, and from being superfluous to the necessity to display.

In the 21st century, the conventional definition of luxury and its status symbol has been eroded by globalization, demographic growth in the emerging markets, growth of the middle-class with high purchase power, digital transformation and the consequent disruption, and democratization of the market, and other socio-economic events (Rambourg, 2014). In agreement with Thurlow (2015), the texts of these times were undoubtedly the artefacts disseminated in the digital landscape, and social media platforms specifically.

Regarding the variable of space, briefly presented in Table 2.1, the dichotomy of luxury needed to display a social status in the 'emerging markets', and personal satisfaction in the 'developed countries' (Lipovetsky & Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009), was further explored in Figure 2.1.

SUBJUGATION & START OF MONEY				
e.g. emerging countries	SHOW OFF & FIT IN			
	e.g. emerging provinces in China	SELF-REWARD		
		e.g. China (tier 3-4)	WAY OF LIFE	
			e.g. Chinese cities (tier 1-2), Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Japan millennials	UNIQUE EXPERIENCE
				e.g. Western countries
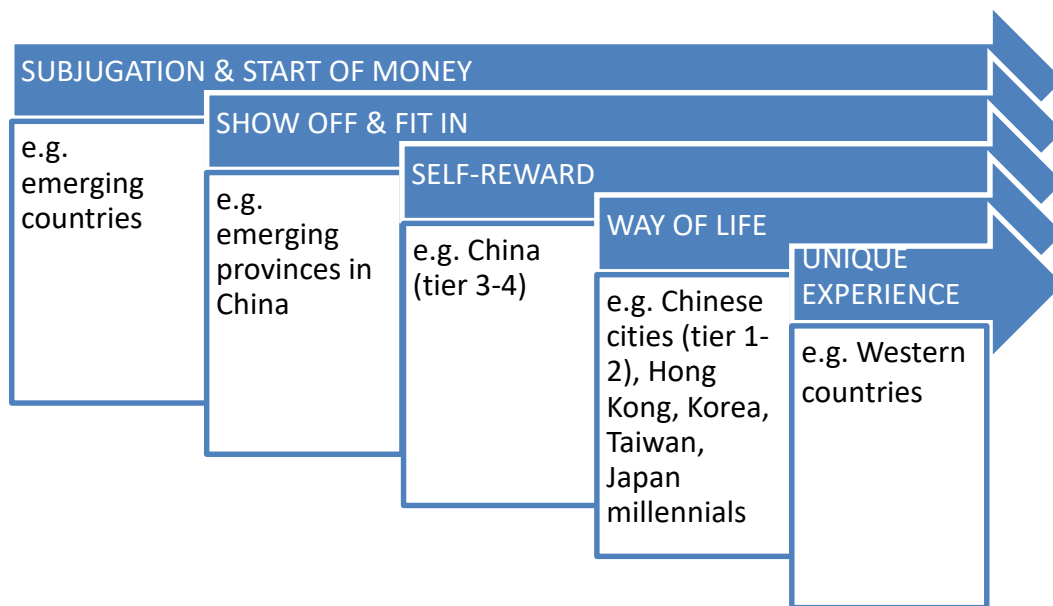
Figure 2.1 Model for luxury (adapted from Chadha & Husband's five-stage model, 2007, p. 44)

Chadha & Husband (2007) designed a five-stage model to categorize the markets according to the attitude of their customers towards luxury and luxury definition, by particularly focusing on Asian countries, namely subjugation, start of money (e.g. India), show off (e.g. China), fit in (e.g. Taiwan and Korea), and way of life (e.g. Japan).

Figure 2.1 adapted the five-stage model to the contemporary scenario, expanding it to the global market. The new elaboration combines the first two stages. The first stage captured the encounter with luxury in emerging countries, such as Cambodia and Myanmar, which opened up to the global market, still benefiting from the aura of the goods seen as unreachable because of spatio-temporal limitations (Benjamin, 1935).

The model also combined the stages of 'show off' and 'fit in' to define the attitude of Chinese customers living in provinces whose cities are emerging urban clusters (Rambourg, 2014). Unifying China as a whole market without considering its

fragmented identity and market was one of the issues identified in the model (Chadha and Husband (2007). If tier 1 and 2 cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, have more cosmopolitan taste, other tiers have more localized needs, and if some consumers were looking for experience more than products, others might still be eager to get logos and show off their aspirational attitude (Rambourg, 2014).

Moreover, Chinese consumers are the main actors of luxury consumption in China, as well as outside of the boundaries of their country. Chinese are well known for their shopping trips to satisfy their more valuable desire of having 'bought in' products in Italy or France or any supposed prestigious 'made in' country for luxury items (Bucci *et al.*, 2011). At the same time, the Chinese market is changing and becoming saturated in terms of luxury colonization, and the new anti-corruption policy initiated by Xi Jinping (President of the People's Republic of China since March 2012) is contributing to damage Western brands in favour of the emerging local brands that have been promoted by local celebrities, like the first lady Peng Liyuan (Santavecchi, 2013).

Self-reward was added to categorize the attitude of Chinese consumers in cities classified as tier 3-4, and their way of life includes the aware customers in Asia that have developed a taste that did not reflect the damage of Western hegemony but mixed and matched with local brands (see interviews in Appendix I; Rambourg, 2014). Unique experience synthetized what luxury was conceived in Western countries where it was developed and first appreciated.

The 21st century luxury scenario presents a kind of discontent, as explained by Von Maltzahn (2015). The research questions driving the study were "what is now luxury?", "is luxury a memory or a memorial? Or both, but both at the same time?".

Brands must preserve their integrity throughout time but in the 21st century the instant world does not seem to offer a fertile terrain for that (Fionda-Douglas and Moore, 2009). The contemporary society paradoxically reflects the importance of the unnecessary, something, which goes beyond functional and utility, and, hence, the importance of luxury (Maffesoli, 2015). Playing on etymology and explaining that the word 'luxury' does not come from 'luxuria', or 'lust', but it has its roots in the term 'luxation' that means "what is dislocated, e.g. in the strict sense, what is not utilitarian", things do not have price[13].

Von Maltzahn (2015), referring to the qualities of luxury, continued recalling the past, craftsmanship and scarcity as the most important features for *maison* like Dior or as the keys for success mentioned by Bernard Arnault, CEO of *LVMH*. The concept also explained how, as for diamonds, fashion can play an artificial scarcity by relying on limited edition collections. This might be the new luxury that consumers are looking for today (Silverstein & Fiske, 2005; Truong, 2010; Truong and McColl, 2011) to overcome the so-called democratization of luxury in terms of wide accessibility to luxury that is damaging the feature of exclusivity, generating a saturation in every market that leads to a continuously changing nature of luxury consumption (Hudders *et al.*, 2013). Leaning on those statements, Von Maltzahn (2015) presented a perfume brand as luxury of the 21st century which has become an iconic symbol of the intangibility of luxurious features framing the exclusive aura, Sjaak Hullekes, a fashion firm from Netherlands[14]. Sjaak Hullekes presents a few limited edition perfumes and frames a new ideology. Luxury brands are supposed to set lifestyle models to inspire individuals to join their world instead of focusing on advertisements

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[13] *Lectio magistralis* given by Michel Maffesoli at IFFTI 2015 entitled "Dans le creuset des apparences" at Polimoda, Florence. *Polimoda Mag*, http://www.polimodamag.com/lectio-magistralis-michel-maffesoli-iffti-2015-5950/ [Last access 08/08/2015]

[14] *Sjiaak Hullekes*, http://sjaakhullekes.com/about/ [Last access 08/08/2015]

to increase sales.

Despite time and space, luxury has always been identified with the image of a diamond from De Beers, which has been discursively associated to the properties of scarcity, rarity, and exclusiveness; however, diamonds are not so rare[15], they are very common. It was De Beers, which meticulously manufactured this idea of rarity through releasing small quantities of diamonds. The discursive construction of diamonds as rare and their symbolic association to an equal unique love obscured the fact that South African mines are inexhaustible resources. Luxury goods, such as diamonds, owe their aura of exclusivity to the advertising discourse which crafted a very well-established myth in the society (Barthes, 1957). A myth relies on embedded meanings, which end up being taken for granted without looking for any explanation. Diamonds, like other myths in the society, are constructed through the privation of history. Eventually, we all believe it.

Different approaches have been adopted to define the 'new luxury'. Silverstein & Fiske (2005) looked at the new luxury as a business opportunity that has shifted the focus from serving an elitist group to promoting the democratic distribution of luxury goods. Thomas (2008) had a more conservative stance that saw the new luxury as diluting the 'old luxury', which was recognized as the 'true' one. Dazinger (2005; 2007), more practically, encapsulated the contemporary luxury into the result of a shift from the old luxury, focusing on the exclusivity of high-quality products, to the new luxury characterized by multi-sensorial experience.

Luxury goods, in any sectors, share a set of tangible (e.g. high quality and high price) and intangible features (e.g. exclusivity and social status) which put brands and

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[15] *The Gem Society*, https://www.gemsociety.org/article/are-diamonds-really-rare/ [Last access 05/08/2015]

products in a privileged position in the minds of customers and potential consumers. In all sectors, luxury is ruled by European brands (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). European brands are seen as 'old brands' incarnating the heritage of the countries in which they are produced. 'Old' in this context is neither old-fashioned nor obsolete, but resignified into history, tradition, and heritage (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007). The term 'old' is commodified in the use of storytelling (see Section 2.2.3).

Table 2.2 presents the institutional definition of luxury in the most influential luxury brands in the countries.

Table 2.2 The institutional features of luxury

Comité Colbert (France)	Altagamma (Italy)	Walpole (UK)
International ambition (t)	:u ality (t)	Long tradition (t)
Brand identity (t/i)	Service (t)	Rich heritage (t/i)
:u ality (t)	Design (t)	Superior craftsmanship (t)
Creation (t)	Prestige (i)	Innovation (t)
Poetry of the object (i)	Innovation (t)	Design (t)
Ethics (i)	Culture (i)	Style (i)
	Style (i)	Impeccable service (t)

Source: Official association's websites (see references)

Those features reflect both tangible and intangible features of luxury as marked in the table with (t) and (i) respectively. Some of the features given by *Comité Colbert*, *Altagamma* and *Walpole* coincide because luxury brands share the same concept of luxury although having different countries of origin (CoOs). For the three associations, luxury goods need to be the result of an artistic process of 'creation' (*Comité Colbert*) driven by 'design' (*Altagamma* and *Walpole*), 'superior craftsmanship' (*Walpole*) that comes from a 'long tradition' and 'rich heritage' (*Walpole*) based on the 'culture' (*Altagamma*) of the country because the idea of luxury incorporates creativity and uniqueness directly generated by incomparable craftsmanship. Another feature shared

by all the three CoOs is "innovation" that is more emphasized by the Italian and the British associations, reflecting the current challenge of today's business context and the specific sector of luxury fashion.   The three associations, together with the Spanish *Circulo Fortuny* and the German *Meisterkreis* [16], created the *European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance* (ECCIA) [17]. Later in 2012, the ECCIA declared luxury an industry on its own (Sun *et al.*, 2015).

European brands have dominated the luxury goods market because of their "craftsperson-based tradition predicated upon rare, unique pieces of work" (Kapferer, 2008, p. 97). European brands highlight their brand identity and unique qualities of their products, while American brands focus more on merchandising and distribution. European brands narrate legendary (hi)stories settled in the past to evoke the idea of tradition, whereas American brands tell stories based on lifestyle and celebrity endorsement (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007). This generates a "brand diversity" (Kapferer, 2008, p. 97), showing the dichotomy between brands construed on "history" and others on "stories" related to distribution (Figure 2.2) (Kapferer, 2008, p. 98). Brands have to act differently to be unique.

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[16] Meanings attributed to luxury by these two associations have not been utilized because no brand from Spain or Germany has been included in the analysis due to the fact that none of the two countries appear as CoO of the leading brands.
[17] *ECCIA*, http://www.eccia.eu/ [09/07/2017]
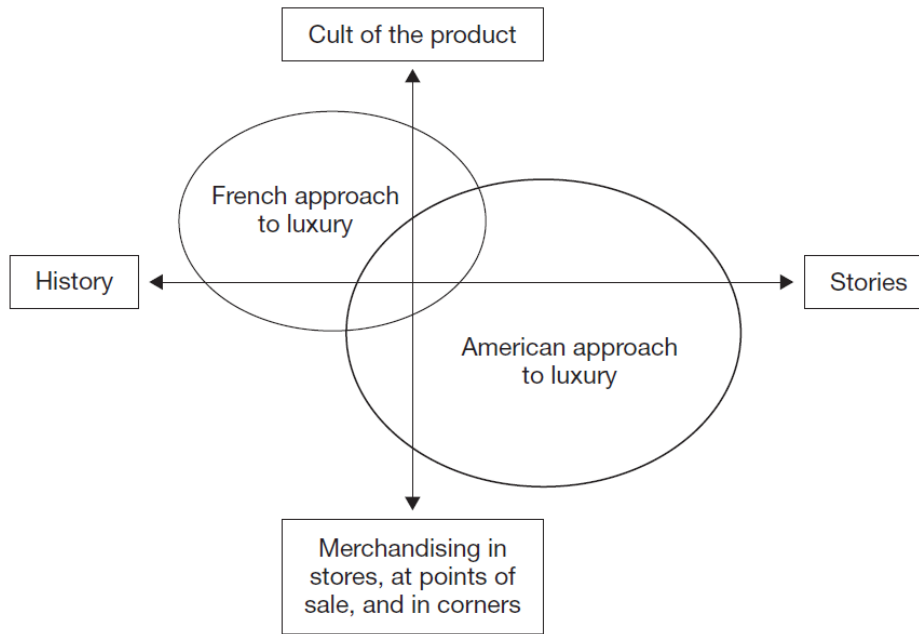
Figure 2.2 History-based and story-based approaches to luxury (Kapferer, 2008, p. 101)

Figure 2.2 shows how French brands, for instance, score high in the history and cult of the product, while American brands frame their identity based on merchandising and stories. This is because European brands can rely on heritage and exploits all the possible symbols to evoke the glorious past of their countries of origin, for instance, Renaissance; while American brands can only claim Hollywood soft power and the American dream (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007) (see Section 2.2.3).

The three brands examined in this study belong to the fashion sector. The encounter between luxury and fashion pushed brands to embrace dynamicity and a tendency to create temporary trends and taste (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2016) argued that high-end fashion cannot be defined as luxury because of its temporary nature; however, other studies (Kapferer, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016), could not deny that consumers recognize high-end fashion brands as luxury, so does the literature.

Arguably, the discrepancy is due to the fact that the current undefined concept of

luxury does not enable scholars to determine a clear boundary between luxury and other segments. Fashion becomes luxury when it reaches a status of classical, timeless, and evergreen taste through its iconic products: it is an evolution (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). In the process of crafting luxury items, fashion firms have to accomplish the mission of "projecting the present into the future, creating iconic, readily recognizable products associated with their genetic code, and <<eternalizing>> the present by challenging codes with radical creativity, beyond all expectations" (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009, p. 30). Figure 2.3 summarizes the luxury fashion stratification in which each layer stands for a level of exclusiveness (Corbellini and Saviolo 2009).

Supreme luxury

Unique pieces, made-to-measure, handcrafted, precious materials, exclusivity

Made-to-measure for Sergio Loro Piana: "A service that enables clients to access the brand and request customized products with precious materials".

Lifestyle luxury

Series production (limited editions), quality/style, heritage and brand identity, selectivity (target, media, channels)

Diego Della Valle, Tod's: "We're not interested in things that are just beautiful but can't be used in day-to-day life by working people. What is perhaps Tod's true success is to have instilled a particular attention to our customers' lifestyle in the world of luxury"

Accessible luxury

High fashion content, price/quality, accessibility (target, media, channels), power communication

The poetry of Swarovski crystal

Masstige

The price of consumer goods, quality and locations *with* the style, communication aesthetics and distribution visibility of luxury goods

Designer limited editions by H&M

Figure 2.3 Stratification of luxury fashion (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009, p. 113)

The top tier describes a one-to-one relationship between the brand and the consumer (supreme luxury) and is characterized by made-to-measure products. Lifestyle luxury is populated by limited edition collections. Accessible luxury focuses on brand extension practices that tend to cover different sectors to expand their target market,

for instance, clothing brands producing watches and cosmetics with cosmetics representing their entry-products because of a more affordable price (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009). 'Masstige' (mass prestige) describes the ultimate invention of high-end fashion to compete with fast fashion firms, such as H&M and Zara. Partnerships launch limited edition collections designed by famous high-end fashion designers for fast fashion firms (Corbellini & Saviolo 2009). This practice enhanced the tamed democratization of luxury (Dubois and Laurent, 1996). It accomplishes two purposes: reaching a wider audience through a fast fashion product; and pushing the high-end brand to create a more provocative and extravagant design to meet the taste of younger customer (Thomas, 2007).

The common denominator to define the tiers is 'distribution'. In brand management, 'distribution' is defined as the organization of channel of distribution for sales (Corbellini & Saviolo 2009), or as transfer of information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

2.2.2 From brand identity to financial value

This section investigates the concept of 'identity' from a more general definition to brand identity from a business perspective. This section also explains the distinction between 'identity' and 'image' to clarify the use of the proper terminology for 'brand identity' and 'brand image'. The coincidence of the two generates brand equity that equals to the financial value attributed to the brand for its ability to successfully communicate its brand values to its target audience.

Bernstein (1986) argues that material entities, like companies, have an identity. Relevant to this study is brand identity. A 'brand' is a 'name' that influences the

decision-making process, becoming a "purchase criterion" (Kapferer, 2008, p. 11). Brand names carry a financial value created through a communication exchange between the brands and the market (Bourdieu, 2014). The ability to impose criteria of appreciation for their products (Bourdieu, 2014) enables brands to define high prices because of their intangible features conveyed through discourse. The assets represent the raw materials, on which the brands construe their brand identity, which is their "symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 2014).

This symbolic power is "brand awareness, beliefs of exclusivity and superiority of some valued benefit, and emotional bonding" (Kapferer, 2008, p. 9). It establishes the brands as unique (exclusivity), strong (saliency) and positive (desirable); therefore, while designing brand strategies, brands construct the ideal identity that they want to be perceived in the market. Its actual perception and associations made with the brand by potential consumers establish what is called 'brand image' (Kapferer, 2008). Brands rely on a system of interconnections between representations (brand identity) and relationships (brand image) (Kapferer, 2008) (Figure 2.4).
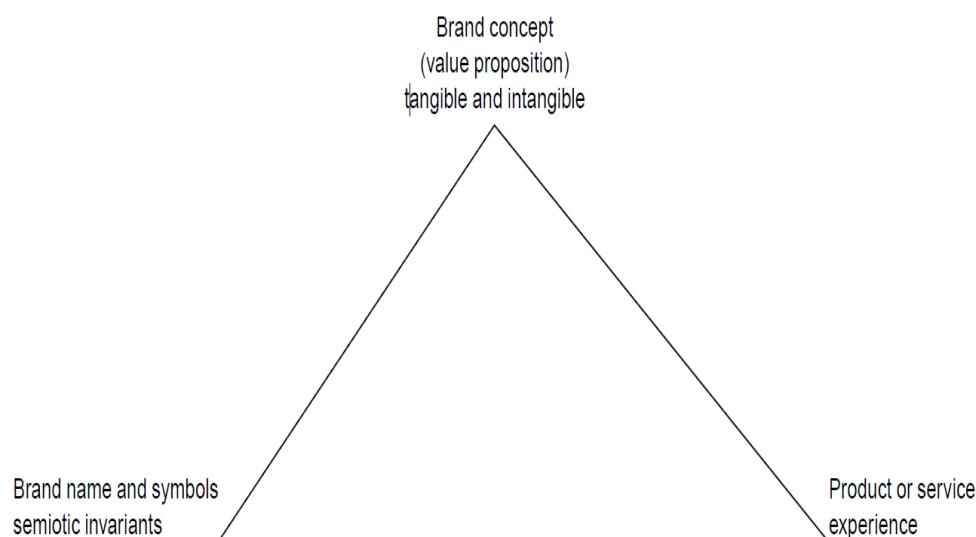
Figure 2.4 Brand identity (Kapferer, 2008, p. 12)

Brand identity is unpacked into a brand concept that incorporates both tangible (e.g. quality of the product) and intangible features (e.g. the idea behind which the brand is associated with), hereafter, synthetized into the terms 'values'. Brand identity is built through a name, and a logo, and it usually owns an iconic product that recalls a unique experience. All these elements work as the basis of the communication system for the brand, and act as being a metonymy for the brand heritage (Fabris & Minestroni, 2004). In some specific industries, the brand is the major criterion that matters while choosing a product. Table 2.3 summarizes examples of sectors in which the brand is the most important variable driving purchase decision.

Table 2.3 Brand functions and the distributor/manufacturer power equilibrium

Main function of the brand	Typical product category	Power of manufactures' brand
Recognition signal	Milk, salt, flour	Very weak
Practicality of choice	Socks	Weak
Guarantee of quality	Food, staples	Weak
Optimization of choice, sign of high-quality performance	Cars, cosmetics, appliances, pain, services	Strong
Personalizing one's choice	Perfumes, clothing	Strong
Performance, bonding, familiarity relationship	Old brands	Strong but challenged
Pleasure	Polysensual brands, luxury brands	Strong
Ethics and social responsibility	Trust brands, corporate brands	Strong but challenged

Source: Kapferer (2008, p. 23)

Table 2.3 displays the findings of a study conducted by Kapferer in 1998 (2008), based on a survey among affluent young executives with high purchasing power. The findings showed the consistent patterns of deploying marketing strategies to construct the need for unnecessary goods across sectors. In those sectors, communication is the key factor for the construction of a successful brand. It was also demonstrated that

when buying luxury goods, consumers have in mind some specific features: firstly, the beauty of the product and its excellence and uniqueness; secondly, the creativity and the sensuality of the product, thirdly, the timelessness and international reputation associated to the product, and lastly, the feeling of rarity evoked by the possession of the product (Kapferer, 2008).

European luxury brands also benefit from the coincidence of brand names with their founders (Figure 2.5) that enacts a process of personification of the brand (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Okonkwo, 2007).
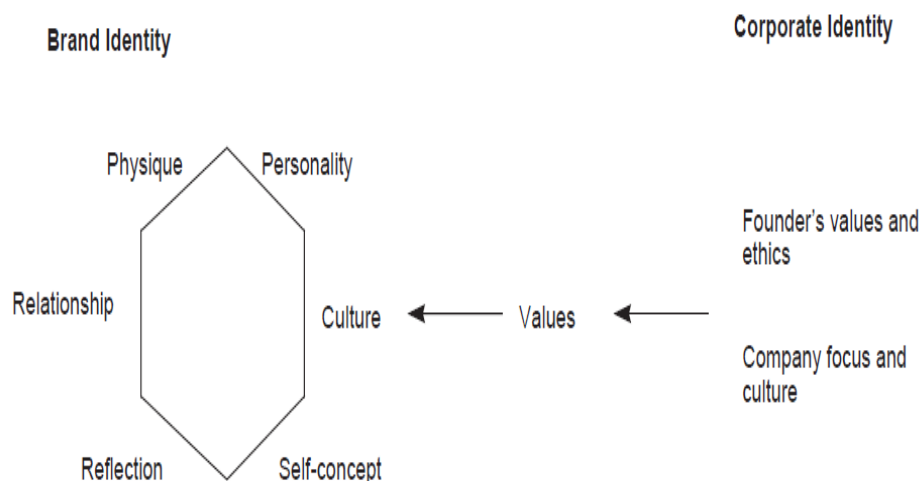
Figure 2.5 The process of personification of the brand (Kapferer, 2008, p. 206)

Figure 2.5 shows how the brand constructs additional values and meanings, a sense of exclusive belonging to its artisan or designer that makes the brand a heritage transferred from one generation to another (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). The brand needs stories, anedoctes, celebrities among customers, and people to tell their stories of entering a dream world and create aspiration (Sassoon, 2012). Salvatore Ferragamo, for instance, is known as the "shoemaker of dreams" because of its stories about making shoes for Hollywoond stars (Thomas, 2007, p. 113). Such ephitet was fabricated through different media and a variety of semiotic resources (Kress & van

Leeuwen, 2001).

Brand identity is also characterized by the metabrand and value of 'made in' because it is grounded on the country of origin effect (Bucci *et al*., 2011); however, in the contemporary market, being labeled with 'made in' does not necessary mean that the product is produced in that country. More often, only the design, or the concept, or the idea behind comes from the 'made in' country. What happens to the labeling of brands and people in relation to the territory they belong to is a similar process. In both cases, we can still talk about *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* principles to shape the relationship between identity and territory (Donskis, 2009).

Both of the principles present the assumptions of the presence of something behind that locate people or brands in a specific position because of the sense of belonging mediated by history, language, culture, and tradition related to a "collective identity" (Donskis, 2009, p. 74). The trait of distinction is that in *jus sanguinis* relationship for people is based on blood for people, while for goods it can be translated into the actual founder; while *jus soli* can be seen as the place of birth for people and becomes more complicated for brands because the birth of a product might be either the design of it or the actual production, also offshored. National branding is drawn on the association of symbols, words charged with emotions related to the idea spread about that specific country generated by history, imaginary elements, and the personality of the inhabitants (Kapferer, 2008). Sometimes brands also shape the country brand themselves while playing on the most convenient values to be associated with (Kapferer, 2008). National branding is based on a strong evocative power that sometimes is even more emphasized by city branding, where possible (Kapferer, 2008). For example, *Prada* presents itself not only as 'Made in Italy' but 'made in Milan' because of the strong appeal of Milan as one of the fashion capitals in the world.

Together with brand identity, luxury fashion firms, like all business entities, must be recognized in their corporate and product identity. Corporate identity is characterized by the culture, the strategies, the structure, the history, mission, and different activties entertained by the firm (Balmer, 2001). In the digital landscape, semiotization of the corporate identity is found on the official website, provinding insights to contextualize the brand and product identity (see Chapter 3). Besides the textual enunciation of the features of the corporate identity, multimodal constituents convey meanings such as "mood, feeling, character, interaction, ambience, desire, emotion, atmosphere" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 117). These elements aim to re-semiotize the "luxemosphere" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 123). Most websites were originally reproducing the concept of the offline store in order to resemble the brick-and-mortar experience of thebrand (Okonkwo, 2010). *Burberry* was the first one initiating a process in the opposite direction. It restored a store based on the cyberorganization of its website (Regent Street, London). Corporate identity semiotized on the website has been widely researched (Catenaccio, 2012; Caliendo & Piga, 2014; Degano, 2012; Hopearuoho & Ventola, 2009; Cheng & Suen, 2014; Kaltenbacher, 2016; Suen, 2013), while brand identity in the social mediascape has been quite disregarded from an applied linguistics perspective, except a few studies (Lillqvist *et al.*, 2015).

Product identity refers, instead, to the identity of the artefacts produced by the company. It mainly refers to iconic products (e.g. *Burberry* trench coat) and it often has dedicated virtual places (e.g. *The Art of Trench*) (Tamms, 2016) and exists on its own, being an evergreen. The activity of branding a product also regards seasonal products and often focus on packaging, and the process of production, and USP. For instance, studies analyzing product identity mostly regard perfumes and focused on the reproduction of fragrances through textual and visual resources (Faiers, 2017;

Featherstone, 2007; Flueckiger, 2009).

Notably, luxury goods market presents a financial scenario that generates a convergence of corporate, brand, and products in the communication agenda. Corporate identity is often instantiated at the conglomerate level (Kapferer & Tabatoni, 2011). For instance, *Burberry* constituted a group itself and lacks the overarching strategies that, instead, frames *Gucci* and *LV* business model (Kapferer, 2015) respectively responding to *Kering* and *LVMH*'s corporate management (see Chapter 3). Luxury conglomerates own a multiplicity of brands that, at the same time, produce wide portfolios of products to increase the volume of luxury incarnations in the society and in this sense dilute the rarity and scarcity associated to luxury (Thomas, 2008). Figure 2.6 represents the relationships among corporate, brand, and product identity in the contemporary luxury landscape.
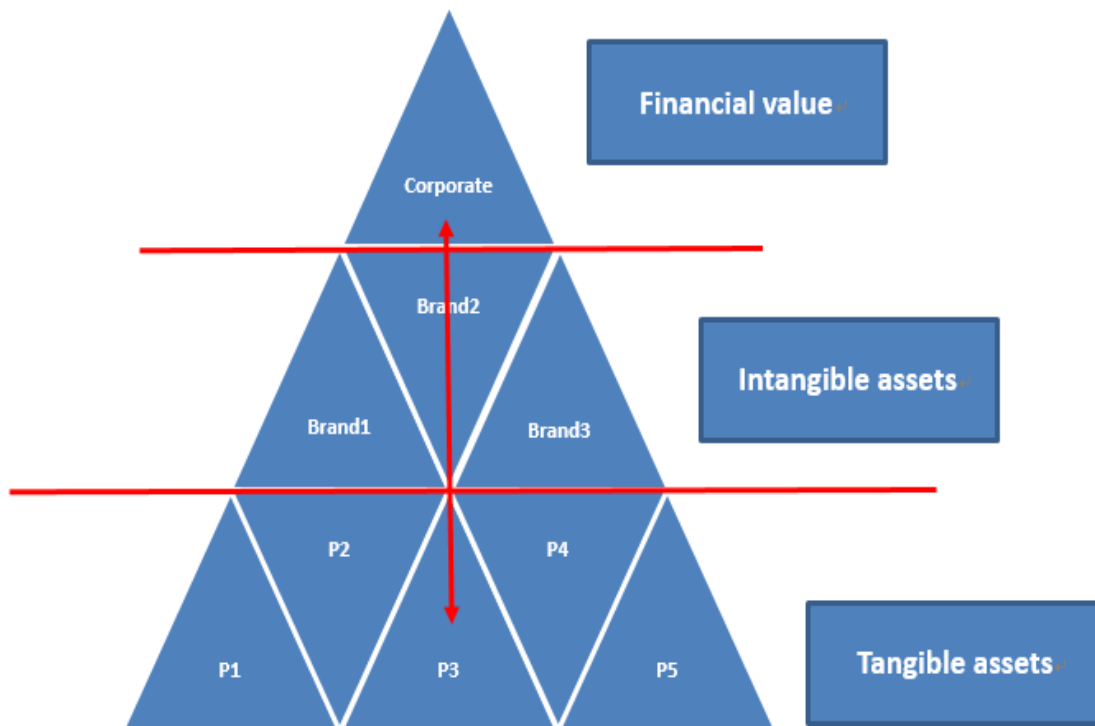
Figure 2.6 Corporate, brand, and product identity

The top of the pyramid is the corporation; it is the institutional and financial entity that holds the different brands (e.g. Kering). One luxury group owns different brands (e.g. *LVMH* owns *LV* but also Fendi and many more). Each brand keeps its own management; however, the general directions in terms of strategies and financial objectives are dictated by the group investors. The management stays at the brand level because both *Kering* and *LVMH*, for instance, are French groups holding shares in Italian firms. In order to keep the specificity of the CoO, the management is left at the brand level. At the base of the pyramids are many products (P1, P2, P3, etc.). They belong to the brand but they generate cash flow for the corporate (red arrow). Interestingly, corporate identity is read as the financial entity and it communicates the financial value. Brands are the coceptual entities that feed the collective imaginary with the intangible features associated to luxury. Products constitute the

materialization of the corporate and brands in society. Products are characterized by tangible features, namely high-quality materials and handmade production. In the luxury goods market, products also benefit from the allure of the brands and present an aura of immaterial assets that is mainly associated with iconic products. In consumers' mind, corporate identity is almost non-existent, while brands and products often overlap by becoming the incarnations of the concept of luxury (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016).

The terms 'identity' and 'image', in many contexts, are used interchangeably, but they incorporate diverse concepts. An 'image' is a representation of the things in the world (Mitchell, 1986), but also as independent actors in the history that upgrade to the *status* of being legendary through time. In diverse institutional discourses, imagery takes various forms; for instance, graphic images belong to art history; perceptual images belong to the discipline of physics; perceptual images are used in different fields like physiology, neurology, psychology, and art history; optical images are employed by optics, philosophy, and literary critics; mental images are domains of psychology and epistemology; and verbal imagery is mastered by literary critics (Mitchell, 1986). Images (signifier) can also reach the *status* of iconicity where they go through the appropriation by society and become a result of a meaning-making process (semiosis) that generates an immediate association with a concept (signified) well established in people's mind (Hodge & Kress, 1988).

In general terms, the word 'image' is defined as the result of the perception that other people have of an individual. The word 'image' is related to 'appearance' and it often occurs with the adjective 'public'. This frequent combination better clarifies the meaning of 'image' as strictly related to what the others think, and it is associated with

'reputation'[18]. This becomes more evident in a business context.

The terminology issue for the use of 'identity' and 'image' is particularly emphasized in business studies that offer a canonic differentiation that might work in other contexts too. In business context, the concept of identity is more about entity and substance, consequently leading to the comparison with the DNA (brand core values conveyed through different codes), while the term 'image' stands for perception and consequently reputation of a brand.

Despite the type of identity constructed, in framing identity to enable the audience to build the image of a corporate, brand, or product, the common goals of firms is to achieve the coincidence between identity and image to generate "brand equity" (Keller, 1993, p. 17). This is possible if the consumer is aware of the brand and has a favorable ad strong attitude towards the brand made of unique brand associations in memory (Keller, 1993); therefore, in the design of branding strategies, brands should take into account that in the construction of brand identity and the reception as brand image, there is an encoding and decoding process (Hall, 2006) that is affected by external (relationship between brand and customer) and internal (cultural identity of the customer) factors. The encoding and decoding process becomes extremely relevant for brands that want to establish themselves as globally successful. This is because while creating meanings, the brand produces contents that incorporate its values (encoding) and they need to be designed with the purpose of being decoded properly by the consumers (decoding). Hall (2006) is very explicit in bringing the cultural dimension in this process where, for instance, each message, and advertisement needs to be built according to the target audience to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

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[18] *OED*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91618?rskey=svdjXs&result=1#eid [Last access 20/02/2015]

In light of the relationship between brand identity and brand image, and consistent with definitions given by Herzog (1963) and Newman (1957), brand image represents the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumer's mind. Brand associations are informational nodes linked to the brand node by consumers.

Figure 2.6 combines the encoding and decoding model (Hall, 2006) and Kapferer's (2008) model, implementing the brand elements into the bull's eye model (sender-message-receiver) in order to represent the distinction of brand identity and brand image as being respectively seen as the sender's design of the message and the receiver's interpretation of the same message. The bull's eye model was criticized by some because of its unidirectionality and disregard for the asymmetrical encoder's and decoder's interpretation of the message (Hall, 2006). This model combines the two models (Figure 2.7).
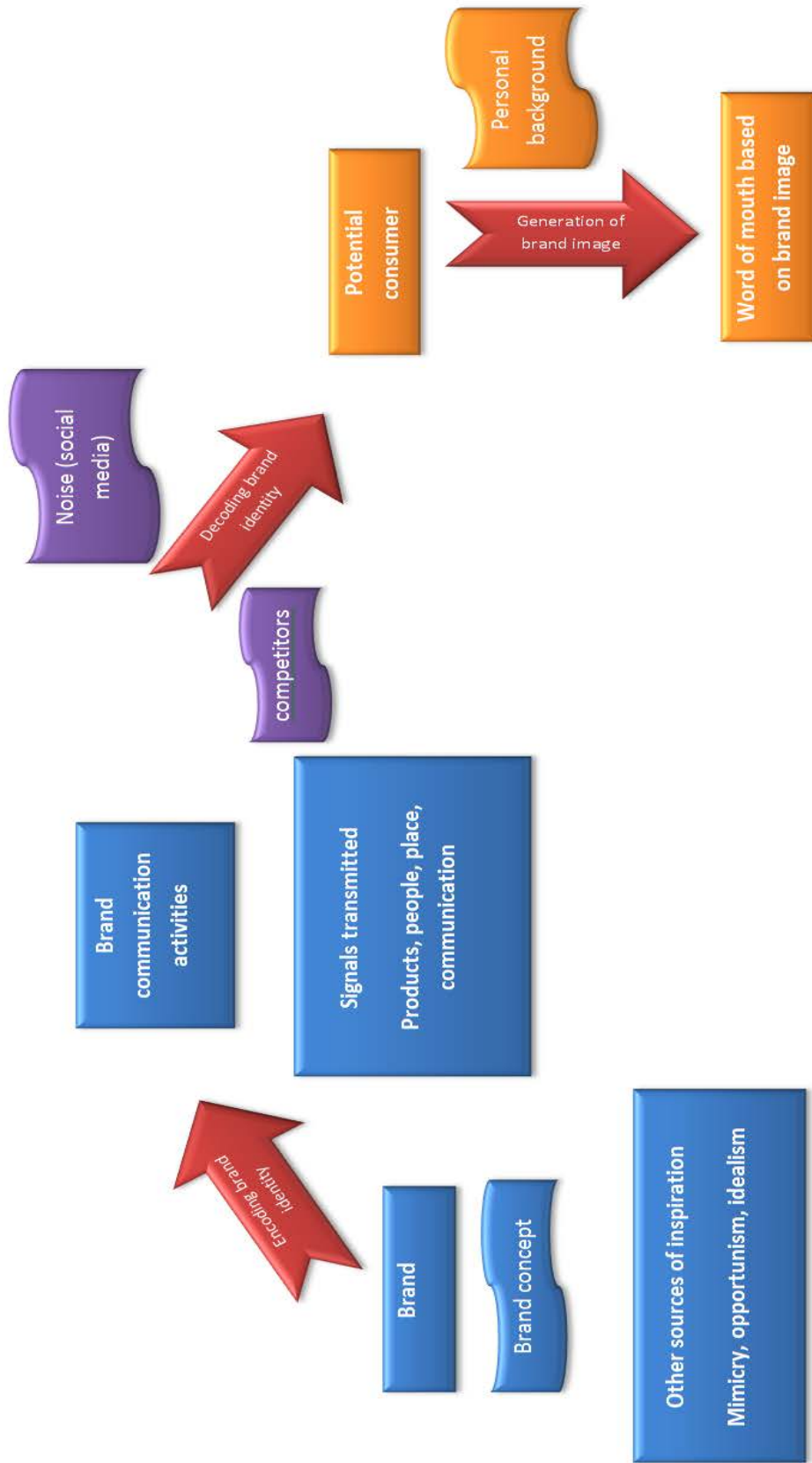
Figure 2.7 Identity and image in the communication process . Adapted from Hall (2006) and Kapferer (2008)

Personal background

Potential consumer

Generation of brand image

Word of mouth based on brand image

Noise (social media)

Decoding brand identity

competitors

Brand communication activities

Signals transmitted

Products, people, place, communication

Encoding brand identity

Brand

Brand concept

Other sources of inspiration

Mimicry, opportunism, idealism

Figure 2.7 shows that the messages can be distorted by competition and noise and in a globalized market, the elaboration of promotional materials becomes more difficult due to the aim to establish a global identity that different cultures can read as a local one designed made-to-measure (Kapferer, 2008). Noise implies all the factors that affect the decoding process. Competitors are part of the noise but, in this context, they are arguably related to the concept of identity. For instance, consumers are able to identify different values in different brands. *Chanel* incarnates elegance while *Burberry* is sophistication. There is no comparison between them because they possess distinctive features, and consumers buy one brand instead of another according to the image they want to project. In Figure 2.7 the concept of image referred to the way the audience decode all the messages emanated from the brands through the products, services and communication (Kapferer, 2008). Taking into consideration the importance of the interpretation that the consumers can make of a brands' message, brands should carefully plan their promotional campaign in order to prevent misunderstanding.

Hence, brand identity and brand image are not interchangeable terms. In order to use the two words in the correct way to express the two different perspectives incorporated into them, it is necessary to think about brand identity as the projection of the internal desire of the brand to construe itself in the world through different semiotic resources. The brand image, instead, has to be seen as the customers'interpretation of the brand identity and the recostruction of the brand in their mind. The overlapping aspects between the two constructions generate the brand equity (Keller, 1993).

The creation of brand equity through the convergence of brand identity and brand image into a shared space for the intersection of values can be exemplified in

advertising (Figure 2.8). Consumers who buy the goods advertised choose them for the associations made with their attributes, and at the same by consuming those goods, try to transfer onto themselves the values they attribute to the products.
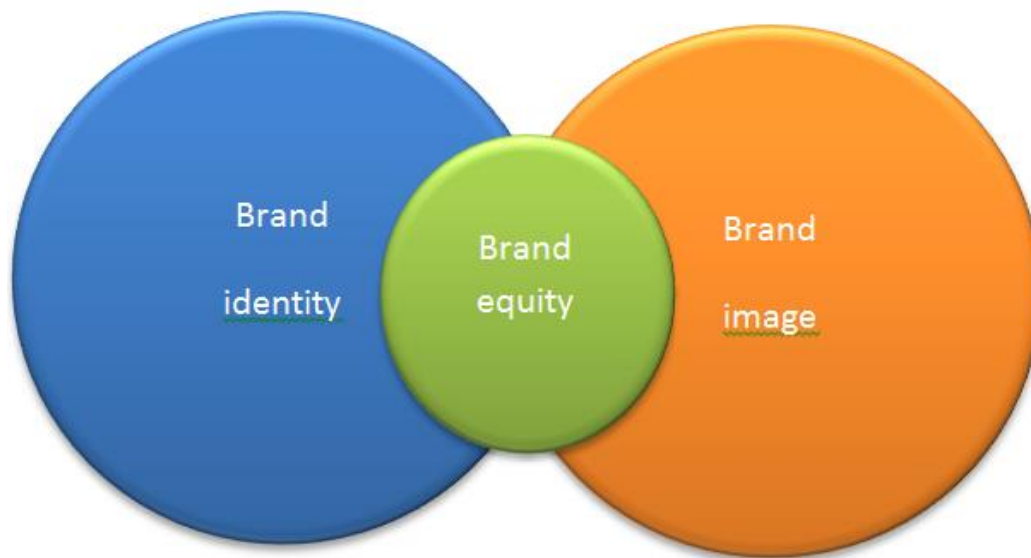
Figure 2.8 Brand equity as the coincidence between brand identity and brand image (adapted from Keller (1993, p. 17)

A brand with a strong brand equity is seen from its consumers as the only one in the industry because of the loyalty that it has construed through time. This leads to the concept of a brand as being the sum of feelings, perceptions, and experiences that the customer associates with its brand name and logo, its products, and services (brand image) (Okonkwo, 2007); therefore, brand equity is the result of the branding process that, at the end, can be quantified with financial value (Aaker, 1993; Okonkwo, 2007).

Corporate, brands, and product identities are discursively constructed and achieved through the adoption of specific luxuxy brand and marketing strategies, which are described in the next section.

2.2.3 Branding and marketing strategies

The following sub-sections aim to gather and summarize branding and marketing strategies under the themes of: anti-law marketing strategies based on Kapferer's (2015) elaboration (Section 2.2.3.1); digital storytelling (Section 2.3.3.2); heritage marketing (Section 2.3.3.3); artification of luxury (Section 2.3.3.4); Renaissance effect (Section 2.3.3.5); Country of origin effect (Section 2.3.3.6); cause-related marketing (Section 2.3.3.7).

2.2.3.1 Anti-law marketing strategies

Kapferer (2015) argued that conventional marketing strategies were not to be applied in the luxury goods market. The last edition of its strategic branding listed 24 'anti-laws' that subverted the marketing principles to define luxury. The long list is here synthetized in 15 points:

1) Luxury brands do not have competitors. They are unique.

2) Products are not perfect. They are handmade and can carry some flaws, or complications, that create emotions. Luxury goods are made to be repaired through time, not replaced (e.g. *Hermès*).

3) Luxury brands do not meet consumers' demand. They create the demand.

4) Luxury brands only privilege their loyal customers. They are the VIPs. Luxury brands stratify their customers.

5) Luxury brands dictate the taste. They do not follow trends.

6) Luxury products are inaccessible (e.g. *Hermès*' waiting list).

7) Luxury brands advertise to all to establish themselves. Luxury advertising is not meant to sell products.

8) Luxury makes the price. The higher the price, the more desirable to goods (Veblen goods). It raises with time.

9) Luxury does not need celebrities in its advertisements.

10) Luxury brands do not seek for synergies.

11) Luxury do not sell on the internet.

12) Luxury brands do not delocalize production and do not give licenses. They do not need to reduce the costs of production.

13) Luxury products are never tested in the market.

14) Luxury brands do not seek any consensus. They do not need consultants. Everything is internal.

15) Luxury is closely related to art.

At a first glimpse, it is possible to claim that most of the brands that are luxury brands in the collective imaginary do not respect all those rules. The present study will verify whether they are attained in the discursive representations of the brands examined.

In addition to the anti-laws of marketing listed above, other main branding and marketing strategies identified in the literature are namely digital storytelling, heritage marketing, artification of luxury, Renaissance effect, country of origin effect, and cause-related marketing.

2.2.3.2 Digital storytelling

Digital storytelling is a narrative entertainment activity that reaches audience via digital technology and media. One of its unique features is interactivity that stands for back-and forth communications between the audience and the narrative material (Miller, 2014). Similar to traditional storytelling, digital storytelling is based on four main elements (Fog *et al.* (2010): the message which can be the motivation behind the story; the plot, which we need to have a story to tell in order to be called storytelling; the conflict that might be the problem to solve to reach the happy end; and the characters that are the protagonist, in this case the brand, and the antagonist that symbolize the competitors of the brand. In luxury storytelling, some of those elements are not necessary, such as the antagonist and the conflict. Relevance is instead an additional value to an ordinary life to make it extraordinary. In these terms, we can argue that the luxury goods market has no unique selling proposition (USP, Reeves, 1996) but a value proposition.

To better understand digital storytelling, it is necessary to look back at storytelling and its definition as a strategy. David M. Boje (2001; 2008; 2011) is considered the father of storytelling in business contexts, with several papers, books, projects about how a narrative is the most powerful tool for firms to establish their identity. The interesting aspect regarding his work is that Boje (2001) has always investigated storytelling for internal communication and coined the term' organizational storytelling'. Gill (2011), following Boje's work (2011), emphasized how organizational storytelling is important to build up a sense of belonging among employees. Brown *et al.* (2009) also stated that if a company had a problem, the first thing to do was to start a diagnosis of the brand and see whether there was a lack of

principles, because the authenticity of the brand identity came from the narrative structure of the story; and therefore, that was the place to look for remedies, too. Organizational storytelling is still a strong component of brand management. Storytelling in advertising, PR or any marketing activity is aimed at creating a positive attitude towards the brand that influences the purchase intention of the audience and, in the long-term, builds up brand equity (Grant, 2013).

The essence of the luxury dream is then the balance between memory and future. Fontana (2010) explained luxury stories should include characters, themes, actions, places, and events. (Hi)storytelling should elaborate the (hi)story according to the different media available. While luxury goes online, it still has to rely on some traditional media that form part of the luxury fashion ecosystem; therefore, luxury has to invest into: paper storytelling, interpersonal storytelling, and digital storytelling, with or without visual support (Fontana, 2010). An effective story: entertains, is memorable, generates emotions, sense of belonging, simplifies events, signs the borders and at the same time goes beyond them, and lets the reader getting lost in the plot (Fontana, 2010). The aim of the story should be: seducing, enchanting, tempting, intimidating, induct to take a decision (Fontana, 2010). One of the main characteristics of luxury branding is the use of "pseudoquotes" (Catenaccio, 2007, p. 56) that attribute authority to people inside the company like CEO, designer, and make their words like trustworthy and the dataset included some instances of it. Like every story the brand story should have a happy ending that usually coincides with customer satisfaction. If we think about the word "text" itself is strictly related to the term "texture"[19] and it is a made of past (heritage) that is the starting point for a legend beginning with "once upon a time". When a story becomes legends brands need a museum to celebrate their

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[19] *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etimology*, ed. CT ONIONS, GWS. Friedrichsen and RW Burchfield, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, New York, 1966.

heritage (Montemaggi & Severino, 2007, p. 81) and the practice of heritage marketing well summarizes the combination of art and business because luxury is an art itself (Kastner, 2014).

In today's society we cannot talk about storytelling anymore without combining this term with 'digital' that gives it an additional connotation that examines the distribution of the stories and the creation of engagement and interaction with the audience. In most cases, this is done through a "humanisation" of the brand and luxury is not difficult because the brand is usually directly linked to the founder of the firm (Okonkwo, 2007; Kapferer, 2008;).

Luxury brands need to consider the web a terrain to play on their heritage and history, establish their brand identity, and tell stories which become part of those codes that construct the DNA of the brand in the society and convey its values (Morriset, 2015). Stories about the heritage of the storytelling is about history; therefore, from hereafter, storytelling about luxury brands will be addressed as '(hi)storytelling'. This term is a synthesis of 'heritage' and 'storytelling' used to indicate the type of stories told about luxury brands. This practice is needed because of the evolution of the consumers who do not accept the current abuse of the term 'luxury' (Morriset, 2015). For instance, brands like the American firm *Coach* are now rebranding themselves as luxury through the restyling of their websites that seem to perform an appropriation of European brands' discourse focusing on heritage when they have only been established in 1941[20] (Morriset, 2015). Brands, in order to avoid the homogeneity in the market, need to create diversity; therefore, (hi)storytelling is the only way to stay relevant in such a dynamic world. Luxury, in essence, relies instead on a long-term relationship with the consumers and does not look for immediate revenues (Morriset, 2015). For

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[20] *Coach*, http://www.coach.com [Last access 08/08/2015]

this reason, luxury brands should act differently on digital media but not to emphasize standardization and democratization that have already damaged its image and also allowed brands from other segments or sectors to challenge their financial performance. This is reflected also offline, while going to the flagship stores, there is no more ritual for the shopping experience (Lent, 2011). Luxury has lost its exclusiveness and prestige, everything has become quantity-oriented in production, communication, and distribution (Lent, 2011). In the smart-age, luxury should exploit all the resources available to reach a wider audience but sharing an exclusive history.

2.2.3.3 Heritage marketing

Brand management, especially in the luxury industry, is not about giving solutions to problems (USP), but concerned with the maintenance of a dream (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2007) and the strategies are based on an equilibrium between factors in contrast including: the need for keeping the tradition and at the same time generating innovation; establishing a stable image and suprise the customers, and creating eternity without becoming obsolete (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2007). The essence of the luxury dream is then the balance between memory and future. The key for success is "keeping the dream alive" (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2007, p.130) in contemporary society but based on the past, and the players in this game are people, the metabrand 'made in', legend effect, and product (Figure 2.9) (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009).
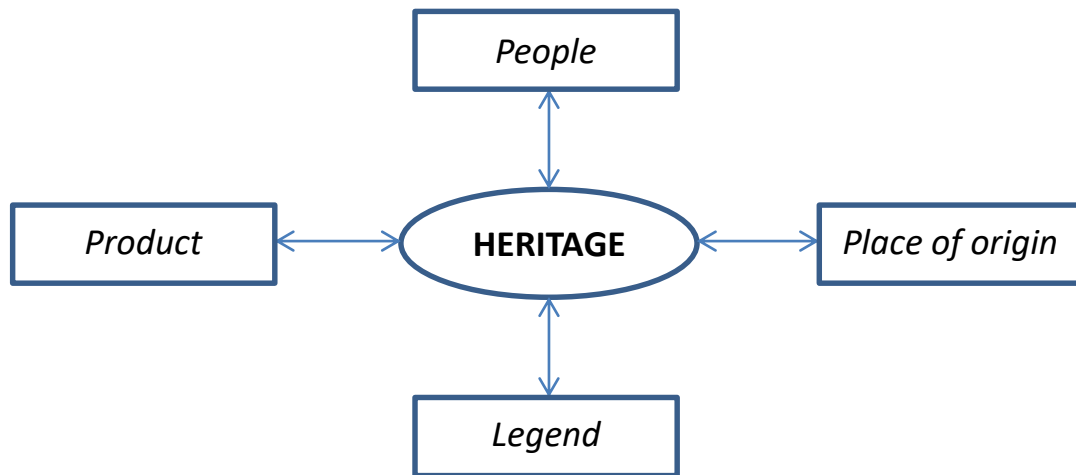
Figure 2.9 The concept of 'heritage' (adapted from Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009, p. 168)

Figure 2.9 construes the concept of heritage and summarizes its components. The identity factor (Freire, 2014), meaning the family, the founder (people), and the parent house (place of origin), represent the elements driving advertising discourse. They are realized through different semiotic resources, and take part in the manufatcure of brand values, along with products and patterns (product), and also legend, standing for history and stories about the brand.

These elements are the protagonists of photographs, museums, and advertising campaigns of brands, especially when they were able to evoke the nostalgia factor for the past. The further is the better, and rooted in the CoO. For Italian and French brands, for instance, the glorious past of the CoO (Renaissance) is probably the reason of their popularity (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007). Renaissance is classified as being one of the most important periods for the flourishing of art and it is even more influential for luxury fashion industry (Okonkwo, 2007). Brands benefiting from their association with the CoO of Italy and France, for instance, remain relevant throughout the centuries by revamping their heritage and relying on nostalgia (Dion &Mazzalovo, 2016).

Aaker, in 1996, was the first one to introduce 'heritage' as a component of brand identity. Rernaissance was part of it, when used by brands in product design or advertisements to enact intertextual and interdiscursive references and enhance the Renaissance effect (Belfanti, 2015a; 2015b). Renaissance, the reign of King Louis XIV in France have been regarded as the spleondour of European history and art; and when brands design their creations, those two phenomena inevitably influence them (Okonkwo, 2007); therefore, when 'Made in Italy' and 'Made in France' are mentioned, the immediate associations that invade people's minds are related to art, craftsmanship and this *savoir faire* is translated into the quality attributed to the products (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007). The idea of the powerful so-called 'Renaissance effect' comes from the genius of Giorgini, the founder of the label 'Made in Italy'. Giorgini, for the first time in 1951, defined Italian fashion as 'Made in Italy'. Elaborating discourses around the legendary craftsmanship culture of Italians for the first fashion show in Florence aimed at fascinating American merchants (Black, 2003).

For Italian as well as French brands, heritage is an important characteristic that needs to be treasured, celebrated and displayed in a museum to create and exalt a value for memory (Montemaggi & Severino, 2007). A brand museum constructed around the heritage of the brand has a historical and institutional mission, and a "digestive" purpose which needs to be an expression of brand identity (Montemaggi & Severino, 2007, p. 115). This branding strategy has generated a specific notion in business studies known as "heritage marketing" that puts together art and entreprise (Montemaggi & Severino, 2007, p. 81). Creating successful stories is both an art, and a science and these should be treated as novels or movies (Handley & Chapman, 2011) and the consumers should get so involved to become the first ambassadors and spread them and create buzz (Handley & Chapman, 2011). The paradox is that those strategies

are more effective than other advertisements and sell more products without talking about the products at all; they just generate brand equity (Handley & Chapman, 2011). As De Mesa (2009, p. 77) states, brands should concentrate on branding activities aimed to craft a brand identity and a brand reputation (brand equity and e-quity) more than promote the products because once you reach the consumers they will buy your products anyway. Luxury goods market has always been depicted as a pantheon of diverse unique brands that their customer would choose for the values they incarnate, unable to compete with each other. For instance, the three brands examined in this study, all European, are the result of a "craftsperson-based tradition predicated upon rare, unique pieces of work" producing iconic products and recognized as indisputable players in the market (Kapferer, 2008, p. 97).

2.2.3.4 Artification of luxury

Artification was identified as another strategy adopted by luxury brands. The natural connections between forms of art from the past re-occur across time because the ultimate objective of art as well as luxury and fashion is to capture beauty and define aesthetic canons (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2004; Eicher *et al*., 2008; Fortunati & Danese, 2005). Processes of beautification, enhancement of gender differences, imposition of taste, definition of art and aesthetics are enacted through the dissemination of visual representations (Eicher *et al*., 2008).   Image 5.8 represents the symmetry between the ancient Greek canons of beauty and the contemporary *D&G* models which do not differ from them.

Image 2.1 Dolce & Gabbana beauty canons

Source: Dolce & Gabbana

The marble statue of Venus de Milo (c.130-100 BCE) and the David created between 1501 and 1504 by Michelangelo foreground the sequence of models that are intertextually and interdiscursively constructed as perfect rendition of beauty. Greek canons traveled throughout history till the 21st century to dictate the rules of beauty.

The uniqueness of European brands surrounded by the heritage, the CoO with a national aura based on history, art, culture, becomes legendary, and settled in the past to evoke the idea of tradition as the source of the products (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007). Unfortunately, the findings did not confirm this conventional asset of European luxury brands but instead showed a shift towards lifestyle strategies which have always been identified as a peculiarity of American brands that could not rely on any heritage. European brands have always benefited from the coincidence of their names with the name of their founders, a sense of exclusive belonging to its artisan or designer that made the know-how a heritage to be transferred from one generation to another (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008).

Shared by different brands but heterogenous in practice is the process of "artification" (Kapferer, p. 71; Kastner, 2014) which constructs the image of the artisan as a way of legitimizing a handcrafted practice. Chapter 1 and 2 have provided

a detailed definition of the concept of luxury. The definition of art instead requires an etymological effort to understand how the term 'art is' derived from the Latin 'ars' (root for 'artisan'). The Latin term equals to the Greek word 'techne' which actually means skill and 'craftmanship' (Parry, 2009). Art, as well as luxury, is framed via discourse that assigns the status; art is not an embedded feature of the artefact but the result of an overarching narrative constructing an artificial aura (Irvine, 2013; Kastner, 2014). Art is art only if it is defined as such, widely distributed in art magazines, exhibited in a museum as object of desire of private collectors (McEvillery, 1997; Kastner, 2014), both of them are for elitist audience appreciation (Meffert & Lasslop, 2004).

In the era of democratization of luxury (Kennedy, 2010), better redefined in this study as popularization of luxury (Chapter 2), luxury firms rely on the strategies of "artketization", a term used by a French brand strategist to indicate the combination of art and marketing in which art is used as a component of marketing strategies (Boche, 2010). The use of art and luxury is then institutionalized with the aim of re-constructing the aura of luxury relying on the attributes associated with art. This love affair is not a novelty, it links back to the very beginning of luxurification of the courts in which artists such as Michelangelo and Leonardo were involved in the realization of garments for the nobility (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008; Tungate, 2009). At the court of the Sforza's, for instance, Leonardo da Vinci sketched various models for Beatrice. Tradition says the costumes worn by the Swiss Papal Guards were created by Michelangelo (Belfanti, 2015b). In most recent times, and even posthumous, Leonardo forges the new *LV* collection of bags in collaboration with the artist Jeff Koons that revamps artworks from the past to solicit new interpretations[21].

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[21] *Louis Vuitton*, http://hk.louisvuitton.com/eng-hk/stories/masterscampaign#section-jeff-koons [Last

2.2.3.5 Renaissance effect

The myth of Renaissance leads us to the idea that historical time as being characterized by this sense of "beauty" and "good taste" (Belfanti, 2015b, p. 74). Beauty and good taste were translated in artistic excellence that traveled across time and will still enchant the future generations. Taste, in Bourdieu's terms, is the result of the process of educating the population to the "sense of beautiful" (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2004; Fortunati & Danese, 2005). This has becomes a distinctive trait of the DNA of European brands in sectors with a highly design-oriented component such as luxury jewelry, fashion and car, whose product design shows intertextual and interdiscursive references to Renaissance style.

In luxury, Renaissance is an embedded feature and intangible asset of the "country branding" process that characterizes brands (Belfanti, 2015b, p. 74). *Gucci*, for example, is a young brand which only started in 1921, but its discourse clearly shows how the use of 'Made in Italy' metabrand is a reconstruction of the golden age constructed and this idea of excellence in arts and ability to craft beauty (Belfanti, 2015a; 2015b; Corbellini & Saviolo, 2004). Based on the artistic work inherited from the Renaissance, luxury brands sell themselves through the "myth of continuity" (Belfanti, 2014, p. 76). Continuity that stands for the transfer of know-how from artist to artisans that again a background of industrial revolution resisted to automation of the process and kept the handcraft work, certified by the guarantee of provenance *ante litteram* constituted by the family name (Belfanti, 2015b). Obviously, it is not a secret that high-end brands have automated some process of production but the handmade component is still present in the refining details. Furthermore, this aspect of production

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is emphasized in the claims of the brand that the runway collection is the product of the work of expert artisans, while the factory model is only applied to second lines like prêt-à-porter collections sold at a lower price. Continuity, as the heritage of Renaissance workshops intended as 'antiquity' (Black, 2003), represents a profitable image for the use and consumption of an international public captivated via a 'pacific conquest' of taste (De Seta, 1982; Burke, 1999; Brilli, 2003; Casillo, 2006).

The association between luxury brands and Renaissance is actually very well established, and in the case of luxury fashion firms from Italy, the Renaissance root were very well semiotically constructed by the father of Italian fashion intended as 'alta moda' competing with the French *'haute couture'* (Belfanti, 2015b). More specifically, Italian fashion was institutionalized as a continuum of the splendour of Renaissance. Giovanni Battista Giorgini, the Italian entrepreneur who created the label Made in Italy to attract American buyers during their expeditions to Europe in search for fashion products in 50s was first to link Italian fashion to the Renaissance (Belfanti, 2015b). Giorgini's strategy of building Italy's image in the USA was very much based on the Renaissance legacy, which permeates throughout centuries in Italy and fashion.

Since then, Italian fashion and Made in Italy are considered an extension of Renaissance and the label Made in Italy incorporates the Renaissance effect. This extension has been enhanced through time. Italian fashion, in the recovery of the Renaissance tradition, recalls Renaissance in its line, cut, and ease of wear as legacy of an artistic tradition (Belfanti, 2015b). It is a matter of transfer of know-how across generations that characterize the Italian craftsmanship which is at the core of the Made in Italy metabrand and among any Italian brand's values (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2004). Looking from a consumer behaviour perspective, choosing an Italian product gives access to a community renowned for its beautiful taste and association with its

historical and artistic heritage that work as marketing strategy (Corbellini and Saviolo, 2004).

Among the brands examined, *Gucci* fully exploits its Renaissance aura in different collections focusing on the design (Image 2.2) and pervading the fashion magazines with titles narrating the history of Italian fashion as re-materialized by *Gucci* in the work of Alessandro Michele, the eternal nostalgic.

Image 2.2 *Gucci* A/W 2016

Renaissance-meets-streets

Source: *Vogue*,
http://www.vogue.com.au/fashion/news/renaissance+meets+street+this+what+youll+be+wearing
+next+courtesy+of+*Gucci*,38490   **[Last access 08/05/2017]**

The collection clearly recalls the distinctive traits, colours, and patterns of Renaissance fashion. Image 2.2 compares a piece from the collection to garments wore by women in the Renaissance and the similarities in terms of product design are explicit and identifiable for the general audience.

Furthermore, on top of seasonal practices relying on the Renaissance and creating

a sense of nostalgia, brands such as *Gucci* and *Ferragamo* that built on the past carefully planned the purchase of historical palaces that were part of their history as a long-term strategy. Their corporate museums placed in historical palaces become branded properties and hosting flagship store with collections available in those stores only as part of a limited edition coming from the history of the brand play an important role in the association of the brand with art, with products and relics from the history of the brand are exhibited as if they were pieces of art and talked about as art and that allows them to be conceived as art in the society.

Interestingly, different from the glass cases, products are hanging in frames as if they were panting. This reinforces the argument of how the semiotic choices of art-like visual elements and captions shape the understanding of the viewer of *Gucci* creations as pieces of art. Other rooms of the museum take the visitor through a journey of *Gucci* history but at the same time offer emerging artists the opportunity to exhibit their work in a different room. This enhances *Gucci*'s artistic commitment. The use of art elevates luxury to a world for connoisseurs. Brun and Castelli (2013) differentiate the 'recognizable luxury' from the luxury created for connoisseurs. When a brand undergoes the process of artification, it aims to achieve the status of luxury for connoisseurs. Based on the fact that consumers buy the goods to change their status, Saviolo and Marazza (2013) state that successful brands tell stories that consumers want to be told about themselves.   Hence, buying a brand for connoisseurs makes the consumer a connoisseur.

2.2.3.6 Country of origin effect

In addition to artification of luxury and Renaissance effect, that is also instantiated through intertextuality and interdiscursivity, the construction of the value of

'authenticity' has been found to be an emerging feature preserving the aura of the new luxury. Smith Maguire (2015) for instance identified authenticity as the indicator for defining champagne for connoisseurs in contrast with conventional big brands. Knowledge becomes the variable that drives the decision-making process for purchase. Authenticity intended as instance of denotative and connotative codes referring to the materiality of the products as well. High price must be justified with rational claims, for instance in the case of water proof watches (Mortelmans, 1998) in which intangible assets cannot refrain the quality of the object; however, elements such as CoO could help reinforce the statement.

The metabrand 'made in' is grounded on the country of origin effect and based on the idea that when a product is labeled with the national brand, it comes with the appropriation of the country itself; however, in the contemporary market, being labeled with 'made in' does not necessarily mean that the product is produced in that country. More often only the design, the concept, the idea behind comes from the 'made in' country, although regulations are going to be revised soon because of the tendence to delocalize the production to optimize the costs.

2.3.3.7 Cause-related marketing

Another strategy used by luxury fashion brands is cause-related marketing (Adkins, 2000). In this Section, instead of reviewing the several studies and conference papers about sustainability that have been published and presented in the past few years because it would deserve another project, a seminar talk entitled "Sustainable Business is Smart Business" given by Marie-Claire Daveu (2015), the Chief Sustainability Officer and Head of international institutional affairs of *Kering* (ex Pinault-Printemps-Redoute, also known as PPR group), is summarized. *Kering* is the leader group in

luxury goods market that has now changed all its marketing plan to embrace the sustainability trend and do business with that[22]. Daveu (2015) has explained why the group has decided to change their name and take the risk of creating confusion in the market because as widely clarified, the luxury name is the most powerful marketing tool because of the extreme importance of brand identity more than any other promotion and advertising (Kapferer, 2008). Once explained that focusing on a sustainable business is the new commitment for the group Daveu (2015) has given examples on how *Kering* actually operates in a sustainable way elaborating specific solutions for each brand and sector and embracing different causes like the environmental one that has an incredible impact on the Chinese market in particular. One of the example is the production of leather products that represent the core business for most of the luxury brands available in the market, *Kering* and in the specific case of *Gucci* with python for instance has established an agreement with association that protect animals like WWF to use only few species, the ones that are not endangered, that are directly bought from certified suppliers and used according to new procedures (Daveu, 2015). Furthermore, Daveu (2015) has highlighted the fact that *Kering* does not fear competition and it is ready to share with its competitors their sustainable activities to facilitate their integration in other businesses also in order to create a better world. This sound like a utopia, seeing competitors cooperating in business; however, *Kering* maintains that at luxury level, there is no competition, every brand is unique and well established so cooperation is possible. Also since luxury, among other industries, use less synthetic materials, and extract a majority of raw materials from the nature and has to give back more than others, luxury must be sustainable to be called luxury[23].

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[22] *Kering*, http://www.kering.com/en/group/about-kering [Last access 08/08/2015]
[23] All the information provided by Daveu are available on *Kering* website: http://www.kering.com

2.2.4 Summary

This section has reviewed the concept of 'luxury' in its conventional definition and gathered the key elements attributed to the goods constructed as such. Keywords such as 'exclusivity', 'timelessness', 'unaffordability', 'inaccessibility,' and the idea of 'elitist target market' have emerged from the different studies; however, most importantly, two main variables, namely time and space, provide variations of the concept.

Additionally, the section reviews the concept of 'luxury' in terms of branding and financial value, explaining how its transformation into an industry on its own has brought in financial elements, which did belong to the luxury aura originally.

Once the concept is defined, the branding and marketing strategies in both offline and online environments are presented to map their application namely: anti-law marketing strategies, digital storytelling, heritage marketing, artification of luxury, Renaissance effect, CoO effect, and cause-related marketing.

This section has focused on the main branding and marketing strategies, next section focuses on the digital landscape and its specificity.

2.3 Branding luxury fashion brands in the digital era

This section briefly defines the digital landscape to situate the discursive practices within a hypertextual environment (Section 2.3.1). Following on that, luxury fashion brands are placed in context and the brand practices are reviewed (Section 2.3.2). The

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last section (Section 2.3.3) presents studies from different research areas that investigated branding discourse in the social media, and specifically in the luxury goods market.

2.3.1 The medium is the message: towards hypertextual advertisements

This section is divided into sub-sections to better present the medium hosting the branding discourse analyzed and understand it based on the phenomenon of digital transformation (Section 2.3.1.1), the internet ecosystem (Section 2.3.1.2), and the social mediascape (Section 2.3. .1.3)

2.3.1.1 Digital transformation

Digital transformation stands as an umbrella term for all the changes in the society given by the introduction of digital technology and in terms of business is often used to refer the mere conversion of daily activities to paperless processes[24]. The term was first used to define the impact of information systems and construe technology as social construction (Stolterman & Fors, 2004). Digital transformation stands for the changes associated with the application of digital technology in all aspects of human society[25]. This transformation construes our life as a series of clicks on a smartphone (Lanzolla & Andersen, 2008); however, it is perceived as transformation only by those individuals and organizations that have been shifting their activities from offline, to a mixed method, to totally online. The so-called 'GEN Y'[26], or 'millennials', or in

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[24] Docherty, M., "Fundraising through digital" from *The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH),* http://torch.ox.ac.uk/digital-fundraising [Last access 05/08/2015]

[25] Docherty, M., "Fundraising through digital" from *The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH),* http://torch.ox.ac.uk/digital-fundraising [Last access 05/08/2015]

[26] This term indicates the generation of people born during the 1980s and early 1990s. The name is based on Generation X, the generation that preceded them. The members of Generation Y are often referred to as "echo boomers" because they are the children of parents born during the baby boom (the "baby boomers"). The children born during this time period are characterized by having a constant access to technology (computers, cell phones) and they are also called millennials, echo boomers, the

Kozinets' (2010) terms "netizens" were born already in a high-tech world and do not interpret digital media as a pervasive accessory but as a necessity in their ordinary life.

Maslow's (1943) pyramid contextualized in the millennials' world assumes another configuration in which WI-FI replaces the physiological needs of human beings conventionally placed at the bottom of the pyramid (Figure 2.10).
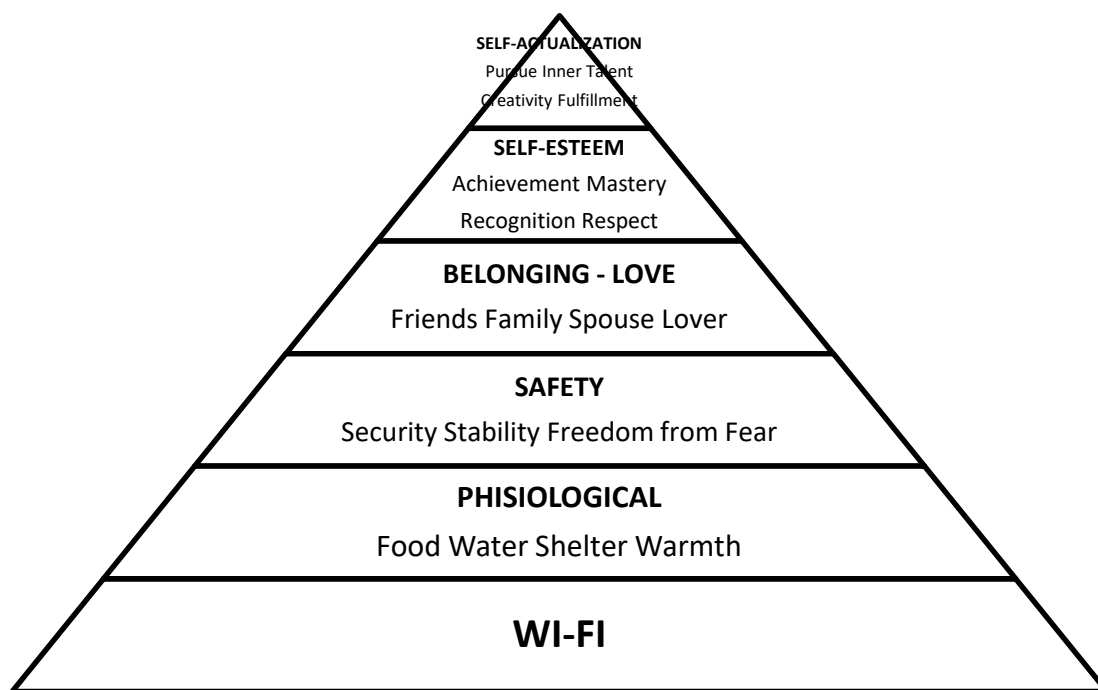
Figure 2.10 The Maslow's pyramid revised (adapted from Maslow, 1943)

Our need of being constantly connected to the rest of the world turns "connectivity" into the ideology, which drives our contemporary society (van Dijk, 2013). Jones *et al.* (2015) find those daily clicks being products of this connectivity as digital practices in meaning-embedded actions such as tagging, sharing, or linking that are performed in a digital environment through a technological artefact (e.g. i-phone) (Carrington, 2015). Those actions shape our ways of interacting with each other, doing things, and

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internet generation, iGen, net generation. Source: *Business Dictionary*, http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/Generation-Y.html#ixzz3iTN0IwVG [Last access 05/08/2015]

our understanding of life, relationships, work, education, politics (Carrington, 2015); however, in the redefined Maslow's pyramid, only individuals who are digitally included would agree with this conceptualization. van Dijk (2005) unpacked the digital divide by explaining that it does not only refer to the actual access to technology but also includes variables such as computer-mediated literacy, censorship of virtual places, and infrastructural problems of the network. Additionally, in underdeveloped countries, the internet is a luxury. The exclusion of those countries is evident in various aspects of life; not only business, but also education, and in the access to information. The consideration of all these factors in analyzing new media discourse has been defined as digital materialism concerned with media ecologies and their infrastructure (Reichert & Richterich, 2015). This innovative approach is encapsulated in the methodological procedure of the present study (see Chapter 3).

The digital transformation has produced changes in the business world such as the boom of sharing economy boosted by the ease of millennials in using and relying on platforms such as *Uber*[27] and *Airbnb*[28]; therefore, as today's society has entered a path into the digital world with no way back, inevitably also the most reluctant individuals or organizations have to embrace technology and create a *Facebook* profile, a Twitter account, and share pictures on Instagram, to mention the most popular platforms. Joining those platforms marks the existence of individuals or collective entities such as companies, and institutions in the world, because in this "instant world" the digital practices construe agency in the society (Gitomer, 2011, p. 135).

In business terms, the capability of digital transformation and adapting to it with structural reforms will make the difference, for instance, the world-famous

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[27] *Uber*, https://www.uber.com   [Last access 05/08/2015]
[28] *Airbnb*, https://www.airbnb.com   [Last access 05/08/2015]

management consultant firms such as *McKinsey&Company* has launched in 2016 their new service to their clients to deal with digital disruption[29]. Digital disruption is the confused situation in which a company operating in a disrupted market finds itself in the attempt of coping with the digital transformation (Bower & Christensen, 1995). During the *World Economic Forum* in 2016 in Davos, Pierre Nanterme, CEO of *Accenture*[30], stated that "digital is the main reason just over half of the companies on the *Fortune 500* have disappeared since 2000"[31] due to their hesitant attitude towards digital innovation that led them to look at the disruption as a threat instead of an opportunity.

2.3.1.2 The internet: hypertextuality and intertextuality

The internet is characterized by hypertextuality and intertextuality (see Section 2.4.3) that frame the site-specific discursive practices (Petroni, 2011). The hypertext changes the cognitive actions of users from reading to scanning and navigating a text (Garzone, 2007) and it is characterized by multilinearity, nonsequentiality, granularity, connectivity, reticularity, and interactivity, all of which are actualized through hyperlinks (Bettetini *et al.*, 1999). Multilinearity and non sequentiality are the characteristics of new media texts, which define the fact that texts do not need to be consumed in a linear way, but can be explored in different directions. Granularity represents the condition for which readers are able to navigate the content by knowing exactly where they are thanks to the site-map organization. It is like leaving breadcrumbs on a path to know how to go back. Connectivity is intended in van Dijk's

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[29] McKinsey&Company, http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/digital-disruption [Last access 05/010/2016]
[30] *Accenture*, https://www.accenture.com [Last access 05/010/2016]
[31] *World Economic Forum*, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/digital-disruption-has-only-just-begun/ [Last access 07/10/2015]

(2013) terms, as an ideology, which pervades society and changes the way people interact. Reticularity explores the infrastructure of the web being formed by different nodes connected to each other. Interactivity is the property of new media texts that enables the turn-taking and dialogical consumption of the texts.

Hypertextuality turned literacy upside down in favour of the ideology of new media (Petroni, 2011). Hence, hyperlinks are the constituents of the infrastructure of new media texts construed through a series of links which connect pieces of content with each other, and users with each other. Hyperlinks are categorized according to the functions and the "associative value" they perform as a "textual linking adjunct" (Petroni, 2011, p. 18). The hyperlinks which build *Facebook* discourse are embedded in the textual resource is visibly linked to another piece of content which adds more information to the hyperlink itself. Hyperlinks are associative which is introduced by such text as 'discover more' (Nielsen, 2000). In both cases, the verbal realization is supported by a visual signal (e.g. colour, highlighting), which informs the reader that there is a way to find out more (Petroni, 2011). Hyperlinks on *Facebook* are used to enhance and exemplify the source-text by leading the reader to another text which, in most cases, happens to be different in terms of modality, and hence the hyperlink has a mode-changing function (Hammerich & Harrison, 2002). The feature of mode-changing is found to be an example of medium-specific fluidity, and is embedded in the coinage of the term "hypermodality" (Petroni, 2011, p. 98) as a blend between hypertextuality and multimodality.

Hypermodality is described as the enablement for users to move from one mode to another while going from one page to another (Petroni, 2011, 2011). Hyperlinks are also described as explicit materialization of the embedded feature of any text, which is intertextuality (Petroni, 2011). Hypertextuality blurs the boundaries of web

domains (e.g. hybridisation) but also discursive practices (e.g. interdiscursivity) because of the marketization process, which pervades our daily practices, and the manufacture of any discourse, particularly branding and promotional discourse (Petroni, 2011, 2010). Borders are blended in different dimensions (Iedema, 2003) especially when the discursive practices of branding discourse are resemiotized on different media. The choice of the media is the product of the selection process of "cultural competition among technologies" (Bolter, 2001, p. 23). Lemke (2002a; 2002b; 2005a; 2005b; 2009) defines them transversals as the products of re-semiotisation of a single raw event into different media events across old and new media. Transversals are also the product of the human capability of experiencing social events, communicative acts, and self-construction is rooted in a web of already experienced practices and in their connecting and blending potential Lemke (2002a; 2002b; 2005a; 2005b; 2009). Humans conceptually move across blocks of information constituting human knowledge and simultaneously connect new experiences with previous ones (Lemke, 2002; 2005; 2009).

Furthermore, the discursive practice of branding discourse created by luxury fashion firms and disseminated on *Facebook* aims to raise consumers' awareness about the brands and it is an example of "commodification" (Petroni, 2011, p. 75). In the meaning-making process of commodification, discourse aims to materialize the goods which is it about (Petroni, 2011); therefore, what happens to the discourse reflects the market rules for the goods. If the information shared is not appealing in terms of content, visibility, usability, accessibility, and attractiveness, the user abandons the page to consume another one. Hence, the editorial content needs to be marketable. The use of new media discourse for branding purposes relies on the human capability of experiencing social and communicative events, and self-construal embedded features

of the web of collecting information from experienced practices. Hence, in the same natural way, individuals conceptually navigate across "blocks of information" constituting knowledge and "simultaneously connect new experiences with previous ones" (Petroni, 2011, p. 90), so do site-specific discursive practices in the new mediascape.

2.3.1.3 Social media platforms

Social media platforms are defined as "internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Treem and Leonardi (2012), on the use of social media in organizations, elaborated four different affordances based on the review of previous studies are namely visibility, persistence, editability, and association of both individuals and information shared. Applying the four affordances to *Facebook*, they are found to be focusing on the functions of the platform discussed starting from the semiotic construal of the tool for interaction (DiMicco *et al.*, 2008; Farzan *et al.*, 2008; Holtzblatt & Tierney, 2011). *Facebook* is characterized by the following communicative features: status updates, call for actions, lists of 'friends', personal profiles, visibility in search engines, possibility of interacting through UGC (e.g. like, comment, share, and in 2016 more options have been added thanks to the use of emoticons), the notorious algorithm which aggregates similar content (Manovich, 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012).

Vaast & Kaganer (2013), drawing on Treem & Leonardi (2012), examine the policies regarding the use of social media in organizational communication applying the four different affordances. The study reveals that the users' expression is facilitated and restricted by the affordances of the platform which are found to the enablers and

constraints (Majchrzak & Markus, 2013) of the meaning-making process initiated in each of communication events. In terms of aggregation, social media platforms enhance the building of the community and generate value in terms of corporate identity by emphasizing the sense of belonging which will increase the positive projection of the company in the public space (Vaast & Kaganer, 2013).

These features unveiled with a study on internal communication are applicable to datasets of external communication as the sense of affiliation and community are embedded features of social networking sites used for any purpose and the algorithm facilitates the creation of tribes. Papasolomou & Melanthiou (2013) look at the features of social media as suitable to match the marketing public relations practice by relying on their inexpensive nature, combined with the wide reach in terms of audience, which facilitates market research without directly investing in a specific country. This latter aspect has also been highlighted by a correlation between the popularity of *Facebook* pages of luxury fashion firms in Mexico City in the year 2013 (Nervino, 2013) which is found to be a predictor of the economic boom of Mexico in terms of profitability for the luxury market, as confirmed one year later by different articles talking about the "Mexico's moment" in relation to luxury goods consumption (Jackson, 2014).

Social media platforms include weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking, mobile apps, and social media platforms. Social media platforms are specifically aimed to create network among users, virtual communities where users with common interests such as brands in case of firms' pages can share their ideas (Kim & Ko, 2012). Social media platforms represent the highest grade of interaction between brand and user and while living in an instant world to post, to tweet, to link are the *conditio sine qua non* to be or not to

be" (Gitomer, 2011, p. 135).

In business, social media platforms are regarded as efficient tools to improve Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and understand consumers' behaviour and taste to better penetrate the market (Okonkwo, 2010). They are a sort of fast track to reach the consumers and through them "luxury brands now have the opportunity to see, feel, perceive and anticipate the psychological evolution of the wealthy online whether they are clients, potential clients or the wider public" (Okonkwo, 2010, p. 55).

The distinctive traits of social media which set up an innovative marketing strategic planning is the blurred boundaries that producers and consumers of the texts shared, which generate the profile of a prosumer which co-create marketing content (Hanna *et al.*, 2011); however, linguistic research offers a more comprehensive understanding of the social life of texts (Domingo, 2012) disseminated in the social media as they approach the text-making process from different communicative perspectives that investigate the design and layout of the medium along with its enablers and constraints, textual production, visual elements and their orchestration in the meaning-making process. The study conducted by Domingo (2012, p. 179) focuses the relations among social functions of the medium and the semiotic construal of the actual usage, its digital form, layered modes structure, and linguistic representation. Domingo (2012) offers an entry point to present studies, which apply social semiotics as theory, to interpret the multimodal ensembles as social texts rely on contextual embedded meanings.

Social media platforms present their own characteristics which, as highlighted by Bezemer and Kress (2014), play a role in the meaning-making process and accomplish specific actions. Interactivity is definitely one of the features of new media

and it is created through semiotic constructions which embed meanings in the age of copy-and-paste (Adami, 2012). The support given by new media in the text-making allows navigating the content shared easily and very often multimodal elements provide information in a form that is automatically generated by the medium and out of the control of the text-maker (Adami, 2012; 2014). The elements also generate hypertextuality (Petroni, 2011) which represents the explicit renditions of interdiscursivity and intertextuality, which in printed media has to be carefully planned while in new media comes by default e.g. discovermore (Adami, 2014). In the *Facebook* environment hypertextuality leads to the "situationality of hypertexts" which regards the "algorithmic constitution" which generates the familiarity with the context (Eisenlauer, 2013, p. 88); so does intertextuality, which happens to follow the general definition of the property of a text which is found to be "dependent upon knowledge of one of more previously encountered texts" (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 10), but being realized through "representational formats" (Eisenlauer, 2013, p.92), which suggest the linkage to the other texts which usually comes under a different format or belonging to other virtual sites.

Eisenlauer's (2013; 2014) work provided an adaptation of the *GeM* model (Bateman, 2008) to *Facebook* platform and posed the medium of communication at the centre of the analysis as a fundamental element to consider. Eisenlauer's work (2013; 2014) unfolded *Facebook* platform into 'automated text actions' (ATA), 'semi-automated text actions' (SATA) and 'creative text actions' (CTA). ATA are those *Facebook* elements which are "machine-authored" and include "propositions mastered by the software" (Eisenlauer, 2014, p. 312); SATA are partially automatically generated by the software hosting *Facebook* but they still give some authorship to the user which change and provides headlines; CTA instead are "user-authored" and

"mastered by a human agent" (Eisenlauer, 2014, p. 312).

Furthermore, Eisenlauer (2014, p. 315) highlighted that web 2.0 technologies are "by no means 'neutral environments', but may epitomize the hidden agendas of their developers". The description of the data in Chapter 3 highlights the choices made along with *Facebook* to create the profile of the corporate page which, like the account of the individual user, has to input specific information to be validated. This informs the discussion of the findings, which take the results up to the level of ideological tools.

This classification somehow matches with the components of printed advertisements (see Section 2.4.3): headline and signature line (ATA), body copy including illustrations and standing details (CTA) (Leech, 1996; Toolan, 1988). The SATA cannot be found in any of the advertisements components because they are the reporting features generated by the platform; however, they can be compared with the information about the issue that characterizes magazine covers.

2.3.2 Luxury in the social mediascape

On the one hand, luxury brands need to understand that they still need the traditional media for specific purposes like setting up an authoritative identity through the use of a 'fashion bible' such as *Vogue*. This is because if a brand does not invest money in fashion magazines with credentials it will not be recognized as a universal icon of style. It is easy to notice that the advertising pages in monthly magazines are always bought by the most renowned brands with specific positions according the editorial rules. On the other hand, social media platforms have many incentives. Firstly, they are less expensive, and secondly, they can work as tools for market research while trying to identify new potential markets for investments of resources (Okonkwo, 2010);

therefore, the best option is to combine traditional and new media while differentiating the construction of the content according to the destination because if traditional media attract the fashion addicted, the new media will inevitably penetrate everyone's life.

There is here a spontaneous question. Is it still possible to preserve a luxury *aura* in the new media age? How luxury brands can frame their uniqueness in the digital world where their positioning is dictated by the democracy of the web? If luxury brands cannot buy any cover on *Facebook* as they do on *Vogue*, or using their negotiation power to decide on which page and next to which brand they want to appear in the next issue, how are they going to stay consistent? Due to the globalization of the market, while deciding about purchasing goods, consumers have a wide variety of products and the decision is usually influenced by the advertisements they are exposed to. Brands, seen as individuals, need to work on their identity in order to build a positive image (reputation) and be able to influence potential buyers without giving them the chance to make comparisons. Brand identity is the key decision force when the purchase intention is high and driven by intangible assets instead of other variables like price. In luxury goods market, price becomes irrelevant in favor of experience offered by a specific brand to stimulate particular feelings (Kapferer, 2008).

Table 2.4 shows the differences between luxury offline and luxury online. The dimensions are intrinsically related to retail; however, they can be extended to the overall activities of the brands.

Table 2.4 Internet as channel of distribution

Luxury brands offline	Luxury brands online
Material products and sensorial experience	Virtuality
Control and consistency are essential	Free speech and absence of control
Each brand is based on specific cultural background	No boundaries, a global medium

Time is an essential issue	Speed is the essence

Source: Chevalier & Gutsatz (2012, p. 229)

If luxury offline is characterized by material products and multi-sensorial experience, its internet representation must re-semiotize it virtually. If control and consistency are essential in the real world and feasible due to the institutionalized and legally coordinated work, in the internet the impossibility to control each space puts luxury brands in an uncomfortable position; however, Kearney (2010) demonstrated how brands found solutions to that. Some brands have filtered *Facebook* timelines which only allow *Facebook* post flow with brand initiated conversation.

At the same time, digital advertisements are trackable in terms of visibility and offer control on activities that are out of control offline instead. If physically brands can localize their strategies, products, and advertisements, in the cyberspace, there are no boundaries and the audience is global; however, boundaries are drawn when digital divide interferes in all its forms previously discussed. Time makes the difference in both worlds, as it has been discussed in Section 2.1 and will be reiterated in chapter 4. The major findings demonstrate how internet builds both offline and online traffic towards the brand and directs it to the spending seasons (Chevalier *et al*., 2012).

Table 2.5 presents the advent of luxury on the social media. It is based on Li's (2015) stage representation of digital presence of luxury firms in combination with a study conducted on the discursive practices detected in an extended corpus from Nervino (2013), which investigated luxury brands diachronically to understand how they have changed their social media discursive strategies (Nervino, 2015; 2016).

Table 2.5 The stage-model based on diachronic evolution of brands' activities online

Time	Attitude	Example	Features of Facebook discourse
2009-2011	**Pioneer**	*The Art of Trench*	➢ Creation of *Facebook* pages

	(web 1.0)	(*Burberry*);	➤ Digitalization of content crafted for traditional media ➤ **Integration** between different digital platforms (hyperlinks) ➤ Visual turn
2012-2013	**Creative (web 2.0)**	*Burberry Kisses* (*Burberry*); *MyBaguette* (*Fendi*); *Je veux les lunettes de Karl* (Chanel);	➤ Exclusive content for new media (e-story) ➤ Interaction between brand and user ➤ **Engagement** (… and you?)
2013-2014	**Rational**	Digital experience store (*Burberry*); m-shopping; storytelling;	➤ Narrative turn (hi)storytelling (sharing brand heritage) ➤ Branded **entertainment** (advergaming)
2015	**Intelligent**	CRM (more business-oriented)	➤ Sophistication of the content ➤ New *genres* (advertorial) ➤ Hybrid registers

Source: Adapted from Li (2015) and Nervino (2013; 2016)

According to the stage-model based on diachronic evolution of brands' activities online (Li, 2015; Nervino, 2013; 2016), the first stage, 'pioneer', represents the arrival of brands on the internet and their suspicion of using social media. The example provided by Li (2015) shows *Burberry* has always been the most avant-garde among brands and its initiative *The Art of Trench* has been considered one of the most innovative projects (Tamms, 2016). The project has been created to reposition the trench coat, the iconic product of the brand, as a product targeting young consumers instead of more mature ones. To give this new image to the trench coat, *Burberry* asked 100 bloggers to share a picture of themselves wearing the trench all over the world on the dedicated page created by *Burberry* to encourage consumers to post their own pictures, and thus enhancing their digital experience. In terms of discursive features, the creation of the *Facebook* pages characterizes the first stage. They are very often left inactive without posting for days and posting digitized printed media pages to be

shared such as the case of *YSL* (Nervino, 2013).

The second stage labeled as creative brings examples of microfilm (storytelling) and product embedding activities (: R code and share) and the creation of new apps to provide the brand with customer relationship management (CRM) information about the taste of potential consumers. *Je veux les lunettes de Karl*[32] by *Chanel* is presented as an instance of advergaming; however, it is a video which deploys the semiotic resources from videogames to recreate a virtual world where the user is asked to interact with Karl Lagerfeld and discover the new products. In the same vein, between 2012 and 2013, *Burberry*, in partnership with Google, launched *Burberry Kisses "A letter to your loved one, sealed with your digital kiss"*[33] that plays on feelings and how to share them especially when time and space separate people. *Burberry*, through digital devices, helps people to overcome the physical distance. In terms of discursive features of *Facebook* content, there is a production of exclusive materials for the cyberspace which contributes to the emergence of e-stories and new media language characterized by high engagement of the user, through the deployment of linguistic constructions which include a first statement followed by '… and you?' (Nervino, 2013) to build the dialogue between the brand and the user.

The two stages, 'rational' and 'intelligent', represent a more mature understanding of the media potential. In terms of 'rationality' brands focus on the omnichannel retailing activities. The digital experience in *Burberry* flagship store in London blends the digital world into the historical one. It was the first time the offline experience was designed to resemble the corporate website.

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[32] *Je veux les lunettes de Karl*, http://www.karl.com/karl-and-co/2013/je-veux-les-lunettes-de-karl/ [08/08/2015]
[33] *Burberry Kisses*, https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/campaigns/*Burberry*-kisses.html [08/08/2015]

The final stage labeled as 'intelligent' has been particularly evolving as the Chinese market is developing in terms of education of the customer towards luxury (Rambourg, 2014). This change makes the social media audience more demanding of content, that is meant to be focused on the history of the brand construed through e-stories aimed at teaching and educating the future customers (Rambourg, 2014). Regarding the features of *Facebook* discourse, at this final stage, the editorial content appears more sophisticated. It is produced by taking into consideration the hosting medium and presenting new *genres* characterized by hybridity of discursive practices, which is a peculiarity of the new mediascape.

2.3.2.1 A business perspective

Recently, there has been a strong increase in the proliferation of conferences, journals, special issues, and books about social media and, in particular, interest in making use of these tools for corporate communication purposes in luxury fashion. The investigation of luxury fashion in the social media platforms has pointed out specific trends that occur in a fragmented way throughout the different studies. There is a shift from the artisanal and local world to a luxury intended as a global industry (Wierzba, 2015). Discourse on social media remarks brands' willingness to adapt to its potential consumers (Bellaiche *et al.*, 2010). Social media luxury promotes ubiquity instead of exclusivity (Hennigs *et al.*, 2012). It becomes 'e-luxury' characterized by financial, functional (e.g. usability of the website, multisensory experience), individual and social value (e.g. interaction among users). Dubois (2013) declared social media unavoidable for luxury businesses, and studies have started to populate academic journals. Godey *et al.* (2016) researched social media pages to identify elements that create brand e-quity such as information, entertainment, and asking individuals what

makes a good social media page after all. Kwon *et al.* (2016) and Dehghani & Tumer (2015) focused on measurements of effectiveness of communication by distributing questionnaires investigating the nature of the symbolic appeal. Kim & Yang (2017) scrutinized *Facebook* behaviours to understand the message strategy adopted by brands. Those messages were categorized as 'ration', 'acute needs', 'routine', 'ego', 'social' and 'sensory'. The categorization needed a content analysis based on the interpretation of the messages.

Patino *et al.* (2012), in their attempt to investigate the use of social media in marketing research and establish the state-of-the-art of social media platforms and their deployment in luxury marketing, admitted the challenge came from the difficulty to elaborate theories on such dynamic text-types; however, the case studies reviewed in this section cover different approaches and methodologies to contribute to the social semiotic investigation, which is undertaken for this study. Due to the novelty, the research includes conference papers from a business perspective in order to gather the empirical studies conducted on the use of social media platforms in the luxury goods market, which show a positive attitude of brands towards the internet.

Scholars have been trying to establish a common ground for these new social semiotic landscapes, which host the marketing activities for luxury fashion firms. Relevant trends in both academia and industry to the present study are the deployment of social media to improve CRM and consumer behaviour research (Stankeviciute, 2012; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Seung, 2012; Kim and Ko, 2012; Rohm *et al.*, 2013) and the advent of social media and their impact on marketing strategies (Casalegno & Mosca, 2015; Montecchi *et al.*, 2015; Kontu *et al.*, 2015; Tarasova, 2015). Those studies showed how luxury brands are still at an infancy stage in the deployment of social media and terminology create some confusion.

The initial suspicious attitude of luxury brands against the internet, as Suzy Menkes (Stankeviciute, 2012) highlights, was due to the fact that the big fashion brands like to have the control of everything in their hands. They wanted to know what it is said about them and where the advertisements are placed, but social media platforms are out of their control. Every user can give a comment and the brands are not able to control all. Stankeviciute (2012) explores the process of going online for the brand *Elie Saab*, a famous Lebanese luxury brand. The management of the brands initially established the brand's online presence just to follow the trend without any activities till their pages became popular (Stankeviciute, 2012). This is the usual itinerary which luxury brands have encountered while going online. As illustrated by Nervino (2013), the ten fan pages used to retrieve the data had an initial stage of inactivity followed by the recycling of editorial content from the traditional media.

Stankeviciute's (2012) work shows how the brand management presented an exclusive editorial content to be shared on a mass medium of communication. The findings highlight the replication of the brand values through the production of content designed to reflect. The crucial element of Elie Saab's strategy is the differentiation of the two collections the *haute couture* and the ready-to-wear; however, for both of them, the essential elements of communication are experience, exclusivity, engagement, and emotion. The brand can differentiate them through stories by playing on the tools provided by storytelling.

Okazaki & Taylor (2013), besides defining social media platforms and their functions, focus on their role in international advertising, reviewing researches from a cross-cultural perspective. Their focus is on the application of traditional cross-cultural theories, such as Hofstede (1980) and Hall (1976), as already done in a broader application on marketing by Mooij (2014). The individualism-collectivism dimension

is used to analyze advertising campaigns. In terms of the choice of target markets especially for luxury, the new dimension of indulgence and restraint provided by Hofstede *et al.* (2010) seems to have been coined. Global advertising on social media brings back one of the features of the internet which does not match with luxury: the medium has been designed to accomplish the one-to-many communication. How is it possible then to create the illusion to the user to be involved in a one-to-one interaction? The key points of this article are the three perspectives: social media-networking capability, image transferability, and personal extensibility (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Okazaki and Taylor (2013) also take the chance to mention another important aspect of social media in this study that is found to be a promising topic for future research in web 3.0 and 4.0.

Kim & Ko (2012) focus on how social media marketing activities influence the consumer's behavior and affect their purchase intention. Among those activities, Kim & Ko point out the importance of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. This is because luxury brands need to establish a trustworthy relationship with their customers in order not to lose their appeal among all the competitors. The most threatening competitors sometimes are not those ones belonging to the same sector but more accessible goods such as cosmetics (Rambourg, 2014) and this becomes particularly dangerous in the emerging markets where the meaning of luxury is different and might be assigned to premium goods. The keyword in social media marketing for Kim & Ko (2012) is involvement that can influence purchase intention. The authors conducted their study in a Korean shopping district through the distribution of a survey among those customers who were aware of *LV*'s social media pages.

Seung's (2012) study specifically about *Facebook* and *Louis Vuitton* is again the

protagonist. In contrast to the studies in Asia, the questionnaires were addressed to the U.S. target audience and the questionnaires are addressed to a target audience in a controlled environment and with precise instructions which means the set is not natural. The purpose of this study is to verify the marketing potential of social media for luxury brand management. The questionnaires have been designed to measure satisfaction and related endogenous variables about *LV Facebook* fan page. The results reveal a click-and-mortar[34] attitude because customers are frightened of counterfeit. As for the reviews, users trust other community members and pay attention to the comments.

Other studies focused on content analysis and explored different types of social media. Rohm *et al.* (2013) conducted a different study more related to the content with the purpose of identifying the ways in which firms and digital native consumers interact. The data have been collected from *Facebook* and Twitter over one week and counted on 311 interactions between brands from different industries, including luxury, and 58 respondents aged 25-30 asked to report on their diary interaction experience as well (Rohm *et al.*, 2013). The research aimed to investigate the co-created content by a qualitative analysis and a latent class analysis (LCA) based on specific themes related to the users' motivations to join the conversation with the brand. Basically, they were: entertainment, brand engagement, timeliness of information and service responses, product information, incentives, and promotion (Rohm *et al.*, 2013). The results had managerial implications. They showed the area of interests of consumers and brands can better address their content according to the medium selected to vehicle the message.

Casalegno & Mosca (2015) aimed to portray the luxury presence online starting

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[34] Instead of "brick-and-mortar" that stands for the offline shopping, the replacement of "brick" with "click" creates the idea of the research online and purchase offline activity.

from websites, to blogs, social media and particular online campaigns by using big data and web-scraping. The introduction to the paper clarified the difference among all the new media and particularly emphasized the importance and innovation of the UGC (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) and the central role of experience in luxury (Atwall & Williams, 2009). The preliminary findings of a wider project on luxury online that aims at analyzing big data by using the following variables were: experience, exclusivity, engagement, emotion, expression, enhancement, and empathy (Casalegno & Mosca, 2015). The case studies presented include *The Art of Trench*[35] by *Burberry* as an example of engagement, and *Tiffany's #TrueLovePicture*[36] to show that also the most traditional luxury, diamonds, is becoming a multimedia lover eager to go social. The features identified as *leit-motif* of luxury fashion include: heritage, storytelling, events and celebrities as entertainment. The aim of their research was to identify activities, which engage the users, integration among platforms, and track patterns in terms of rituals which lead to consumption. The findings also confirmed the fact that in luxury people do research online and then prefer to purchase offline (ROPO). Casalegno and Mosca (2015) explored different luxury sectors, including wine, delete seasons of fluctuation like Christmas that can quantitatively alter the data, and include the two most powerful search engines *Google* and *YouTube* to collect data. This latter recognized as the medium to project dreams because of the new trend of video storytelling through movies telling the story of the brands.

Montecchi *et al.* (2015) focused on the social media as the place where the prosumers[37] can show their instant skills to keep up-to-date with this instant world.

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[35] *The Art of Trench*, http://artofthetrench.*Burberry*.com/ [Last access 08/08/2015]
[36] Instagram's hashtag.
[37] The notion of news consumers is giving way to something called prosumers, in which citizens simultaneously function as consumers, editors, and producers of a new kind of news. *Cambridge Dictionary*, http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/business-english/prosumer [Last access 08/08/2015]

The main theoretical framework was based on the concept of netnography (Kozinets, 2010) along with the "affective cognitive behavioural engagement" designed by Montecchi *et al.* (2015) with the help of thematic analysis (qualitative) on *Facebook* and *YouTube* pages of brands like *Rolex*, *Burberry*, and *LV*. This work was also supported with a neuro eye tracking machine to incorporate a more quantitative aspect and step into neuromarketing.

The same research group released a pioneer study about Pinterest, the social network that has not been colonized by many companies yet and where the UGC is typically the only one creating buzz (Kontu *et al.*, 2015). This study aimed to investigate the visual storytelling on *Pinterest* that has just been integrated with *Shopify*[38] to directly sell the products shown in the "pins"[39]. The findings from Kontu *et al.* (2015) showed that, especially in luxury goods market, brands like *Chanel* do not have their own page on *Pinterest* but their presence has been built up through users' pins; therefore, there is no catalogue of products like in Instagram that is found to be more sales oriented than *Pinterest* in this case. Furthermore, other relevant findings confirm accessories as the most aspirational popular products among young consumers. Kontu *et al.* (2015) proposed an explorative approach to deeply understand the opportunities offered by Pinterest as a new tool for visual storytelling that seems to be the new frontier of digital marketing at the moment, and brands are still monitoring their competitors to experimenting new practices. Trying to forecast new trends might be helpful in terms of managerial implications and PR content/theme analysis about products and lifestyle of brands can be a starting point. Storytelling, mainly enacted by visual resources, was also at the core of user-generated advertising

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[38] *Shopify*, http://www.shopify.com/ [Last access 08/08/2015]
[39] "Pin" is the term to identify an image shared on Pinterest, this item can be actually pinned or repined from users that is synonym of "share". *Pinterest*, https://about.pinterest.com/en [Last access 08/08/2015]

(UGA) that has recently caught the attention in social semiotics (Rossolatos, 2017).

In fashion, images are more relevant than language as suggested by Kontu *et al.* (2015) in a study about Pinterest, and emphasized by Tarasova (2015) in her study "Modern day Polaroid – Instagram Russian way" about the use of social media in Russia by Russian retail brands. Tarasova (2015) adopted two frameworks: the netnography and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) elaborated by Davis (1986) along with some statistical information on other social media like *Facebook* and Twitter with the help of www.statista.com[40] so basically her research was more quantitative with just few examples of qualitative nature. The study was designed to be prescriptive and generate findings aimed to give tips to brands on what time to post, which colour and filter can grab the attention of the users more than others and so on.

Halliday (2015) instead presented the innovative activity that *Burberry* launched for the integration of social media in its branding strategies. Halliday (2015) showed a few examples of *Burberry* live streaming catwalk integrated with Twitter posts in order to make it more interactive and directly involve the audience, *Burberry* did it as an experiment and asked the audience to watch the live streaming of the fashion show and post their favourite screenshot. Halliday (2015) did a visual content analysis of the screenshots. The idea was successful because in this way *Burberry* got re-tweets and so buzz on Twitter. Furthermore, *Burberry* had the chance to see its audience preferences among the items from the fashion show by looking at the personalized tweets. Mohr (2013) also demonstrated that the internet traffic towards social media increases during fashion weeks.

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[40] Statista is one of the world's largest statistics portals, providing access to relevant data. It reports a list of statistics, studies and reports relating to search request. www.statista.com [Last access 08/08/2015]

Kim *et al.* (2015) focused on advergaming, and more specifically on the game players purchase behaviour that actually reflected their activities; they do shopping while they are playing (c.f. ROPO). Game players feel comfortable in their virtual life.

Johnson (2015) presented a more comprehensive overview on fashion and games particularly focusing on examples from *Second Life* and how this practice generated a transmedia effect in Jenkins' (2006) terms because actually the virtual and the real world are globally interconnected. Furthermore, Johnson (2015) explained why it cannot be realized in the real world for several reasons (e.g. ethnicity, social *status*, income), and why it should be seen as a representation of the aspirations. In this way, the virtual world becomes a looking glass for brands to collect information about potential consumers' taste. It can also tested the prototypes of the products online. Jonhson (2015) called this idea of mixing the virtual and the real identity "identity remix". The study summarized this advent of new technology and its power as a process of "feeding the real with the virtual" by exploring new resources and pushing the boundaries of creativity to engage the so-called GEN Y (Castells, 2013). Moreover, Johnson (2015) also mentioned how it is important to investigate the media that are now related to fashion and are changing fashion in the same way television did in the past, or the new 3D will do in the future.

Weiner (2015) investigated the idea of luxury as social *status* in the men's *fora*, in which he analyzed the possession of luxury goods as a way to shape the power relationships among users. In a similar digital environment dedicated to *Hermès* online and started by brand lovers, Lebom and Voyer (2015), observed power relations. As in Weiner's study, also in Lebom and Voyer's study, the user who owned the products had more power than aspirational consumers. The findings showed how users do not need to mention the brand in a branded space, but talk about the products as absolute

made by the brand. Moreover, in in Lebom and Voyer's study, the most discussed product is the iconic *Birkin*. Although the place for discussion is not a branded one, the product would not need to be addressed as the *Hermès Birkin* because it has unique name, which is immediately recognizable. Both papers are based on a thematic analysis but focused more on the sociological aspect of the online interaction between the different users. in Lebom and Voyer also tracked the development of friendships from online to offline by analyzing the use of pronouns and nicknames versus real names. The findings suggested that the highest grade of legitimation for power is the use of real names and surnames.

Several studies have also been conducted about blog and bloggers who have become the new celebrities. They sit on the front-row during the fashion shows. Their opinion, which will be shared globally online impacts brands (Peretti, 2011). As Okonkwo (2010) had already suggested, millennials trust bloggers more than word-of-mouth coming from friends. What bloggers write is even more important for them than brands and journalists because their opinion is perceived as an independent voice although the trend is becoming more business-oriented.

Pedroni *et al.* (2015) focused on the evolution of the figure of the blogger along time. Bloggers started from being an independent voice to now having now an editorial line like a magazine or even being both bloggers and journalists. Nowadays, blogging is considered a skill. There has been an entrepreneurial turn in which bloggers shifted from being contacted by brands to be their ambassadors to the creation of their own brand. Chiara Ferragni, as known as *The Blonde Salad*[41], is a more recent example. Chiara Ferragni started as a fashion blogger. Once she established herself online, brands started inviting her for their events and to share their products online. Today,

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[41] *The Blonde Salad*, http://www.theblondesalad.com/   [Last access 08/08/2015]

she launched her own shoe collection, which has great success especially in China (Pedroni *et al.*, 2015). Chiara Ferragni has now become a case study for Harvard University researchers in terms of business (Keinan *et al.*, 2015). Pedroni (2015), with the help of Sanmiguel and Sábada, tries to shape bloggers' identity as sellers of the imaginary in Bourdieu's terms (2014), and products of the second generation of cultural mediators.

Kristensen & Christensen (2015) focused instead on the idea of mediatization of fashion blogs and the interplay between fashion and media. Blogs are a hybrid between a diary and magazine and they focus on the informative purpose. But blogs need to be further investigated in terms of *genre*, translation, power relation, because taking into consideration that the connotation meaning is sharing like social media.

Mortara & Roberti (2015) investigated the relationship between bloggers and audience (tenor), which arose the *genre* issue. One of the novelties in today's blogs is the need for professional photographers that is a must to be rated among the most popular ones. Social media today is challenging to bloggers because Instagram directly influenced the sales with the buzz and can now replace even blogs. Blog content has also been declared under copyright, which is one of the authentic gate that can allow professionals to enter the fashion system (Mortara & Roberti, 2015). For example, Danielle Bernstein[42] runs the style blog *We Wore What* and has 992.000 followers on Instagram. The platform allowed her to earn from $5.000 up to $ 15.000 for one single piece shared for a brand depending on the relationship with the brand and the number of posts that the promotion requires. This shows how social media is now sharing the business and creating the 'mediatization' process that rules the fashion system

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[42] *Daily Mail UK*, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3092913/The-rise-Insta-millionaire-Fashion-blogger-reveals-earns-15-000-just-posting-ONE-sponsored-Instagram-picture.html [Last access 08/08/2015]

(Couldry & Hepp, 2013). Laurel (2014) defined blogs transactional space in which storytelling initiates the process of commercialization.

Business scholars also explored the analysis of discourse by observing lexical choices and collocations from a content analysis perspective. For example, the immediate co-text occurring with the word 'luxury' has been observed and it offered a multiplicity of understanding of the concept (Bastien & Kapferer, 2013). Bastien and Kapferer (2013, pp. 22-23) used the following examples to give the idea of how the presence of "a" instead of "the" or the collocation of "my" instead of the absolute concept of "luxury" without the need of any other word can modify the meaning of the whole concept; however, those discourse and content analysis did not present any systematic methodology.

Ricca & Robins (2012) also tried to redefine luxury and coined a new term 'meta-luxury' to highlight the scenes behind what the audience sees and pay attention to. Audience focus on the process of crafting a luxury product by identifying the milestones of the industry. The authors stated that the purpose of meta-luxury was to establish a culture based on two principles: knowledge and timelessness. This culture is the only possible through craftsmanship, rarity, focus and history that represent the pillars above which luxury brands can develop their identity. Craftsmanship is a concept that British brands are really renowned for. It has led to the establishment of a new annual appointment in 2015, the *London Craft Week*, which is in addition to the design, jewelry, fashion and art events that have already been on the calendar for many years to celebrate the British *savoir-faire*[43]. The concept of meta-luxury at the origin of the brands constitutes the overall brand at The House of Britannia[44]. It has built up

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[43] *The London Craft Week*, http://www.londoncraftweek.com/ [Last access 08/08/2015]
[44] *The House of Britannia*, http://thehouseofbritannia.com [Last access 05/08/2015]

its business and positioned itself as a brand not made to meet the increasingly high demand for luxury goods in the world but to keep the *aura* of luxury and make its products available only for a limited group of elected customers, a niche, like the British Royal Family for instance. This marketing strategy reinforced the prestige of the brand as being a truly domestically manufactured British brand[45]. It makes the brand desirable for the HNWIs who were mostly from the U.S. and Europe in the past, and nowadays are more easily found in the Middle East, China or India (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). These countries are not only the place where the HNWIs come from but are also becoming the most profitable markets for luxury goods because of their increasing numbers of middle-class affluent consumers that are eager to show their success through the consumption of specific products that carry cultural embedded meanings (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). This has become another variable that influences the definition of luxury and all the activities related to this industry because the increase of the demand for luxury all over the world and from those emerging markets is still under definition as well.

Roper *et al.* (2013) used discourse analysis to investigate the subjective experience of luxury of interviewees to materialize the brand image.

The studies reviewed indicate the need for a common definition for luxury and social media, and concluded that luxury is still at its infancy stage online. Luxury brand management in the digital environment so far has scarcely been studied independently from offline practices. The studies presented some weaknesses in the understanding of the tools provided by the social media and in the elaboration of the questionnaires for consumers, and the results might have been affected by the confusion in the terminology. As for the research methods applied in these studies,

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[45] *The House of Britannia*, http://thehouseofbritannia.com [Last access 05/08/2015]

they were mostly ethnographic studies based on surveys, interviews, or content analysis of documents, websites, and social media pages. These studies focused on the text consumption evaluating the reader/viewer perspective on the usage of social media in the luxury fashion industry.

The next section reviews studies in applied linguistics and socio-cultural studies.

2.3.2.2 An applied linguistics and socio-cultural perspective

In December 2014, *The Economist* declared luxury as "exclusively for everybody" and published a report discussing how the changes in the luxury goods market were remarking a change in the social stratification, consumerism, and materialism. Besides the role of professionals in the luxury goods market denouncing the identity crisis within the luxury segment, and the business scholars investigating numbers and assets to re-define luxury, discourse about luxury started gaining the attention of researchers in the humanities.

The present study finds its place in the area of applied linguistics, studies in this discipline were reviewed to understand the methods adopted and the findings obtained at this stage. Jaworski & Thurlow (2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d) extensively investigated luxury as social construction and definition of social class, and in its specific spatial resemiotization mostly related to the tourism industry (Jaworski &Thurlow, 2009; 2010; 2012; 2013; 2014). The two scholars position themselves within social semiotics and critical discourse analysis; however, their studies did not directly contribute to the methodology of the present study because they were articulated on a sociological and ethnographic perspective that disregarded the branding and marketing negotiations behind the manufacture of the multi-sensorial

entities explored. The primary aim of Jaworski &Thurlow was throughout their studies, to identify how luxury spaces contribute to the social stratification of the society in Giddens's (1984) terms with a focus on elitist demographic.

Thurlow & Jaworski (2017abcd) construed élite as a privileged social status based on demographic rarity, wealth, and power associated with superiority. The introductory paper (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017a) problematized the construction and maintenance of the elitist status and explains how communication framed the social stratification and how it helped preserving the exclusivity belonging to this group. Elite read as the happy few that had access to luxury goods, which were the focus of the present study. In this vein, another study defining those élites as the 'super-rich' found that in their media constructions, the social status co-occurred with the material goods needed to join the club (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2017b). The glossy world in which the super-rich are placed in the collective imaginary is filled with luxury goods which classify the individuals as such.

Strongly supporting the rationale for the present study, Thurlow & Jaworski (2010, p. 188) in the book chapter *Silence is Golden: The 'Anti-communicational' Linguascaping of Super-elite Mobility* argued that tourism, as well as other industries after globalization, fabricated the "post-industrial, late-modern societies" by enhancing the understanding of semiotic construction of goods and discourse about them as informants of the social stratification (Giddens, 1991; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2003). This chapter (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010) presented findings of a social semiotic study conducted on photographs of luxury destinations. It applied Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) visual grammar and draws conclusions based on the interactional meanings. The analysis of the interactional meanings suggested that advertisements of luxury destinations construct aspiration by depicting silent

participants. The participants represented did not interact with the viewer, there was no engagement. The viewer was not admitted to the world depicted, social distance was constructed through long shots that distant the viewer from the photo, and power relation was governed by the text-producer. Interestingly, Thurlow & Jaworski (2012) following on previous studies, contributed to luxury studies with a semiotic analysis of visual representation of luxury places by showing how in the luxury goods market the concept of exclusivity involved power relationship between the participants of the situation. This study proposed a more CDA focused on the principle of interactional order between these new elite mobilities that could or could not access luxury spaces according to their social status and wealth (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2012). Visual construction of luxury (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2012) was investigated through the use of Bourdieu's (1984) strategies of distinction based on discourse, economics, and relations of power. The dataset included photographs collected through an ethnographic field work in airport lounges, and the framework applied focused on the idea of resemiotization of exclusivity.

A similar study conducted on luxury hotels shifted the attention to the emptiness of those spaces, and the fact that if participants in the photographs of luxury destinations did not engage with the viewers, in closed spaces such as hotel rooms, were not depicted at all, willing to include and at the same time exclude everybody indistinctively (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2009). The same study focused on the idea of 'global' as symptomatic of luxury; therefore, silence and emptiness are read as symbols of luxury. As well as the study in frequent flyers (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2006) in which practices of division and separation are discursively constructed.

Conclusively, Thurlow & Jaworski (2013, p. 177) promoted social semiotics as the one approach able to understand the "(re)formulations of class status by examining

the performative logistics of luxury in the context of *super-elite* travel". These two scholars, undoubtedly, opened the luxury scenario for social semioticians; however, all their studies do not interact with brand management and marketing. This lack of a business perspective was instead fulfilled in the present study. The socio-cultural perspective that characterized Thurlow & Jaworski's studies is considered part of the research background for the present study and at the same time a consequential implication of the understanding of the semiotic construction of luxury based on the brand communicative agenda.

In support of Thurlow & Jaworski's perspective, theories such as the 'self-other concepts' and Veblen's theory (1957) have been identified. Veblen discusses the relationship between consumption and social status. More specifically, consumption of goods is construed as the primary index to assign an individual to a particular social status. Veblen also focused on the price as the symbol of the grade of desirability of a product; therefore the higher the price of a good higher was the *social status*. This works in the luxury goods market where goods stand for *modus vivendi* (Pilelienė, 2012) and particularly affects the fashion industry whose products might be seen as 'instruments' to build up our own social identity (Barnard, 1996; Meinhold, 2013). This additional value to products might also generates another reactions from other consumers, like female luxury consumers in Shanghai who are not buying the most popular luxury brands. These products are now affordable by middle class women of Shanxi province, and Shanghai women do not want to be associated with them; therefore, they opt for other choices (Pilelienė, 2012).

In light of the above, it is possible to argue that individuals/consumers buy specific goods to reflect their personal attributes. While purchasing these goods, individuals wish to transfer the characteristics proper of the products onto themselves

in order to build up the public image and generate association to a particular group (Hoolbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The so-called "ideology of consumption" to borrow Baudrillard's (1968) words was construed on commodities and the choices mediated by the messages that the individuals receive from media (Silverstone, 1981). It is possible to argue that nowadays individuals are branded and can become brands. For instance, the entertainment industry offers examples of construction of characters through outfits.

In contrast to Jaworski & Thurlow's studies that mainly analyzed printed media and spatial constructions of luxury, the virtual construction of luxury hotels in Hong Kong explored by Suen (2013) presented different luxury features. Suen's *genre* analysis, implemented with appraisal theory and multimodal investigation of the three metafunctions through the adoption of the visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), found hotel websites being a discursive representation of the diachronic changes tracked in the industry and presented by professionals interviewed for the study. The diachronic study of the hotel websites demonstrated how through time, the semiotic construction of luxury relied on more digital affordances to facilitate the establishment of a closer relationship between the text-producer and the text-consumer (Suen, 2013). Websites belong to the web 1.0 and yet represent an institutional definition of luxury (see Chapter 3); however, in their adjustment to the new media ecologies shifted from a digitalization of brochures to a more engaging display (Suen, 2013). These evolved features of luxury representations were expected to be amplified in this study because the dataset falls into the more interactive transition between web 2.0 and web 3.0.

Language studies on social media covered aspects of language change in CMC (Androutsopolous, 2011), sociolinguistics in terms of language change in the new

media (Domingo, 2012), CDA and power relations in corporate *Facebook* pages (Lillqvist *et al.*, 2015), narrative approach to *Facebook* status (Page, 2010), or construction of identity (Bouvier, 2012; Paganoni, 2014; Rio & Casper, 2014; Schildhauer, 2016; Seo & Ebrahim, 2016), ideal identity (Eagleman & Burch, 2015); however, more relevant and specifically connected to the *genre* analyzed for this study were Crawford Camiciottoli (2013), Crawford Camiciottoli *et al.* (2014), and Faraoni *et al.* (2015) because the textual analysis focused on the categorization of lexical choices from a semantic and lexico-grammatical point of view to investigate branding discourse.

Crawford Camiciottoli's (2013) study had the objective to explore the construction of brand identity online of three globally-renowned Italian fashion brands: Valentino, Dolce and Gabbana and Giorgio Armani. The data included online platforms like websites and annual reports, and interviews with designers. The researcher used the *corpus* to scrutinize the language and identify lexical choices that construe their identity in an online context. *Wmatrix* (Rayson, 2003) was deployed to extract the keywords from her specialized *corpus* by keeping the brand separated and compare them to the more general *BNC* sampler of *Spoken English* by applying a corpus-driven approach. The choice of the reference corpus revealed the position of the author who considered web-based communication closer to spoken language than written. The keyword clouds clearly showed that the main word classes are related to fashion products, designers, and events. Crawford Camiciottoli (2013) also described the most frequent adjectives that represent the primary features attributed to brands belonging to fashion brands. The list suggests the importance of modernity, identity, and country of origin, and in this case, 'Made in Italy'. One of the research trends in Italy is now the construction of this metabrand in corporate communication and online.

In the findings, it is also possible to distinguish the distinctive features related to each brand. Crawford Camiciottoli (2013) concluded that a new direction for further research should focus on the comparison between brand identity and brand image in order to implement customer-oriented strategies. In addition to this, particularly relevant could be the analysis of hashtags related to the luxury goods market and different sectors in order to facilitate the improvement of search engine optimization (SEO) process for the companies.

Crawford Camiciottoli *et al.* (2014) and Faraoni *et al.* (2015) investigated brand personality (Aaker, 1997), its alignment (Malar *et al.*, 2011), and consumer engagement (Hollebeck, 2011) on social media. The analyses were conducted using big data and text mining to examine the content shared on different online communities by premium brands selected from *Fashionbi.com* with the aim of formulating a new cognitive ratio. Both studies use netnography as the main framework and examine adjectives as part of the discourse retrieved with the help of *CLAWS 4*[46] as tagger software. The aim of the study is to verify whether the intended brand identity and the realized image coincide. This study aims at creating a multidisciplinary model, an aim shared with the present project, which will add to the linguistic analysis the visual resources.

The present study is also informed by my M.A. thesis submitted to the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in 2013 whose focus was the resemiotization of exclusivity through lexical choices on the *Facebook* fan pages of ten luxury fashion firms from Italy and France mainly targeting female consumers. The corpus linguistic analysis conducted on a corpus of 90,000 demonstrated how the use of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005) reinforces the engagement, which is one of the feature promoted by

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[46] *CLAWS4*, http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/ [Last access 08/08/2015]

the medium. The findings showed how exclusivity is construed through the deployment of specific phraseologies, which manufacture the one-to-one relationship between brand and user (Nervino, 2013). Moreover, the attempt to identify the emergence of a new *genre* by following Garzone's (2007) work on websites, which leans on Bhatia's definitions of *genre* (2004) and Myers' (2010) research on Twitter and microblogging provided examples of generation of cybergenre discussed according to the categorization introduced by Shepherd and Watters (1998). Instances of extant and novel *genres* (Shepherd & Watters, 1998) were identified in the data as replication of editorial content shared on printed media and scanned and posted on *Facebook*, or experiments of narrative exclusively created to be disseminated on the *Facebook* platform. Furthermore, the study unveiled the establishment of an implicit narrative agreement between the brands and the fans of the page which allow the sharing of editorial content meant to be for a global audience to be perceived as an exclusive sharing (Nervino, 2013).

In addition to textual analysis, a more qualitative approach based on the interplay between text and images was adopted by the semiotician Roland Barthes (1967) in the 60s giving the kick-start to studies in the semiotics of advertising (Codeluppi, 2002). Roland Barthes concentrated his work on fashion and examined the discourse as a fashion narrative (Barthes, 1967). Time marks temporal situations (e.g. fashion seasons), and space remarks instead spatial situations, both interact to blur the boundaries between everyday life and the extraordinary experience projected in the advertising.

Marrone (2006), following Barthes, analyzed the fashion system by comparing it to the linguistic system in de Saussure's terms; and identifying fashion (e.g. fashion group meaning designers, editors, models) as the *langue* dictating the rules, which is

instantiated into its physical representation as the *parole*. Barthes' study is considered a milestone in fashion studies and foregrounds the subsequent studies in this area that are reviewed in the next Section of advertising discourse. Barthes goes to the sources of those rules. He explores fashion magazine discourse standing for the 'ruling class' (Marx & Engels, 2006). Fashion magazines decide the death of a collection in favour of a new one or instead resignifies it as vintage adding a value by time. Codeluppi (2002) following Barthes explains how the business concept of USP does not exhaust the complexity of advertising and that the discourse of the product before the discourse about the product plays a major role in its positioning in the market first, and in the consumers' minds later. The complexity of advertising discourse is taken into account as an additional component of the hybrid *genre* that the dataset for the present study consists of.

More experience-oriented is a study on an e-commerce website *Zalando*, which explored the hybridity of virtual spaces in combining fashion magazines and fashion catalogues to construe a shipping experience. In this study conducted within the framework fo social semiotic (see Section 2.4), Andersen and van Leeuwen (2016) identify the role of textual resources in compensating the lack of multi-sensorial experience, visual representations as anchored to the text, and a major role played by the context that becomes part of the text in performing hypertextual references. More studies adopting social semiotics are reviewed in the next Section to foreground the research methodology, even though not examing similar situated discoruses.

Those studies lead to same conclusions and limitations, though. Social media represent a promising opportunity for luxury brands but their use is still at an infancy stage. Brands needed to design new strategies and build effective contents by taking into consideration that although they go globally while colonizing the web they need

to localize their content and think locally. Social media can be very dangerous for brand reputation because in the virtual world content matters. The studies which adopt a corpus linguistic approach as a tool to examine big language data which are found to be attentive from a quantitative point of view and offering results which explain the linguistic rendition of luxury fashion brands. This is the reason why corpus linguistics is applied in this project to investigate the textual rendition of branding strategies and an additional corpus tool is utilized to annotate the visual text too; however, the medium with its semiotic enablers and constraints remain unexplored or underestimated. In addition, the necessity to examine the visual elements becomes essential for a comprehensive understanding of the discursive practices, which is highly contextualized.

2.3.4 Summary

This section focuses on the digital transformation in the luxury goods market and, more specifically, on how this has changed the way luxury brands construct their brand identity in the digital environment.

Once defined the characteristics of internet *genres* and social media have been defined, the section presents studies in both business and applied linguistics, which investigated how luxury has been resemiotized in the internet. The different studies are discussed in terms of methodology and findings and main limitations and opportunities.

Among the key concepts to be examined in the present study, the understanding of how discourse production and distribution is enabled and constrained by the medium of communication has been rarely considered. In a social semiotic study, this

becomes a crucial element.

Contributing to this research gap with the need for a discursive approach, this study has identified social semiotics as a suitable theory to address the multidisciplinary nature of the present study.

After discussing the reliance of social semiotics on systemic functional linguistics in the analysis of multimodal texts, the following section reviews studies on advertising discourse, to highlight the social semiotic approach on advertisements as multimodal artefacts for promotional purposes, which lead to overcome the limitations of the previous studies. The section also presents the shift from advertising to social media to draw a line of continuity for the application of the frameworks reviewed and prepare the terrain for the upcoming adaptations to the dataset.

2.4 Towards a social semiotic approach to discursive representations

This section is dedicated to social semiotics (2.4.1), its multimodal frameworks for the investigation of multisemiotic artefacts (2.4.2), and the relevance of advertising discourse in the transition from printed media to new media (2.4.3) which are explored in the present study. Corporate *Facebook* posts examined in the present study are construed as hypertextual advertisements.

2.4.1 Social semiotics: from semiotic construal to social construction

Social semiotics is the study of "human semiosis as an inherently social phenomenon in its sources, functions, contexts, and effects" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 261). Semiosis, which has always been of interest to semioticians, is defined as "the processes and effects of the production and reproduction, reception and circulation of

meaning in all forms, used by all kinds of agent of communication" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 261). It aims to investigate the semiotic construal of meanings in its socially contextualized human practice and history (Hodge & Kress, 1988). Specifically, semiosis aims to unpack the rules that determine the construction of meanings and their circulation in the society (Marx & Engels, 2006; Veloso, 2014).

The foundations of social semiotics are intrinsically rooted in the semiotic tradition initiated by Saussure (1974) with the elaboration of semiology/semiotics as the study of signs and its further development as the theory of transformation. It leads to the understanding of the relationship with *langue* and *parole*. It also includes Peirce (1903) who had already contributed to the establishment of semiology, followed by structuralists and post-structuralists such as Hjelmslev (1963) who clearly explained the interaction between expression and content plane. Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucauld dealt with the understanding of the society and provided principles to the development of a theory which could analyze the meanings in context. Other scholars applied semiotics to different fields such as Metz in film studies, Umberto Eco who popularized it through its application to his novels, primarily *The Name of the Rose* (1980), and many other discipline-specific approaches which highlighted its versatile nature in dealing with different matters of human society; however, the contribution which linked social semiotics to *Systemic Functional Linguistics* was Halliday's (1978) work *Language as Social Semiotics*, which has already introduced social semiotics as an additional value to language. The book (Halliday, 1978, p. 2) focused on the need of investigating language "within a socio-cultural context, in which the culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms".

Halliday (1978) proposes the socio-cultural context as the social structure and

semiotic organization of communication construed based on the relationships among the actors involved in the communicative event. In these terms, social semiotics aimed to describe the meaning-making process as a system of choices made among the meaning potentials and controlled by the idea of making information available in the context. Social semiotics explores the communication process from both producer and consumers' perspective and takes into consideration the possibility of asymmetry between the encoded and decoded message (Hall, 1966). Andersen & van Leeuwen (2016) in the analysis of *Zalando*, an e-commerce website, explained how the context becomes text in the cyberspace, and discursive space (Heller, 2010).

A further elaboration of social semiotics proposed by van Leeuwen (2005) who articulated the role of social semioticians in the contemporary society in which everything is actually information. The three main activities attributed to semioticians are the collection of an archive of semiotic resources available; the analysis of their use in specific social contexts while taking into consideration historical, cultural, and institutional aspects and the attitude of people to the materials; and the contribution to the discovery or development of new resources or new use of the existing ones.

Hodge & Kress (1988) offered a first example of social semiotic analysis of a text - a billboard advertisement for *Marlboro* cigarettes – to show how social semiotics comprehensively cover multiple perspectives in unpacking a specific type of text. Social semiotics analyzes the semiotic structures of the semiosic and mimetic plane (Hjemslev, 1963), where the semiosic plane represented the social process by which meaning is created and the mimetic plane, where the representation (mimesis) of the meaning takes place. The analysis was also foregrounded by the understanding of the *genre* as a social structure itself, which affects the construction of the meaning and imposes rules and limits (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The example of analysis explains

how different variables are involved in shaping meanings in the society. Those meanings are identified as follows: the place in which the text was placed, the rules which affected the construction of the content such as the laws of the city in which the advertisements were placed; the authority which ruled the space occupied by the promotional material; the producers of the advertisement as well as the commissioners and the potential recipients for whom it was designed (reader/viewer); and the social context along with other information such as the product; the brand vision; and specific advertising rules in the industry (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The present study follows these guidelines and draws on this example to present the factors affecting the meaning-making process behind the construal of the brand identity for the luxury firms examined.

In social semiotics, meanings are semiotic constructions made of compositions of signifier and signified (Saussure, 1974; Barthes, 1977) or expression and content plane (Hjelmslev, 1963; Eco, 1976) as visualized and compared with the notions of mimesic and semiosic plane provided by Hodge & Kress (1988) in Figure 2.11.

Sign (semiotic resource)	Signifier	Expression plane	Mimesic plane
	Signified	Content plane	Semiosic plane

Figure 2.11 The composition of the sign (adapted from Hjelmslev, 1963; Saussure, 1974; Hodge & Kress, 1988)

The signifier, or expression plane, can be seen as the realization of the meaning in the

social context, the form it takes to convey the meaning while the signified, or content plane is the meaning itself that is connotatively perceived by the reader in its own context which in the case of the web includes the socio-cultural context, the context of situation and the medium of communication (Baldry & Thibault, 2006). The idea of 'netnography' proposed by Kozinets (2010) clarifies that, although the internet is a tool projected to facilitate a one-to-many communication, "netizens" have diverse cultural backgrounds and interpret messages accordingly. Meanings shared in the social media platforms are also a product of the process of "mediatization" which cannot be ignored in the analysis of the texts, which needs the understanding of the social role of media and their influences on cultural practices in all spheres of life (Androutsopoulos, 2014).

In the present study, the production of meanings is related to the manufacture and consumption of luxury fashion goods that is driven by marketing strategies that design the relations between demand and offer in the market. Figure 2.12 shows the consequent relationship between marketing strategies and the social/cultural context where they are realized (Hoolbrook & Hirschman, 1993).
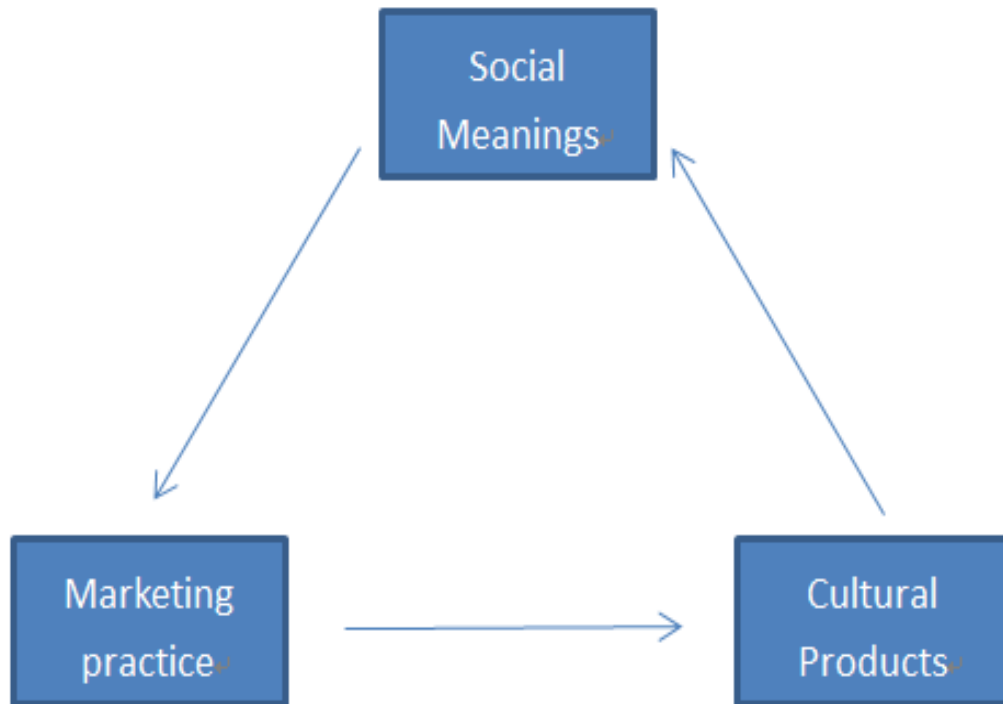
Figure 2.12 The relationship between marketing and its social/cultural context (adapted from Hoolbrook & Hischman, 1993, p. 57)

The pyramid (Figure 2.12) clarifies how social meanings actually drive the marketing practice that includes the design of the product, the production, the discourse of the advertising and promotion and the distribution of the products (Hoolbrook & Hirschman, 1993; Du Gay, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Furthermore, those different marketing practices shape the cultural products that are the products themselves, and all the communication artefacts derived to enhance promotion and advertising activities in different media (Hoolbrook &Hirschman, 1993; Du Gay, 1996; Jenkins, 2006). Social meanings are both the origin and the final results of this meanings making process because the signs produced are contextualized in the market in terms of culture and consumer behaviour (Hoolbrook & Hirschman, 1993; Du Gay, 1996).

van Leeuwen (2005) added different dimensions to be considered in the analysis,

namely: *genre* in terms of the seek for a generic and rhetoric structure of the social media posts; 'style' that in this particular discourse is found to be a representation of lifestyle conveyed by the brands thinking of the posts as advertisements or fashion captions; 'discourse' as the instrument of brands to tell their stories; 'modality' to indicate the modes deployed by the brands to construe the discourse. Through different steps the research project will underline how the semiotic construal of the discursive practices has a social impact on the context it is exchanged.

The advent of new technology requires a customized design and arrangement of the space to better distribute the labour among the different semiotic resources, and the layout itself becomes a semiotic mode in that sense. This is because the web is characterized by a non-linear structure that allows the user to scan the multisemiotic texts and read what they are interested in (Martinec & van Leeuwen, 2009); therefore, the design aims to draw the attention of the audience to the most important content, making it available in an appealing way. In these terms, the design is a semiotic mode. In contemporary society where communication is realized using the social media, it is possible to argue that multimodal discourse is built not only through semiotic resources like language, pictures, and sounds, but also discourse, design, production, and distribution (Figure 2.13).
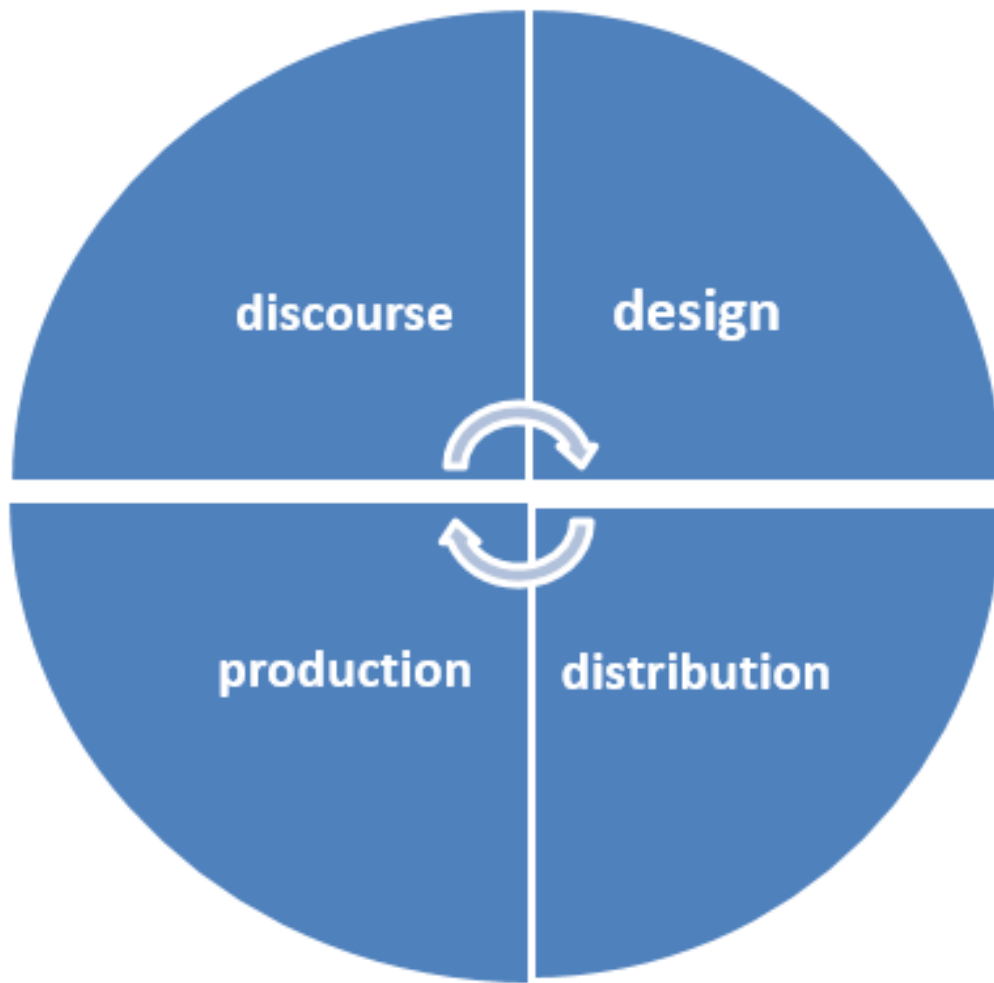
Figure 2.13 The modes of the contemporary multimodal discourse (adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001)

The diagram shows the different semiotic modes involved in the multimodal discourse that characterizes the contemporary communication especially in the new media (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The terms were used to indicate specific concept: 'discourse' stands for "socially constructed knowledge of (some aspects of) reality" where specific social context is used instead of a general one to match with a given social actor or ideology (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 4); 'design' is here used to indicate "the conceptual side of expression, and the expression side of conception",

which is the design seen as meta-mode to create the interaction with the consumer of the content, and is defined as the "midway" between content and expression plane (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 5); 'production' identifies the "medium of execution", social media in this case, and more precisely the semi-automated tools provided by the platform to construe the expression (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, pp. 6-7); 'distribution' here includes both the process of "preservation" and "distribution". Although distribution is not seen as semiotic, arguably, in luxury goods market, 'distribution' is a fundamental player in the construction of the brand identity as luxury itself (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, pp. 6-7). Furthermore, distribution can also be interpreted as the medium chosen to spread the discourse, the language, for example, that somehow limits the accessibility to content for non-speakers of a certain language.

The present study particularly focuses on the characteristics of the medium, being the variable that has changed the materiality of the texts. It works as canvas for the construction of the meanings and directly enable and constrain the meaning-making process (Bateman *et al.*, 2016) (see Section 2.4.4).

2.4.2 Social semiotics and multimodality

Multimodality is the product of the increasing attention devoted to different 'modes' or 'multimodal resources' other than language which shifted the research activities from 'monomodal' to 'multimodal artefacts' (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The advent of new technology has pushed researchers in this field to extend their interests to multisemiotic texts to explore the use of the different semiotic modes in the construction of meanings on multimedia platforms (Kress, 2010). The modes are resources to produce potential meanings based on the medium and the context where

they are allocated and accomplish at distinct functions (Veloso, 2014).

In the last decade, social semioticians such as Bezemer and Jewitt (2009) and Veloso (2014) have felt the need to review social semiotics and multimodality due to the recent growing interest towards them since its first embryonal manifestation in the 70s (Halliday, 1978) and its later legitimization with the work of Hodge & Kress (1988). Besides a need for theoretical advancement, scholars advocated the necessity of defining empirical methods for the analysis of multimodal data (Bateman, 2008; Bateman 2004; Veloso & Bateman, 2013; Bateman *et al.*, 2016, Walsh, 2012). These scholars, among others, have successfully integrated corpus methods and qualitative analysis with the support of technology to turn multimodal artefacts (e.g. comic books, digital photographs, scientific documents, etc.) into usable data to be treated with digital annotation tools (e.g. *UAM CorpusTool*, 2007; *ImageTool*, 2010).

Based on the empirical approach proposed in those studies, the present research project elaborates its own holistic methodological procedure to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze the dataset. These studies and the present research project fall into the research area of digital humanities that promotes the deployment of technology in the humanities and contributes to its scientific aspect (see Chapter 3).

Manovich (forthcoming) describes the diverse types of analyses conducted on big data: media content, user interactions with the content, and interaction among users. This latter converges into word-of-mouth (WOM) on a larger scale (Arndt, 1967; Alreck & Settle, 1995).

2.4.2.1 Visual grammar

The visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2006) is an adaptation of Halliday's

(1978) work, which transfers the three metafunctions (Halliday, 1985) of the linguistic system to the pictorial elements, co-deployed to construe meanings in a society. Table 2.6 presents the relationship between the linguistic and visual metafunctions also foregrounded by the work of O'Toole (1994) on visual art.

Table 2.6 Metafunction in Textual and Visual systems

Semiotic resource	Field	Tenor	Mode	SFL informed studies
Text	Ideational	Interpersonal	Textual	Halliday (1985)
Images	Representational	Modal	Compositional	O'Toole (1994)
	Representational	interactional	Compositional	Kress and van Leeuwen (1996)

Source: adaptation from Halliday (1985), O'Toole (1994), and Kress & van Leeuwen (1996)

The transposition of the three linguistic metafunctions to other systems has enabled the development of multimodal studies and its position as multidisciplinary nature which links the semiotic construal of meanings to their social action in different contexts. This is the case for the study of sound system (van Leeuwen, 1999), gesture (Martinec, 2000), or colour system (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002). In terms of the visual system, the visual grammar elaborated by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) is the only systematic approach to visual analysis, which allows the detection of meaning construction through pictorial elements. Its continuous validation is also given by the ongoing implementation carried out by Kress and his research groups who are now undertaking the challenge of applying social semiotics to the new media. Hence, there is a need for a comprehensive model to investigate the construction of meanings through different semiotic modes, which considers the nature of the medium

through which meanings are conveyed and distributed in a society. It must work across disciplines to contextualize the interpretation of the texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2012; Kress, 2010).

Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, p. 3) recognized the significant role of images in communication and based on existing frameworks developed for language, elaborated a transposition to examined "visual design". In the 'visual grammar' theorized by Kress & van Leeuwen, visual resources work to accomplish the three metafunctions defined for language. The following figures (Figure 3.24) show how Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996; 2006) categories for the visual analysis drawing on the linguistic framework proposed by SFL (Halliday, 1985). Visual grammar is unfolded into the narrative structure (Figure 2.13), the interactive semantics (Figure 2.14), and the compositional aspect of visual design, that match respectively with the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions.

Figure 2.14 Narrative structures in visual communication (Kress& van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 74)
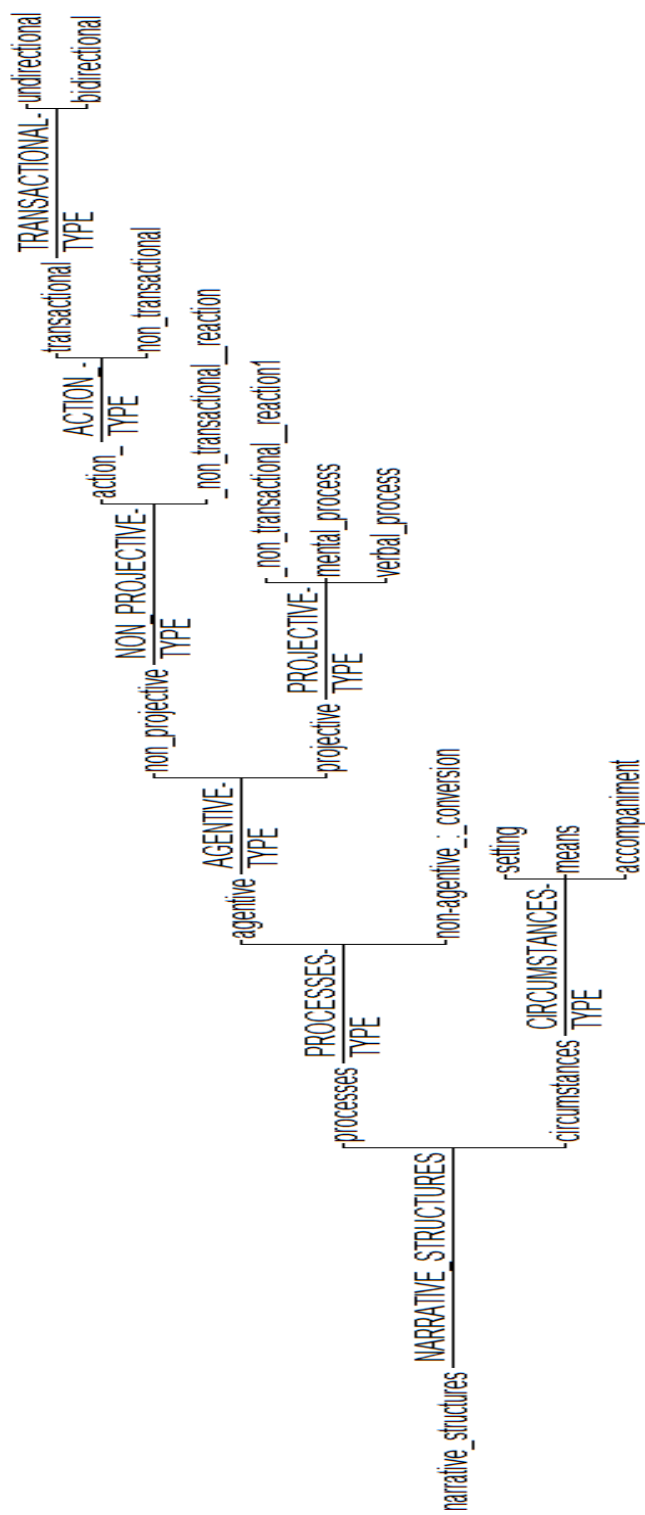
Figure 2.13 describes a useful tool to investigate visual transitivity, highlighting how participants, circumstances, and processes can be identified in visual elements through graphic elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Table 2.7 explains the taxonomies of the different categories which form the narrative structure.

Table 2.7 Realizations of the narrative structure

Unidirectional transactional action	A vector (e.g. arrow) that connects participants like for example and actor and a goal
Bidirectional transactional action	A vector (e.g. double-headed arrow) that connects two interactors
Non-transactional action	A vector that starts from a participant but does not link to any other participants
Actor	Active participant in the process. It is usually the starting point for a vector or it is fused with it
Goal	Passive participant, it is usually the destination of a vector
Interactors	Participants in the process. They can be both the origin and the destination of a vector
Transactional reaction	Eyeline vector that connects the reacter and the phenomenon
Non-transactional reaction	Eyeline that originates form the reacter but does not connect to any other participant
Reacter	The active participant of a reaction process whose look generates the
Phenomenon	The participant that represents the object of the reacter's look
Conversion	Phenomenon that includes the change of the status of a participant from being the goal of an action to be the actor of another process
Mental process	Any conventional device that indicates a though that connects the senser to the phenomenon
Senser	The active participants of a mental process, usually the origin of the connector to the phenomenon
Verbal process	Any device that connects two participants; the sayer and the utterance
Sayer	The participant that generates the verbal process
Utterance	The verbal participant enclosed in the verbal process
Setting	Background or context where the particpants are collocated and that partially obscure
Means	Tools that enable the participants to initiate the process

Accompaniment	Participant in a narrative structure that does not have direct relation with the process

Source: Adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen (2006, p. 74-75)

These realizations will be adapted to the data and reduced or accompanied by new ones borrowed from other models in order to provide a global understanding of the data and a match with the marketing strategies.

Interactive semantics instead looks at the semiotic construction of interaction between text and reader/viewer. It is summarized in the following figure (Figure 2.15).
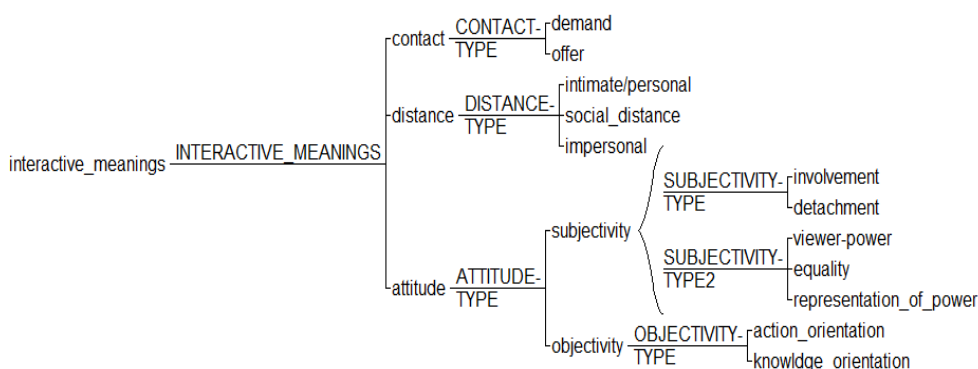
Figure 2.15 Interactive semantics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2006, p. 149)

The actual realization of the relationship established between the text and the reader/viewer is realized through the following visual elements (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8 Realizations of the interactive semantics

Demand	gaze at the viewer
Offer	absence of gaze at the viewer
Intimate/personal	close shot
Social	medium shot
Impersonal	long shot
Involvement	frontal angle
Detachment	oblique angle
Viewer power	high angle
Equality	eye-level angle
Represented participant power	low angle

Source: Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2006, p. 148)

In addition to the analysis of the narrative structure and interactive semantics, the visual design also relies on the compositional meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006); however, compositional meanings is not directly explored in this study but explored in terms of medium-specific features and derived from representational and interactional meanings.

2.4.2.2 Intersemiotic relations

Investigating multimodal texts to understand how different modes interact with each and construe meaning by exploring the distribution of the labour among the semiotic systems (Matthiessen, 2009). In a text, different modes interact for the achievement of a common goal and to vehicle the same message, but with a different codification (Astorga, 2009).

Intersemiotic relations in the literature is mostly interpreted as the understanding of the relations between text and image and leans on the very first study conducted by Barthes (1977) which constitutes the basis for the other framework developed so far. Barthes identifies two kinds of relationships between text and image: 'anchorage' that looks at the images as the elaboration of the language work at the connotative level to guide the audience; and 'relay' which presents the image as provider of information and support to the text, which is complementarity. Barthes (1977, 1987) had found the relation between text and image quite problematic but applied in a series of studies on fashion captions in magazines due to his interest for the couturiers. He (Barthes, 1993) describes the couturiers as "the poets who, from year to year, from strophe to strophe, write the anthem of the feminine body?". Barthes wrote extensively on fashion and his works are collected in two books as the final products *The Fashion System* (1985) and *The Language of Fashion* (1993).

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Multimodal artefacts or combination of diverse semiotic systems generate the idea of one meaning that can be replicated and re-used in different modes (affordances or semiotic resources) (Bateman, 2008). This recalls the concept of multiplying meanings suggested by Lemke (1998) and to the idea of "intersemiotic metaphor" provided by O'Halloran (1999). Lemke (2008) in his exploration of social media platforms as complex structures identified their huge potentiality and the urgent need for the development of new models for visual-verbal communication analysis through the different potential semiotic modes available in the new media. Lemke (2008), in his paper entitled "Transmedia traversals: marketing meaning and identity" draws upon SFL and multimodality as the most suitable tools to explore the promotional material available on new media by taking into consideration the marketing purposes behind the development of such digital content and the different "market identities" to be targeted. This emphasizes the idea that, if in the old media, we faced implicit ideological bias, in new media they are even more evident and need to be further investigated.

Social semioticians, in developing SFL frameworks for the study of intersemiotic relations, start from Barthes' works. For instance, Bateman (2014) tries to match Barthes' concepts of anchorage and relay then with Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST). Bateman (2014) recognized the vital role of advertising in our contemporary society as being the most suitable data to describe the art of rhetoric intended in classic terms as the art of persuading and convincing. Bateman (2014) also suggests the idea of the prevalence of pictures in advertisements because of their immediate appeal to grab the attention of the audience to let them consume the text later. Advertisements, therefore, are found to be "highly designed communicative artefacts" construed through the use of "heroic" products, "romantic" settings (or use) that play on a

connotative level (Bateman, 2014, p. 140). Like Bateman (2014), Martinec and Salway (2005) propose a model to investigate the language-picture interaction making a comparison between old and new media building up on Barthes' theories. Martinec and Salway's (2005) model relies on the semantic linkage between the two different semiotic resources to display a dependency or independency relationship drawing on SFL starting from the identification of equal or unequal relationship.

The term "intersemiosis" was firstly coined by O'Halloran (2005 pp. 165-167) to define "co-contextualization relations" based on Royce's work (1995) on mathematics. It was explored by other scholars which investigated different text-types such as textbooks (Unsworth, 2006; 2007), children books (Evans, 2009; Painter *et al*., 2013; Heberle, 2015;), multimodal documents (Bateman, 2008), comics (Veloso, 2013; Bateman & Veloso, 2013;), new media (Thibault, 2000). The increasing production of empirical studies will hopefully lead to the development of solid model to allow researchers to make generalizations according to the text-types explored. Text-types in which "text and image mutually recontextualize one another, influencing our interpretations of each and both together" (Lemke, 2002a, p. 322)

Martinec & Salway's (2005) framework, for instance, has been designed with the aim to analyze both old and new documents, which has been deployed and tested on blogs, Twitter, and Pinterest (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Domingo *et al.*, 2014; Henriksen, 2014).   Its wide application to new media texts legitimized its choice for this project along with the recent release of a further study focusing on new media (Martinec, 2013). The image–text relations system (language-picture system) provided by Martinec & Salway (2005) is a synthesis of Barthes' (1977) image–text relations with Halliday's (1994) interdependency and logico-semantic relations. This relates the analysis to RST and incorporates the idea of combining the analysis of the

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different modes separately first and together later.

Martinec & Salway (2005; Martinec, 2013) also emphasize the applicability of their framework for old and new media, in particular, when there is a narrative construction that has benefited from both language and picture systems. This is relevant in the design of content for marketing purposes, and in luxury goods market communication, which plays a central role in the reconstruction of exclusiveness. Figure 2.16 aims to identify the primary relationship between language and pictures.
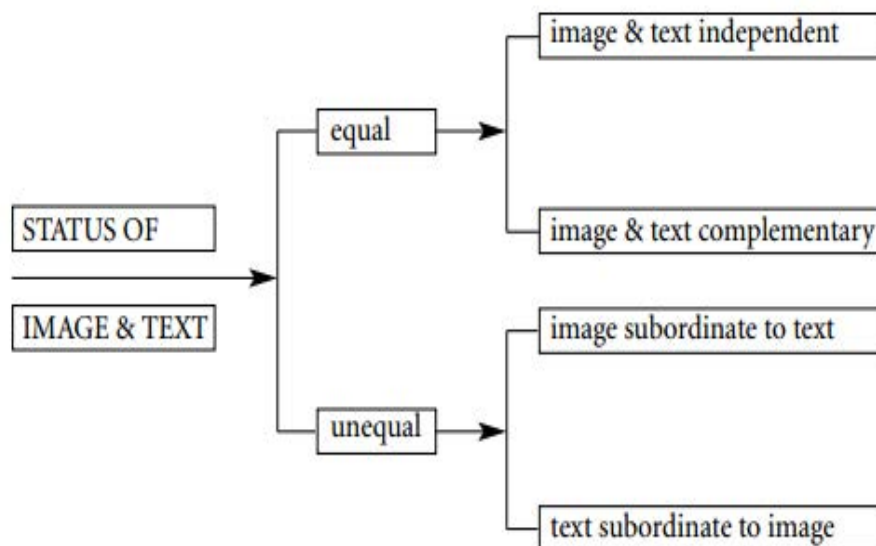
Figure 2.16 System of image–text status relations (Martinec & Salway, 2005, p. 349)

Building on that, Figure 2.17 describes a more specific label for the relationship to illustrate the ways in which language and pictures interact with each other and create hierarchies of relationship.
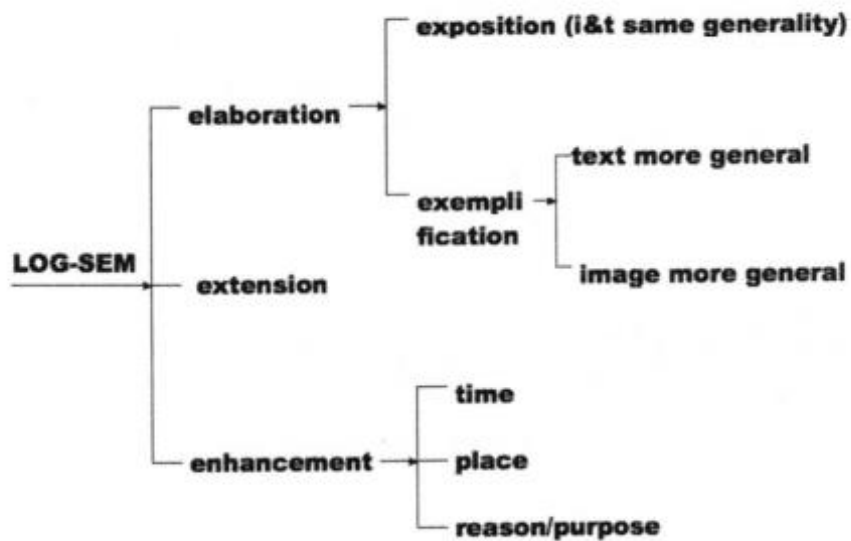
Figure 2.17 System of logico-semantics for image–text relations (Martinec, 2013, p. 155)

The different relationships identify the action done by modes to each other: elaboration when a meaning is restated or clarified, extension when more information is added, and enhancement when additional elements provides information about how, when, where and why a certain process takes place.

2.4.2.3 Printed advertisements

In the application of multimodal frameworks, studies have focused on printed advertising discourse. For example, Cheong (2004) who conducted a study on printed advertisements and proposed the use of a joint model by working on images drawing on Hasan's "Capture Focus Justification" model to identify a generic structure of this particular *genre* (Hasan, 1996, p. 41). Cheong (2004) also takes into consideration the idea of Given and New proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2001) and Barthes' (1977) concepts of 'relay' and 'anchorage' relationship between language and pictures. Cheong (2004, p. 164) elaborated a potential generic structure that describes the interaction between the different SFL metafunctions: Lead (Display) Emblem

(Announcement) (Enhancer) (Tag) (Call-and-Visit information). Cheong (2004) applied this model to five advertisements and used transitivity to work on the short texts. The study points out also the visual metaphors that characterize the advertisements, although it might not be workable for a larger corpus due to the detailed and time-consuming analysis conducted. In the analysis of the visual elements, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2006;) represent the role model for the analysis. They are also frequently applied in different studies and occurs in combination with Barthes' (1977). This suggests the applicability of Kress & van Leeuwen's framework to different *genres* of texts. Another framework to elaborate on the relation between different modes is provided by Martinec & Salway (2005) who apply Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2001) and Barthes (1977), along with Martin's (1992) idea of logic-semantic cohesion for the analysis of pictures.

Luxury branding discourse offers very good examples of how the semiotic construal feeds ideology behind the construction of the advertisement. The study proposed by O'Halloran & Lim Fei (2009) on *Cartier* advertisement on *Time Asia* (8 May 2006) provides a first attempt of linking up the expression to the content plane in the analysis. The study focuses on the analysis of the values incorporated in the advertisements and the metaphors created through the semiotic resources of text and image (O'Halloran and Lim Fei, 2009). In order to identify the reasons behind the verbal and visual choices in the construction of the advertisement, O'Halloran & Lim Fei (2009) apply the SF-MDA (O'Halloran, 2008) (Table 2.9) through the combination of systemic functional linguistics discourse analysis on multimodal texts.

Table 2.9 SF-MDA systems: the ideational metafunction

| | INTERSEMIOSIS ACROSS LANGUAGE AND VISUAL DISPLAY | | |
Metafunction	Discourse	Grammar	Expression
Experiential	INTERSEMIOTIC IDEATION Activity sequences and relations which span visual and linguistic elements	TRANSITIVITY RELATIONS Relational processes to set up identifying relations	JUXTAPOSITION Use of space and position to create lexical and visual relations
		LEXICALIZATION & VISUALIZATION Functional elements are re-represented using an alternative semiotic resource	FONT Use of font style, size and colour for experiential meaning
			COLOUR Use of colour for experiential meaning
Logical	INTERSEMIOTIC IMPLICATION SEQUENCE Cohesive and structural devices	INTERSEMIOTIC LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS & INTERDEPENDENCY Cohesive and conjunctive devices	SPATIAL POSITION Alignment of items in the text
		INTERPLAY OF SPATIALITY & TEMPORALITY Visual transformation of linguistic elements and vice versa	COLOUR Use of colour to direct the sequence for the construction of logical relations

Source: O'Halloran (2008)

O'Halloran & Lim Fei's (2009) study functions as basis for the development of a model for the understanding of the relation between consumerism, identity, and power in the mediascape which hosts the phenomenon of transmedia franchisee (Lemke, 2004) that, especially in luxury has become fundamental to create a 360° degree-world to englobe the consumer. The multi-framework proposed only focuses on the ideational metafunction in its experiential and logical meanings. In terms of semiotic resources, it investigates the textual resources through the deployment of the transitivity system (Halliday, 1985). The visual resources are investigated in the construction of intersemiotic relations to construct the cohesion between modes. Colour is examined as cohesive device; differently from studies in which in terms of ideational metafunction colour was investigated in its connotative meanings (Eco,

1973; Kourdis, 2014; Plümacher & Holz, 2007). Attempts of defining a grammar of colour have also been initiated (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2012); however, the exploration of this mode is still at its infancy due to the fact that it implies physics and cultural variables behind that. Goethe (1810) has probably captured the most comprehensive colour theory so far. The use of transitivity system as innovative approach in contrast with the overused appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). Additionally, the identification of colour as cohesive device has informed the annotation scheme for the representational meanings for the present study. In the same vein, O'Halloran & Fei's (2009) study has shown how investigating the ideational metafunction concerned with the construction of reality this clause is incomplete, the analysis also provides useful insight for the understanding of the textual metafunction.

Motta-Roth & Nascimiento (2009) also investigated identity and values in advertisements focusing on the ideational metafunction only and examining textual resources with transitivity and visual resources with the narrativity structure provided by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, 2006); however, Bell (2001) finds it incomplete to leave out the interactional meanings that offer useful insights into the understanding of the power relation s enacted by the advertisements. Bell's (2001) study is conducted on a printed lifestyle magazine for women. It starts from a quantitative analysis by assigning a numeric value to the representational and salience variables and focuses on a more qualitative aspect by taking into consideration the construction of distance in social relations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001; Hall, 1966). In this way Bell (2001) construes the representation of identity and the interaction with the viewer/reader. Similar to Bell (2001), Machin & Thornborrow (2003) and Machin and van Leeuwen (2004; 2015) examined the Cosmo lifestyle magazine and construed the world created within the framing of the magazine. Both studies perform multimodal

discourse analysis to unpack the semiotic construction and discuss the dynamics behind the choices to produce the magazine and the rules of the publishing game to be attained, along with the identity construal of the readership. The studies provided examples of branding strategies for newspapers (Machin & Niblock, 2008). Chen & Machin (2015) also replicate the same methodology in Chinese context. These studies gave an overview of the necessary variables to be considered in investigating advertising discourse to infer socio-economic power negotiations.

The next section focuses more on the shift from printed advertising to digital advertising, describing the advertising *genre* and its printed and digital instantiations.

2.4.3 From advertising to digital multimodal artefacts

This section reviews studies on advertising and identifies characteristics of the *genre* and multimodal frameworks, which can be transferred to digital multimodal artefacts with the same communication purpose.

2.4.3.1 Advertising discourse

Drawing on the definition of marketing as the process of creating the need, and in case of unnecessary goods, the desire, advertising industry works as producer of additional value to sell people goods "by selling them an identity: a 'new look', a 'make-over', a 'new me" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 29; Leiss *et al*., 1990); however, advertising has been disregarded from a social perspective for a long time (Bruthiaux, 1993; Cook, 1992). Brands create desirable features for the consumers to generate the purchase intention; therefore, in the process of production of content, brands need to take into consideration the effect they want to generate in the potential buyers and carefully

make choices to construe meanings. Meanings need to attain to specific legislations and constraining frames, which are not only in outdoor environments (Floyd, 1983), but also online as "global subject" under the "global gaze" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 390). More recently, for example gender equality is one of the themes kept under control.

Advertising is a discursive practice which finds its roots in the ancient times as individuals have always been promoting goods, places, people, and ideas (Brierley, 2005). Greeks and Romans were the artists of rhetoric and eloquence and these skills were practiced to persuasively convey ideas and engage the audience (Brierley, 2005). The 'advertising' refers to the set of marketing activities aimed at selling products through paid channels of communication, and advertisements can be categorized into soft sell and hard sell according to their unique selling proposition (USP) if any (Reeves, 1960).

In industries characterized by low-involvement in buying decision processes advertisements are structured following the USP. It can be briefly summarized into 'problem-solution-satisfaction of the customer' where the reality presents a problem that the product can solve and the customer can be satisfied only through the purchase of the product (Reeves, 1960). It is not the case of the purchase intention in industries where the buying decision process requires high-involvement like luxury goods market (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Luxury is construed through communication. An accurate design of the contents is needed to construe appealing messages that are able to persuade potential customers and convince them that those products incorporate intangible assets that justify the price (Okonkwo, 2007). What is the rhetorical structure of luxury brands advertisements? How has it changed in the era of social media marketing? Advertising discourse is

"intrinsically persuasive, informative and socially constructing" (Cook, 2001, p. 5; Dyer, 1986, p. 129; Durant & Lambrou 2009, p. 93). Additionally, advertising 2.0 pervasively penetrates our daily live (Tuten, 2008; Takran & Ylmaz, 2015).

Interesting examples of advertising based on intangible features are offered by perfumes. Featherstone (2007) argued that perfume advertising is constructed as journeys through time and space enhancing nostalgia. The *LV* commercial analyzed is a journey of nostalgia, and its sharing in the digital space enhances the blur of the boundaries between art and ordinary life. The methodology adopted presents the analysis of text and image in the sequentiality of a video. Unpacking videos into text-image frames establishes text and images as basic units of multimodal texts, and the present study treats them as such (see Chapter 3). Faiers (2017) promoted advertising as the discourse of desire and aspiration, and likewise Flueckiger (2009, p. 197) examines advertisements of perfumes in their denotative and connotative creation of lifestyle in which the scent becomes a "cross-modal representation". Denghani *et al*. (2016) also examine video advertisements on YouTube to measure when the construction of brand identity creates awareness and generates purchase by categorizing the discursive practices into informational and entertainment. Lee & Hong (2016) called it the measurement of creativity.

Studies on advertising discourse have identified the following features: elliptical participants and processes, often related to text-image relation; a tendency to use nominalizations and long nominal group listing the evaluative features of the products promoted; reducing the number of words for the sake of conciseness and immediacy of the message; deictic words, typical of advertising discourse, but also further explored as contextual elements whose use is reinforced by the hypertextual structure of the texts (Cook, 1992; Myers, 2010; Riboni, 2014). As technical and specialized

discourse, advertising is also subjected to Halliday's (1989) theory that formal communication and technicality present a high percentage of nominalizations, and less clauses. These findings are confirmed by Bruthiaux (1996). These peculiar features travel from printed to new media and preserve the high lexical density of the discourse and its difficulties in being annotating as clausal elements.

Advertising was investigated through appraisal theory (Durham, 1986; Johnston *et al.*, 2005), likewise its derived web *genre* of promotional websites and TV commercials (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Johnston *et al*., 2010; Suen, 2013; Thibault, 2000).

Cook (2000) focused on advertising in its instantiations of shopping commercials to unveil the ideologies behind it. The study concluded that advertisements are constructed to reduce class distance and frame consumption as satisfaction of aspiration.

Baig (2013) further explored advertising as social practice and applied speech theory on the text seen as exchange between text-producer and receiver. Williams (1980) argued that without advertising, people would not have desire for goods.

Patpong (2008) examined advertisements of talismans on Thai magazines from a tri-stratal perspective with the aim to deconstrue persuasion. The tri-stratal approach built on the context, semantics, and lexico-grammar strata of discourse. Focusing on the methodology applied, transitivity constitutes a major work and the findings proved that material processes play a fundamental role in the construction of persuasion.

Similar to Darani (2014), the narration of actions is more effective than relational processes stating qualities with the use of the verb 'to be'. Transitivity has also been used by Mills (1995) to investigate the role of women and men in advertising. Mills

found that women are often passive goals of actions while men are empowered being the actors of the processes. Gender studies definitely constitute a conspicuous area of research in advertising. Shouf *et al.* (2016) contributed to this discussion by examining web advertisements, and performing a cross-gender examination, which confirm Cho's (1999) claim that visual design plays a key role in producing effective messages; however, it is not the focus of the present study, the findings will eventually provide some instances of it.

Both printed advertisements and digital advertisements are constructed through intertextual and interdiscursive references (Cook, 1992; Tanaka, 1994; Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985; Bhatia, 2017). Feng and Wignell (2011), for instance, have examined intertextuality in TV commercials, Lam (2013) has found it in Groupon promotions, Erjavec (2004) in promotional journalism and intersecting with interdiscursivity defined as product of the internet and named 'interpractice'. Intertextuality characterizes advertising discourse despite its canvas.

Advertising like other discursive practices, is intertextual and interdiscursive by default (Halliday, 1978). T.S. Eliot 's *The Waste Land* is a notable example of a mosaic defined by Kristeva (1969, 1986). A literary text constructed on others. A net, within which each node constitutes a piece of literature coming from the glorious past, from Ovid to Shakespeare, and Homer to Baudelaire, in which different centuries converge into one text. Numerous scholars (Bakhtin, 1986; Bhatia, 2004; Devitt, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Foucault, 1984; Halliday, 1978; Kristeva, 1969, 1986; Martin, 2002; White, 2002) have investigated this discursive practice.

Among others, Bazerman (2004) unfolds the methodological procedures necessary to investigate this phenomenon. The procedures include: firstly,

understanding why intertextuality is examined; secondly, why it is necessary in this particular corpus; thirdly, what are the other texts composing the text analyzed; fourthly, why these particular choices; fifthly, how intertextuality is realized; sixthly, its function and subtle clues. Those procedures are followed in the present study.

Intertextuality does not only refer to the explicit use of citations and common knowledge shared, but also refers to other instances (Bazerman, 2004), for example, the compositional meanings in Kress & van Leeuwen's terms are investigated to verify the sources of inspiration of the intertextual references. In branding discourse, intertextuality is used based on calculations of appeal made on the background knowledge of the target audience. In these terms, intertextuality works as an umbrella term to indicate the use of both internal and external semiotic resources to link the text to her texts or contexts to build authenticity and credibility of the brand, and in the case of digital media also authority in terms of voice.

In the process of constructing authoritative associations and voice, texts present instances of intertextuality, when the actual reference is internal to the texts (e.g. *Facebook* post showing Da Vinci's Mona Lisa), and interdiscursivity, when the association comes from an external agent, which could be the context of use or any relations that could be made by the reader/viewer (e.g. use of vignettes in advertisements) (Bhatia, 2017). In both intertextuality and interdiscursivity, the process involves the appropriation of semiotic resources from other texts; more specifically, in the case of intertextuality, semiotic resources belong to the internal construction of the texts, while for interdiscursivity, they are more related to the discursive space, meaning the context of use (Bhatia, 2017).

2.4.3.2 Digital multimodal artefacts

Rossolatos (2015) explored the concept of brand from a semiotic and social semiotic perspective across a wide range of public and private sectors. He brought into discussion several aspects of communication and theories and frameworks under a common goal of defining the state-of-the art of brand semiotics by injecting it with the social dimension of the SFL scholars. Among all, Bateman (2015) applied his framework for the investigation of multimodal text to the rhetoric of persuasion of advertising discourse and O'Halloran *et al.* (2015) propose a systemic functional approach as a tool for the investigation of the evolution of the promotional discourse of universities on their websites initiated to marketize educational programmes.

Bateman (2015) explained the fruitful experience of applying systemic functional social semiotic frameworks to branding discourse and suggested that future investigations in this direction will be able to explore advertising as a social phenomenon, which provide room for shifting from a micro to macro perspective within a sector, market, and society. Bateman promoted the examination the semiotic construal (forms) of meanings through multimodal frameworks and highlighted the shift to the content plane by borrowing concepts from other disciplines to interpret their function in the society and elaborate implications for the designers of branding discourse. Register, as realized through socio-semiotic processes (fields of activity) was found an essential element for the construal of branding texts as it contributes to the convention of the brand values (Bateman, 2015). The notion of registers in the cyberspace, along with the investigation of *genre*, has become of interest with the emergence of social media. It is further discussed in relation to interdiscursivity as a phenomenon which leads to hybridization in the mediascape. Bateman carefully

explains theory and application of systemic-functional social semiotics to branding discourse, while O'Halloran *et al.* (2015) provided a more empirical approach which show the analysis in details of a case study.

O'Halloran *et al.*'s focus of the analysis was the "navigation style" of the website in terms of usability which drew upon Askehave & Nielsen's (2005) framework for homepages in which hyperlinks represents a tool to enhance an explicit intertextuality. Intertextuality (Petroni, 2011), which was realized in the construction of meanings as a negotiation, and exchange as the product of the encounter between the user and the information shared. The notions of hypertextuality and intertextuality have become distinctive features of Web 2.0 and functional in terms of usability of a platform which enhances the coherence and cohesion of the web text (Petroni, 2011). Social media platforms are found to borrow those characteristics from websites and other media, and incorporate them as embedded features in tags, hashtags, and other tools, which are discussed in the findings of this study.

The wider multiplicity of modes available to construe the meanings in the new media increased the proliferation of multimodal studies (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Lemke, 1998). Hopearuoho and Ventola (2009) conducted a study comparing printed media and new media for cars to identify if the medium affects the product identity in terms of globalization or localization. Hopearuoho & Ventola (2009) compared printed car advertisements with car web advertisements and 'pop-up' banner advertisements. The study aimed to reinforce the idea that marketing and linguistic experts should work together to better explore the new frontiers of communication on digital media to go beyond the developed strategies and scrutinizes the potentiality of computer-mediated *genres*. The study explored all the three metafunctions and includes the investigation of the intersemiosis between the different semiotic resources involved

(Hopearuoho & Ventola, 2009). Also known as 'hypermodality' as interaction of different modes in hypermedia environment, like "semiotic artefacts in which signifiers on different scales of syntagmatic organization were linked in complex networks or webs" (Lemke, 2002b, p. 300).

Digital media environment represented a fertile terrain for research at the *Multimodal Methodologies for Studying Digital and Data Environments* (MODE[47]) and the *Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches* (NOVELLA[48]) research centres, both of the nodes are based at the Institute of Education (University College London). These two centres work on the development of new methodologies to investigate communication in the digital environments. These methodologies need to be designed to meet the technical orientation of digital platforms and allow the understanding of potentials and constraints for meaning making (Domingo *et al.*, 2014).

Interesting research projects focused on food blogs (Domingo *et al.*, 2014) that deployed a combined framework based on social semiotics and ethnography along with the tools for multimodal analysis developed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) adapted to digital media (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2010) and the idea of storytelling in blogs.

The second study relevant to the present project aimed at investigating the composition of social media texts (Henriksen, 2014). It was conducted at MODE with the attempt of applying the tools for textual and visual analysis along with the investigation of intersemiotic relationship between them to social media like Pinterest

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[47] *MODE*, http://mode.ioe.ac.uk/ [Last access 15/09/2015]
[48] *NOVELLA*, http://www.novella.ac.uk/ [Last access 15/09/2015]

ad Twitter.

A further study conducted by Bezemer & Kress (2014) which investigated the text-making process of *Facebook* by individual users culminates as the research advancement in this area foregrounding and informing the present study. The study (Bezemer & Kress, 2014), as well as this thesis, work on the implementation and application of existing multimodal frameworks with an extensive investigation of the medium and contest as major players in the construction of meanings and their dissemination. The multi-framework proposed (Bezemer & Kress, 2014) included different layers of analysis: the organization of information within the layout; the generic structure of textual realizations in terms of lexical choices and syntax following Halliday (1985) and Hodge & Kress (1988); Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) for visual grammar; video and camera angle as well as shots (Burn, 2014); layout according to Ambrose and Harris (2005); and Barthes (1977) and Martinec and Salway (2005) for the intersemiotic analysis. Cohesion is investigated through the adaptation of Halliday & Hasan (1976) and the interpretation of the results is informed by Kress (2010) and its functional distribution of the modes. This study represents the corollary to process of development of the multi-framework model elaborated for the present study (see Chapter 3) through a data-driven approach which adapts existing and widely validated and replicated models by highlighting the medium-specific mode combinations circumstances to consider in the analysis.

Maier (2012) also explored intersemiosis in multimodal construction of persuasion corporate communication. She found out that text and image work at the same generality, and when extension is realized images contribute to it by providing additional details. This produces a shift at the consumption level in which from passive consumers, the readers become critical learners (Santulli, 2007).

The advent of new technology increased the interest of researchers in the investigation of semiotic resources other than language and of their orchestration for the production of "multimodal artefacts and events" (Mitchell, 2005; van Leeuwen, 2005, p. xi; Veloso, 2014). These texts that populate the media in large volume, especially if hosted by the internet, constitute information worth investigation as product of its times. Unlike big data analysis, social semiotics is based on an accurate collection of texts that preserve information about the context of production and distribution of meanings (e.g. layout). It is a qualitative approach used to draw the connection between denotative and connotative interpretations of signs (Barthes, 1957). Social semiotic theory in its application to multimodal texts entails that each semiotic resource plays a role in the meaning-making process. For instance, newspapers and magazines convey meanings constructed by different components, language, photographs, color, font, paper materials and their properties (e.g. laminated, thin or thick texture), among others (Veloso, 2014).

Social media have pushed the increasing deployment of images in the form of photography undergone through transformation throughout time moving from cameras to digital cameras, till smartphone, which today represents the most used instrument to capture moments of our life. This has favoured the mutation of photography from tool to privately preserve extraordinary moments of life, to an agent for identity construction shared daily with a wider audience (van Dijk, 2005). Selfie, for instance and its meta-representation of a photo of someone taking a selfie have emerged in social semiotic studies.

Selfies have been examined by scholars especially in terms of identity construction (Zappavigna, 2016; Tifentale & Manovich, 2017), upgrading of status while reporting a trip to a specific destination or visit to a museum (Lyu, 2016), and

identification of selfies as a new *genre* in a particular context of culture like celebrity culture reducing the distance between celebrity and followers (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2015). This latter reflected more the use of selfie that appears in the dataset for the present study that interestingly portrays the shift from an institutional and top-down elaboration of editorial content to consumer-oriented communicative strategies. Hence, by looking at photography as a social activity in the last two decades, photography has evolved from a moment of creation of memories for private consumption to a massive practice aimed to construct an aspirational world built on the ideal self to be consumed for the others (van Dijk, 2005).

Zhao & Zappavigna (2017) have already developed categories to differentiate types of selfies, and the framework is a development of Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar. Zappavigna (2016) construed motherhood on Instagram and focuses on the interaction between photographer, subject, and viewer. The subject is part of the image and it is not a "disembodied" entity like it was in the Renaissance art (Zappavigna, 2016, p. 15).

Tifentale & Manovich (2016, p. 2) examined selfies as instances of self-construal on Instagram coining the term "competitive photography" to discuss the visual construction of competing discourses (Ravazzani & Maier, 2017), among the *genre* of popular photography. Competitive photography tends to replicate features that makes it likeable such as angles, filters, but also subjects. Kozinets *et al*. (2017) also verified through an ethnographic and netnographic approach (Kozinet, 2012) how art and museums become background elements in selfies.

Social semiotics recognized photography in its materiality and performative power (Chouliaraki & Blaagaard 2013). Sonesson (1989) starting from the history

photography, before digital, explained how printing photographs was a ritual. Dominick (1999) foregrounded the digital turn for photography and anticipated Schroeder's (2013) snapshot aesthetics. Digital photography was investigated by Knox (2009) who examined how the medium hosting the images impacted the text-image relations.

Caple & Knox (2015) focused on online galleries, drawing on Barthes and Knox (2009) from a methodological perspective; however, more systematic studies were provided by O' Halloran (2013) on Fox news that include frames from videos and Veloso (2016) on electoral photography. These two studies approach data from a more empirical perspective.

Veloso (2016) investigated photography in the digital era and, more precisely, in its *Facebook* canvas in the *genre* of electoral photographs. Electoral photographs, being a promotional *genre* it shares similarities with branding discourse, and more interestingly articulated within *Facebook* posts provide insights within the site-specific discursive practices. Veloso (2016) identified social distance and power relation as being framed by the medium hosting the discourse. *Facebook* aiming to reduce distance among its users, reduces the distance between the candidate and the audience, and at the same time also drops the high positioning of the candidate by bringing him/her close to the electors.

Despite the subject of communication, digital advertising generated an immersive 'ubiquitous branding' (Paganoni, 2012). Ubiquity infused our everyday life (McStay, 2010) as a direct consequence of interconnectivity (Springer, 2007, 2009). New media promoted the co-existence of different *genres*, both offline and online, for instance, branding tweets and consumers' voice in combination with magazines, and billboards,

and other forms of advertisements (Paganoni, 2012).

Consumers in social media platforms are addressed as 'prosumers' (term first used by Toffler, 1980 and Kotler, 1986, but concretely applying in the web 2.0). They are prosumers because the potential consumers in terms of content shared on social media are both consumers and producers because of the presence of the UGC that has now given the consumers the title of 'product and brand advocate' (Gunelius, 2010).

In post-modern societies "traditional distinctions and hierarchies are collapsed" (Featherstone, 2007, p. 92) and digital landscape offers discursive instances that reflect this statement, and arguably, the differences in social class, which are also enhanced by the digital divide as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Facebook posts in the present study are functionally treated as advertisements because of their coincidence of the communicative purpose of generating profits for the brand through the persuasion of the audience to buy the products (Kotler website), and *Facebook* posts accomplish this task with additional values [49]. Due to the development of e-commerce tools incorporated into the *Facebook* platform (f-commerce, Fondati, 2011), recently, brands can actually sell through *Facebook* whose timeline can be regarded as the windows of an offline shop, but it is only that.

If, instead, we redefine profit as the financial value of the brand we come across the concept of brand value that nowadays represents the actual value for brands because it can be translated into the potentiality of the brand of establishing hegemony in its market of reference (Kapferer, 2008). Brand equity generates brand value, or e-quity in this context and summarizes the position of the brand in consumers' mind (Keller, 1993). Brand e-quity is the product of effective communication activities

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[49] *Facebook Business*, https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads [09/07/2017]

(Keller, 1993) that while building up the brand identity are successful in terms of decoding and decoding process (Hall, 2006) and the brand image presents a high coincidence between the purpose of the brand and the correct perception of the audience.

The additional power of *Facebook* posts resides in the fact that the brand acquires financial value not only from the sales revenue, but from the collection of 'like', 'comments', 'shares' that create buzz and make the content displayed more visible in the cyberspace. It also generates a digital 'word-of-mouth' effect, and can also become a tool for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to understand and meet the taste of the audience by reading the feedback (Okonkwo, 2010); therefore, *Facebook* posts represent a more resourceful form of advertising because of its multiple functions.

2.4.3.3 Luxury in the social media: mapping registers

In this project, the realization of the meanings shared by luxury brands in the social media is allocated into the registerial cartography elaborated by Matthiessen (2014, p.1) where the term register it used in its literary linguistic meaning of being a "functional variety if language". The aim of the cartography is to provide "maps" covering different functional varieties of the language contextualized according to the use (Matthiessen, 2014, p. 9). The cartography is constructed by taking into consideration the continuum *axis* between the 'system (potential) pole' and 'text (instance) pole' (Halliday, 1991; 2002). Especially among the emerging registers, there are registers that overlap, blend, and "shade into" one another and to generate "registerial hybridity". New emerging text-types are now proliferating due to the constant need of adaptation to the new channels (Matthiessen, 2014, p. 9; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2015;), and are going to investigated in this study. Figure 2.18 shows the

fields of activity and socio-semiotic processes that characterize different "registerial repertoires" (Matthiessen, 2013, p. 10).
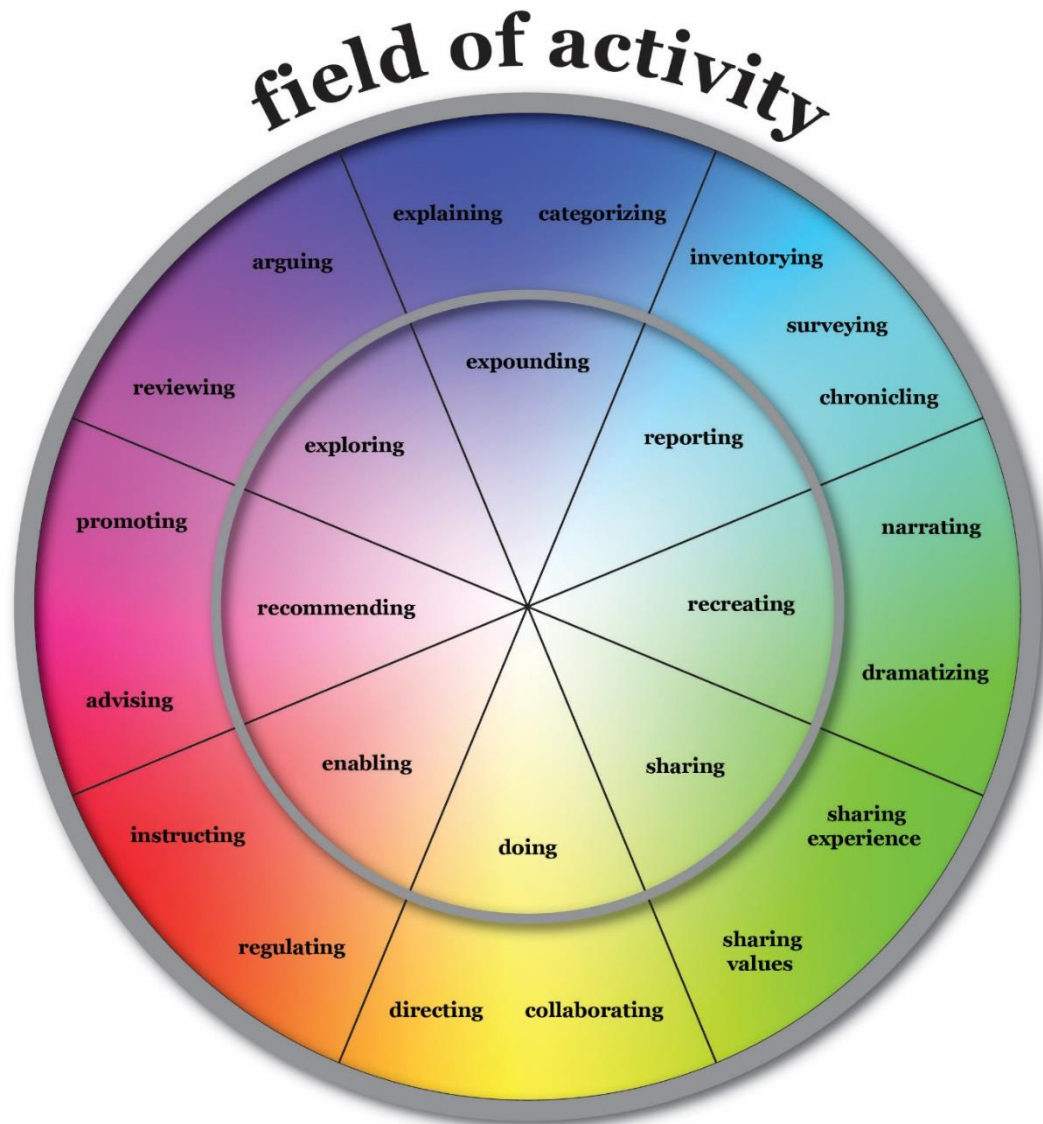
Figure 2.18 The registerial cartography (Matthiessen, 2015, p. 7)

Figure 2.18 summarizes the contextual structures (Matthiessen, 2014, p. 9) dividing the pie into different rays for fields of activity or socio-semiotic processes: the "expounding" that implies the activities of categorizing or documenting and explaining certain phenomena; the socio-semiotic process of "reporting" that includes chronicling and surveying (e.g. guide books), and inventorying; the field of activity of

"recreating" that is characterized by the process of narration and dramatization; the socio-semiotic process of "sharing" that regards experiences and values and aims at establishing, maintaining, and negotiating personal relationships; the field of activity of "doing" that has the purpose of engaging in interactive social behavior, collaborating and directing   in individuals in groups; the socio-semiotic process of "enabling" that also suggests the act of instructing and regulating; the field of activity of "recommending"   that implies advising and inducing (e.g. promotion); and the socio-semiotic process soft "exploring" that is complementary with reviewing and arguing (Matthiessen, 2014, p. 10).

While trying to identify the field of activity the analysis will also include the 'tenor', which aims at defining the institutional role of the actors involved in the meaning making process; the 'mode' will also investigated by emphasizing the importance of the medium and the channel particularly dealing with new media; 'field' will accomplish the aim of identifying the field of activity and discourse already discussed (Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30).

Furthermore, the discourse can be located into systems of different order according to the classification provided by Halliday and Matthiessen (Halliday, 1966; 2005; Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999; Matthiessen, 2007;): physical and biological as material systems and social and semiotic as immaterial systems. The physical system is related to the physical phenomenon object of the discourse, the biological can be seen as the actual perception of the phenomenon by an organism, the social system is the social value of the phenomenon and the semiotic system provides the phenomenon with a meaning that enact social relationship (Matthiessen & Kashyap, 2014).

The promotional discourse construed on *Facebook* and realized through different

posts is identified as a registerial hybrid that blends into one entity different fields of activity and socio-semiotic processes. Matthiessen & Teruya (2016, p. 211) have already highlighted how "hybridity" is an embedded feature of media texts such as the example provided of product reviews, which presents an overlap of 'recommending' and 'exploring' socio-semiotic processes. Hybridity in the mediascape have also been confirmed through quantitative studies (Biber *et al.*, 2015) conducted on the corpus *CORE*[50], which includes different media *genres* and has been created with the intent of elaborating linguistic taxonomies to identify web registers.

Furthermore, another aspect is the exploration of different systems of order by combining the business and linguistic approach while trying to map the significance of the data. For the material systems, the physical order looks at the product, which is the reality represented in the social media posts and that becomes the subject of all the discourse. The biological order suggests the idea of a possible reversed Maslow's pyramid based on Jackson and Shaw's (2009) interpretation of luxury. Luxury prioritizes the "self-actualisation needs", and "esteem needs", and "social needs" and "needs to belong" that are on the top. In terms of immaterial systems, they become more effective because of the importance of communication in the construction of luxury itself, in the social order the data can be seen as discourse aimed at imposing the specific taste for the brand and although is not consumed physically needs to be object of computer-mediated consumption. In the semiotic order, there is further step that emphasize the idea of luxury consumption as satisfaction of desire for belonging and establishing an identity and as raw material to work on in the process of self-construction.

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[50] *CORE*, http://corpus.byu.edu/core/ [25/10/2016]

2.4.5 Summary

This section has defined social semiotics and explained how this theory enables a multidisciplinary approach, which construes discourse as a process of meaning-making, which shapes and at the same time is shaped by society.

In the present study, social semiotics is particularly used to investigated digital multimodal artefacts and the limited number of studies conducted on those types of texts requires the understanding of printed text analysis and the identification of frameworks applicable in the digital environment with due developments; therefore, the section explored studies conducted on both advertising discourse, mainly printed texts, to focus on the how persuasion is constructed, and new media and social media artefacts to identify the features of those specific texts.

As a result, the literature review provided a set of different frameworks used to investigate multimodal texts a suitable starting point to develop a multi-framework, which takes into account the digital environment and the purpose of communication behind the meaning-making process.

The frameworks to be compose the multi-framework for this study are: transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2006), intersemiotic relations framework (Martinec & Salway, 2005, and registerial cartography (Matthiessen, 2015).

2.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the key concepts of this research project, namely luxury, brand identity, branding and marketing strategies. These concepts have been

investigated in their conventional meanings, and in their digital evolution. Luxury is conventionally defined as a privilege for an elitist group of people; however, in the 21st century it faces an unstable conceptualization due to socio-economic events that have diluted its aura. Its features of exclusivity, unaffordability, inaccessibility, rarity, scarcity, tradition, and high-quality are undergoing digital transformation, and evolving into something else.

Brand identity is defined as the combination of tangible and intangible assets associated with the brand name. It differs from brand image, the perception that people have of that particular brand. Brand identity is characterized by the specificity of the brand and the segment to which it belongs. The brand values involved in the construction of brand identity span from tradition to innovation, from Italianicity to Britishness, according to the CoO. Branding and marketing strategies are identified as anti-laws of marketing because of their aim to construct brand identity instead of selling goods. Branding and marketing strategies include digital (hi)storytelling, heritage marketing, Renaissance effect, artification of luxury, country of origin effect, and cause-related marketing.

Studies from different disciplines have been reviewed. The literature review of business studies provides an understanding of how brands are perceived in the social media platforms, what type of editorial content is constructed, and which content is more appreciated by the audience. The studies reviewed in applied linguistics have focused on how discursive representations of luxury contribute to its conceptualization in the society and its role in the social stratification.

Crafting a successful brand identity on social media requires a complex system of electronic communication construed through different resources that affect the process

of conveying the message; therefore, social semiotics has been identified as a suitable approach because of its systematic, coherent, and comprehensive theory (Hodge & Kress, 1998). It is presented in relation to multimodality. A review of multimodal studies identifies frameworks applicable to social media texts, such as the Eisenlauer's *Facebook* structure (2013; 2014), Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) visual grammar, Martinec and Salway's (2005) annotation scheme for intersemiotic relations, and Matthiessen's (2015) registerial cartography.

This chapter bridges brand management and its discursive instantiations. It seeked to point out that the concept of luxury, being characterized by intangible features constructed through discursive representations, necessitates a discursive approach to understand the consequences of the semiotic choices. Table 2.10 summarizes the previous studies on the relation established between the semiotic construction of luxury through discourse and its conceptualization in the society (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Table 2.10 Interwoven relation of medium, discourse, distribution, and luxury conceptualization

Medium	Printed media	Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Social media
Degree of interactivity	Read-only content	Mostly read-only content	Opportunity to interact	Co-creation of content
Discourse production	Branded content	Branded content to be consumed online	Branded content vs. User-Generated Content (UGC)	Branded content, UGC, algorithm
Discourse distribution	Localized	Globalized	Glocalized	Customized
Definition of 'luxury'	Top-down and institutionalized	Top-down and institutionalized	Top-down but seeking for interaction	Bottom-up informs top-down

Source: Adapted from Kapferer & Vallette-Florence (2016), Hodge & Kress (1988), and Kress & van Leeuwen (2001)

Table 2.10 shows how the definition of luxury is given by the discourse constructed around it, and how, at the same time, the discourse is framed by the medium within which it is produced and distributed and designed for.

In the era of web 1.0 that finds its manifestation into websites, created by luxury fashion firms quite late comparing to other sectors, are characterized by a mostly read-only branded content consumed by the audience that visits the page, even though at its infancy stage, websites still presented language barriers. Here again the concept of luxury is institutionalized as the content can only be consumed by the readers/viewers.

With the development into web 2.0, the mediascape changes and UGC first appears as a chance to interact and comment the branded content disseminated on digital platforms such as blogs and wikis. Luxury is still an institutionalized concept

but it is seeking for interaction with the younger audience to perform CRM research. With the advent of 2.0, messages are glocalized, meaning that they are globally shared, but locally designed to address specific target markets.

Web 2.0 informs the stage of social media communication in its pull towards 3.0 and 4.0. It empowers the users over the institutions shifting the manipulation of the discourse to the audience's side. To counteract the proliferation of uncontrolled discourse about the brand resulting from the prosumers, luxury firms need to rely on discourse in framing their brand identity and values. Branding discourse in the social media era is co-created by brands and users, not only because users can actually contribute with their comments, like, and share, but also because in the production of the texts and even earlier at the level of design, the meanings are created to mitigate reactions. At this stage, messages are customized and make use of the most advanced tools to tailor advertising to the need expressed by the potential customers.

This shift from web 1.0 to social media era will be considered as framing context for the identification of the medium-specific features. Those features together with textual and visual modes compose the dataset for the present study.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aims of this research project are to find out the conceptualization of luxury in the 21st century based on its semiotic construction, to understand how the medium of communication chosen to spread the branding discourse enables and constrains the division of the semiotic labour, and to identify the site-specific discursive practices performed by the three luxury fashion firms selected for this research project.

Three research questions have been designed to achieve the aims:

1)   How are different semiotic resources used by luxury fashion firms to construct their brand identity and values through corporate *Facebook* posts?

2)   How do the different semiotic resources interact with each other in the production of the branding discourse in the *Facebook* platform?

3)   What are the socio-semiotic processes that frame the site-specific discursive practices enacted in the corporate *Facebook* posts?

The theoretical and analytical frameworks are the result of six pilot studies conducted on 135 corporate *Facebook* posts retrieved from *Burberry* corporate *Facebook* page. The pilot studies tested the applicability of the annotation schemes for identity construction and marketing strategies, transitivity system, representational meanings, interactional meanings, intersemiotic relations, and socio-semiotic processes. Two other coders have helped to code 30% of the dataset to validate the annotation schemes.

The present chapter is organized as follows: Section 3.2 presents the research methodology, including data collection and description (Section 3.2.1), the profile of the brands (Section 3.2.2), corpus-based approach and corpus tools utilized (Section 3.2.4), and data analysis steps (Section 3.2.5); Section 3.3 describes the theoretical framework and explains how different perspectives and disciplines are combined together under the theory of social semiotics; Section 3.4 describes each step of the multi-framework proposed for the multimodal discourse analysis; Section 3.5 summarizes the key-points of the chapter.

3.2   Research methodology

The present section describes the process of data collection (Section 3.2.1), the positioning of the brands examined (Section 3.2.2), the compilation of the multimodal corpus and the data description (Section 3.2.3), the choice of the corpus approach and corpus tools for the analysis and the annotation of the dataset (Section 3.2.4), and the different steps of analysis (Section 3.2.5).

3.2.1 Data collection

The data for this study consists of corporate *Facebook* posts of three luxury fashion brands. Corporate *Facebook* posts are instances of multimodal digital discourse and include layout units, medium-specific features, textual, and visual resources. The selection criteria for data collection are the following:

- Luxury goods market: it is selected for its connection between the discursive construction and its actual brand value. Luxury goods owe their positioning in the market to intangible features constructed through discourse.

- Fashion: this sector is examined because of its closer relation to cultural values and its dynamic adaptation to new media ecosystems. Additionally, fashion accounts for most of the profits made by luxury firms (see Chapter 1).

- *Interbrand*: this is used as the ranking criterion to select the brands to be examined. *Interbrand* is a global brand consulting firm specializing in brand strategy, brand analytics, brand valuation, corporate design, digital brand management, packaging design, and naming. *Interbrand* is a division of *Ominicom*[51] a media company, leader in global advertising, marketing and corporate communications. It has its headquarter in New York with 31 offices in 27 countries working on a world-scale. *Interbrand* is very well established for its impartiality and international coverage and is widely used in business practice to access information on brands' performance.

- *Facebook*: this social media is strategically selected because of its hegemonic presence all over the world with the highest number of active users. Its constant adaptation to companies' needs and cannibalization of features originally characterizing other digital platforms such as hashtags from Twitter, and live streaming from Snapchat. Additionally, it has a high purchase power to acquire the other platforms as it happened for Instagram (in 2012) and WhatsApp (in 2014) already.

- Corporate *Facebook* posts including textual and visual resources in the form of still images: these are chosen because text and image are the basic units of the evolving and new semiotic resources such as videos, GIF, live streaming.

- The year 2015: this is the timeframe. It is selected because it is defined as the rational and experimental stage of digital transformation for branding (Li, 2015;

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[51] *Omnicom*, https://www.omnicommediagroup.com/ [20/05/2016]

see also Chapter 2).

- Institutional branding discourse: it is selected over UGC because it defines the notion of luxury and it is its primary source of discourse. Additionally, it is not widely examined in the business literature, which instead focuses on the UGC (see Chapter 2).

Based on the above factors, three luxury brands were selected to construct the corpus. The three luxury brands were selected according to *Interbrand*'s *Best Global Brands 2016*[52], a powerful tool used to understand the positioning of brands. It is based on a solid methodology that is clearly explained on *Interbrand* website to promote transparency in its practice. Also, the international business interests of *Interbrand* mitigates the bias in favour of one country of origin over others.

Interbrand works on the concept of brand as the most valuable resource for brands and adopts a brand valuation methodology based on the analysis of positioning, architecture, and brand extension. Specifically, the valuation criterion for the selection of brands is being truly global, meaning a brand has successfully overcome geographic and cultural boundaries by entering the most relevant economic centers of the world in Asia, Europe, and North America and the major emerging markets. Additionally, at least 30% of revenue must come from export, transparently providing data on financial performance, and having a long-term established economic profit with a return above the cost of capital. Besides having a public profile and awareness across the major economies in the world, brands are evaluated according to the model reported below (Figure 3.1) that consists of three key-components: role of brand, brand strength, and financial analysis.

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[52] *Best Global Brands 2016* (filter applied luxury), http://*Interbrand*.com/best-brands/best-global-brands/2016/ranking/#?filter=Luxury&listFormat=sq   [20/05/2016]

	Brand Management	Strategy/Business Case Development	Financial
Applications	Brand performance management Brand portfolio management Resource allocation Brand tracking/dashboards Return on Investment analysis Sponsorship evaluations Senior management KPIs	Brand positioning Brand architectures Brand extension Business case for brand investment Co-branding/joint venture analysis	Investor relations Mergers & acquisitions Licensing/royalty rate setting Tax planning/transfer pricing Balance sheet valuations
Typical Frequency	Recurring	One-off	One-off
Primary Objective	Ongoing brand management leading to insights and recommendations to grow brand value	Business case connecting brand change/investment to projected financial results	A robust value with supporting analysis

Figure 3.1 A versatile strategic tool: applications for brand valuation. Retrieved from *Interbrand*, http://*Interbrand* .com/best-brands/best-global-brands/methodology/ [20/03/2016]

The strategic tool is classified into different components. The first column focuses on the influence of brand on the purchase intention and it is calculated through different steps, namely a primary research, a review of historical roles of brands for companies in that industry, and expert panel assessment. The second column reports on the ability of the brand to generate a long-term loyalty. The third column summarizes the financial analysis focusing on the net profit for the company. In order to build credentials behind the variables, *Interbrand* incorporates different kinds of information such as financial data from Thomson Reuters and company annual reports, consumer data retrieved from *Datamonitor* (focusing on brand volumes and values), and social media information.

The *Best Global Brands 2016* lists the best 100 brands according to the methodology explained above. In order to narrow down to luxury brands, the search

filter for luxury firms was applied and, from the sector-specific ranking reported in Figure 3.2, 10 brands were generated.
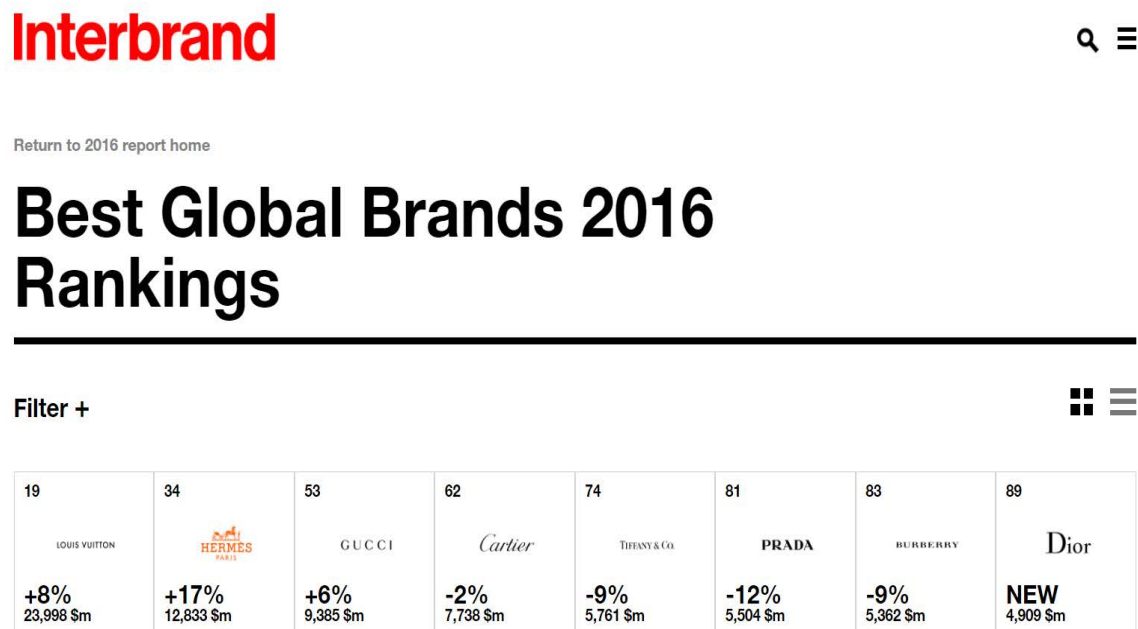
Figure 3.2 Best Global Brands 2016. Retrieved from *Interbrand*, http://*Interbrand* .com/best-brands/best-global-brands/2016/ranking/#?filter=Luxury&listFormat=sq   [20/03/2016]

Figure 3.2 shows the ranking of luxury brands that are the major players in the luxury goods market. Among eight brands, six of them belong to the fashion industry (*LV*, *Hermès*, *Gucci*, *Prada*, *Burberry*, *Dior*). The other two namely, *Cartier* and *Tiffany & Co*, shine in the jewelry industry. All brands within the fashion industry originate from the old continent. *Cartier*, on the other hand, is from France and contributes to the European hegemony, and *Tiffany & Co.* is American, but specifically from New York. *Tiffany & Co.* relies on its city of origin because it benefits from its status of fashion capital.

For this study, one fashion brand for each European country of origin was chosen. The first was the French *Louis Vuitton*, followed by the Italian *Gucci*, and the British *Burberry*.

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3.2.2 The profile of the brands

This section summarizes the brand identity and values of the three brands examined. The information was collected from their official websites on the 'About us' page, and others dedicated to brand history and vision. Information about their profile on *Facebook* was also provided. The three brands will be described in the following order: *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *Louis Vuitton*. A note on copyright, ethical issues and conflict of interest considerations is added in relation to the collection of the data.

Burberry

Burberry is a British fashion firm established in 1856, when Thomas *Burberry* opened the first shop in Basingstoke, Hampshire in England. It has become famous all over the world for its tartan pattern and its core product, the trench[53]. *Burberry* became a group in itself after 2000 due to a rebranding process that created sub-brands for different collections. For the purpose of this study, *Burberry*, because of its pioneering position in digital marketing practice, in general, and the use of social media, was analyzed first. Table 3.1 provides a synthesis of the brand business and culture as stated in the title of its webpage.

Table 3.1 'Business and culture' webpage

Key terms extracted from the website	Business practices listed in the website
- British brand with long history and tradition in the making of high-quality outwear able to satisfy customers' taste globally, across genders, and generations	- Product design - Digital marketing strategies - Retail experience - Focus on the CoO - Avant-garde management - Balance across channels, regions, and products

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[53] *Burberry*, http://www.*Burberry*plc.com/ [20/03/2015]

- Quintessentially British - Innovative mediums of the trench coat - Trademark check - Equestrian Knight Device heritage icons - Protect, Explore, Inspire	- Focus on the CoO - Iconic product and brand extension - Cross-functional collaborations and meritocratic ethos - Intellectual property - Ethos and brand manifestations - CSR activities

Source: ***Burberry*****, http://www.Burberryplc.com/about_Burberry [10/04/2015]**

The key terms for *Burberry* are the CoO and cross-functional collaboration to produce innovative products based on its iconic trench, which appeals to customers across countries, genders and generations. The focus of the business practice is a balanced management of the different products across channels and countries, which in terms of marketing, is only mentioned in its collocation with digital. It defines digital media as the main media of communication for the brand. The terms in Table 3.1 characterizing and defining *Burberry* identity and values are expected to be found in the form of branding discourse in the dataset.

Gucci

Gucci was founded by Guccio Gucci in Florence in 1921. In 1999, the brand was partially acquired by the French *Kering* Group (better known with its old name *PPR* that stands for *Pinault-Printemps-Redoute*) and the process of acquisition is still going on[54]. The fact that *Gucci* belongs to a French group affects its financial activities and obliges the group to respect some general directions for the business strategy; however, the brand management is still under the control of the CEO, the kingpin of decision-making in the Italian base. From a consumer's perspective, the brands are

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[54] *Gucci*, http://www.*Gucci*.com/us/home [20/03/2015]

still perceived as family companies and sometimes the acquisition of the brand by a group is not even known by the customers; therefore, *Gucci* is globally recognized as a Made in Italy leading brand in luxury fashion and accessory industry. The key terms were extracted from its webpage entitled 'About *Gucci*' (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 'About *Gucci*' webpage

Key terms extracted from the website	Business practices listed in the website
- Luxury brand recognized for its fashion innovation and Italian craftsmanship appealing to both men and women - Century's worth of artisanal quality and unparalleled design	- Product design - Focus on the CoO - Craftsmanship - Brand extension covering different products available across genders and generations
- Contemporary glamour and traditional - Made in Italy - Craftsmanship - Social commitment to the global community - Sustainability (*Kering* guidelines) - Philanthropy (women, children, and arts)	- Innovation and craftsmanship - Focus on the CoO - CSR: collaborations with the *Kering* Corporate Foundations, UNICEF, launch for Chime for Change, SA8000, The Film Foundation

Source: *Gucci*, http://www.*Gucci*.com/us/home [20/03/2015]

Gucci's brand vision is driven by the positive associations with the metabrand Made in Italy and its entailed artisanal heritage, the craftsmanship tradition, and the CSR values inherited from Kering. These key values are expected to be found in the dataset.

Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton (*LV*) was established in 1854 in Paris by Louis Vuitton, a pioneer in craftsmanship of leather trunks[55]. Nowadays, *LV* is an internationally leading brand in fashion and accessory industry, part of the French group *LVMH* (*Moët Hennessy Louis*

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[55] *LV*, http://www.louisvuitton.com [20/03/2015]

Vuitton) since 1897. Table 3.3 reports the key terms extracted from the webpage entitled 'A legendary history' that indicate the core values and business practice of the brand.

Table 3.3 'A legendary history' webpage

Key terms extracted from the website	Business practices listed in the website
- A brand built by members of Vuitton family through generations, that founded its success on the revolutionary luggage lock applied to the Travel trunks characterized by the Monogram created over a century ago.	- Focus on history and heritage of the brand - Iconic product - Innovative product design
- Family brand - History and heritage - Scientific process behind creations - The Monogram - Innovation	- Personification of the brand - Over a century of trunk making tradition - The product is the result of a long process based on research for innovation - The iconic Monogram is revisited by artists and designers to bring innovation

Source: *LV,* http://www.louisvuitton.com   **[20/03/2015]**
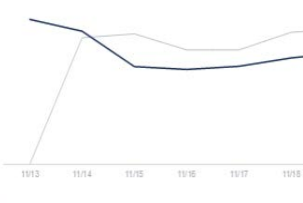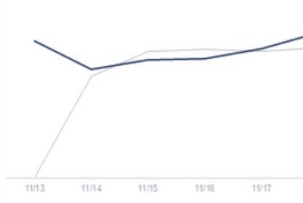
Surprisingly and differently from *Burberry* and *Gucci*, *LV* does not refer to its CoO, but it shifts the focus to the founders of the brand and the process of creation of the iconic products. The branding discourse across the *Facebook* posts is expected to maintain the same guidelines.

Overall the three firms show a strong attachment to the (hi)story of their brand, the iconic products and the process of their creation, the CoO, the strategies to remain relevant through time and combined together under the strive for innovation. These key terms fall into the features of luxury identified in Chapter 2.

Some figures about the three brands on Facebook

The study focuses on the corporate *Facebook* posts as texts functioning as attention grabbers on the timeline of the users who like the page and follow the updates. Hence, there is no need to examine the *Facebook* page of the brands; however, some information about the visibility of the brand and the engagement of users has been retrieved from the insights page of each brand. The 'insights' page is a page that continuously updates the facts and figures related to the page: number of people talking about 'this', the page and, thus, the brand; number of people checked in 'here' referring to physical check-ins in branded locations tagged with the page, usually flagship stores; and number of 'likes' to the page, with a glimpse on the 'new page likes' in the last week. Table 3.4 presents the snapshots of the insights sections of the *Facebook* pages of *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *LV*.

Table 3.4 Facts and figures of the three brands from Facebook insights

Burberry	**Gucci**	**LV**
People	People	People
34,921 People Talking About This	75,358 People Talking About This	86,027 People Talking About This
129,433 People Checked In Here	115,687 People Checked In Here	18,803,526 Total Page Likes ▲0.2% from last week
17,160,302 Total Page Likes ▲0.1% from last week	15,643,799 Total Page Likes ▲0.3% from last week	29,414 New Page Likes ▲29%
22,920 New Page Likes ▲4.4%	41,901 New Page Likes ▲21.6%	

Source: Facebook page of the three brands [20/11/2016]

The statistics reported in Table 3.4 shows the visibility of the brands. In terms of buzz generated by the users (UGC), *LV* is more influential based on numbers, followed by *Gucci*, and *Burberry*. Regarding the check-ins, *Burberry* collected more in comparison

to *Gucci*, that means that more visitors felt the need to report and share their visit on the *Facebook* platform, while no information is shown for *LV*. This is justified by the fact that *LV* had not activated its location for check-ins at the time of the collection of these data. For the total of likes, instead, *LV* scores higher than *Burberry* and *Gucci*. The numbers reported in this Section do not provide any information concerning the financial value of the brands; however, as explained in Chapter 2, in the 21st century the brand equity generating brand and financial value is the result of different components, including brand e-quity and online brand reputation.

Copyright, ethical issues and conflict of interest

Facebook Terms and use[56] remind the internet users in relation to the intellectual rights of any user-generated content. The terms suggest that for any type of information uploaded, *Facebook* is automatically granted with "non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content"[57]. This includes copyrighted materials such as text, photos, videos. At the same time, for corporate accounts using *Facebook* as an advertising platform, *Facebook Advertising Policies*[58] also provides guidelines for the creation of the content. Those guidelines include enablers and constraints following the U.S. regulations on advertising practice and the netiquette (Posteguillo, 2003). In terms of copyright, the internet has increasingly amplified the issue because of its prosumption ideology that confuses the roles of author and audience. This reinforces the need for legitimization of the work not only among professionals, but also among amateurs (e.g. photography).

Hong Kong's Amended Copyright Law: a Guide for Teachers and Students[59]

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[56] *Facebook Terms and Use*, https://www.facebook.com/terms.php [20/03/2017]
[57] *Facebook Terms and Use*, https://www.facebook.com/terms.php [20/03/2017]
[58] *Facebook Advertising Policies*, https://www.facebook.com/policies/ads/ [20/03/2017]
[59] *Intellectual Property Department*, www.ipd.gov.hk [20/03/2017]

lists three main criteria to claim the 'fair use' of copyrighted material: the non-profit nature of the work, the size of the portion of data used in comparison with the whole text, and the potential impact on the market. As this research is for education and research purposes, it is of non-commercial use. In terms of the portions of the text analyzed, dealing with 597 corporate *Facebook* posts limits the analysis to a number of post using text and image in the year 2015. The amount is a smaller amount of data in comparison with the *Facebook* production in terms of medium, and the branding discourse disseminated in the internet by those brands. In addition to that, brands post their editorial content on their corporate *Facebook* page with the distribution setting of 'public', and authorize the audience to view the content independently from liking the page. Once the content is uploaded to *Facebook*, the brand loses control of it in the chain of likes, comments and shares, that multiply its visibility globally.

Regarding the impact of the research on the market and eventual consequences for the brands, there is no positive or negative evaluation of the brands in terms of quality of their products or any topic able to cause any damage or favour a brand over the other. Brands have been informed about the study and any related publications.

The last criterion involves the issue of conflict of interest. This research has been conducted free from any conflict of interest with any of the brands of institutions involved. These considerations are elaborated on the basis of examining corporate discourse as instances of advertising. This would be different from investigating UGC that involve individuals.

3.2.3   Compilation of the multimodal corpus and data description

The data, consisting of corporate *Facebook* posts, were collected manually from the

timeline of the three brands throughout the year 2015; however, the benefits of working with big corpora and the optimization of the time offered by web-scraping software to collect multimodal texts from the internet, and testing different tools, are acknowledged. This choice was motivated by the need for a multimodal corpus that preserved as much information as possible about the medium used to produce and distribute the texts. It was more time-consuming, but it eased a higher quality of the dataset, more logical organization and analysis because the data went through additional screening before being annotated, and a higher awareness of the context within which the corporate *Facebook* posts were produced and distributed.

Corporate *Facebook* posts, in this study, are conceptualized as "virtual canvas" drawing on Bateman's (2008, p. 16) *GeM* work. The concept of canvas was further clarified in its application to comic books, by highlighting the importance of preserving the materiality of the medium within which different layout units are organized to produce meanings (Bateman *et al.*, 2016).

A *Facebook* post is a "perceptual unit that a reader is confronted with" (Bateman *et al.*, 2016, p. 14), or better a flow of posts, while scrolling down a timeline of any account and page on *Facebook* platform. Image 3.1 shows an example of *Facebook* post within the ecosystem of timeline of the *Facebook* page examined in this study.

Image 3.1   Facebook post within Facebook page

Source: *Louis Vuitton* **Facebook page**

The red frame defines the boundaries of a *Facebook* post, the layout units will be deconstructed in Chapter 4. *Facebook* posts were chosen because of their role of attention grabbers indistinctively to real customers, occasional customers, and aspirational customers. *Facebook* posts appear on the timeline of users who liked the *Facebook* page owned by the brands. Alternatively, the posts can be displayed to other users as sponsored content if the information collected through cookies showed any searching behavior falling into the categories that the brand has been categorized to target its profiled audience.

Among the *Facebook* posts collected, two different categories were distinguished. Image 3.2 and 3.3 respectively show examples of a single-image post and a multi-image post, also defined as album post.

Image 3.2 Single-image post　　　　　　**Image 3.3 Multi-image post**

Source: *Gucci* Facebook page

The single-image post is totally dedicated to one photo only (Image 3.2). The multi-image posts (Image 3.3), are the ones that bundle more than one photo together for the composition of a new album and allow the page administrator to upload more photos to an existing one. The following figures (3.3 and 3.4) represent the abstraction of the two types of posts.

Figure 3.3 Abstraction of single-image post　　**Figure 3.4 Abstraction of multi-image post**
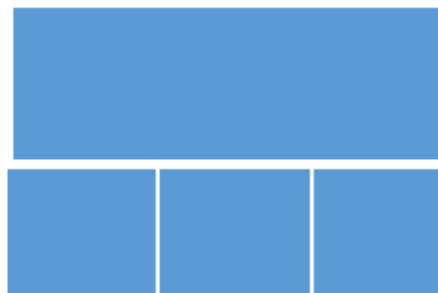
The distinction between single and multi-image post is determined by the use of framing cut (white margins). It is the indicator to count the post as multi-image because among the single-image posts there are photo whose composition is given by

a collage within the same frame.

The multimodal corpus includes all the *Facebook* posts in their full composition (green contour), and it explores the use of the photos (blue contour) used within the frame. The textual resources (red contour) are extracted from the *Facebook* posts and were converted into text files to enable the use of an annotation tool able to generate quantitative results. Image 3.4 shows the different units analyzed.

Image 3.4 Example of Facebook post: a multimodal text

Source: *Burberry* Facebook page

The collection of the posts was limited to the content shared by brands involving use of textual resources and still images. The *Facebook* algorithm also randomly displayed these posts according to information settings of my *Facebook* profile and, thus, collected and stored as electronic image (jpeg files). It was possible to document a moment in time within social media, which is renowned as dynamic and fast-pace environments within which information is instantly pulverized by new ones, and sometimes lose their value before reaching the target audience. The number of firms

was kept up to three to make it workable for the analysis and resulted in a total of 597 texts that it was possible to fully analyze within time constraints. The size of the dataset is summarized in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Size of the dataset

Sub-corpus	Number of posts	Percentage of posts
Burberry	164	27.50%
Gucci	305	51%
Louis Vuitton	128	21.50%
Total	**597**	**100%**

This study collected all the posts that the brands shared throughout the year 2015 and that *Facebook* randomly displayed to my account while I scrolled down the timeline of the page of the brands. There were 741 posts. For this study, as only the ones constructed by textual and visual resources in the form of still images were considered to a total of 597.

The figures presented in Table 3.5 already provide information about the discursive practices performed by the brands in the *Facebook* platform. *Burberry* has posted a total of 264 posts, 164 of which use words and still images, and hence, 100 use videos, embedded links, GIF, and other elements that are not explored in this study. While *Burberry* deploys a quite diverse inventory of post-types, *Gucci* presents a difference and *LV* report a relatively small difference between the posts actually shared and the ones analyzed, 19 and 25 posts respectively. This suggests that these two brands remain faithful to the basic units of fashion captions and photography.

The textual resources extracted account for a total of 15,314 word tokens, making the corpus a small specialized one (Tognini-Bonelli, 2011). The tokens in the sub-corpora are 4,005 (26.15%) in *Burberry*, 7,870 (51.40%) in *Gucci*, and 3,439

(22.45%) in *LV*. Such specialized corpora describe situated discourse in a specific context e.g. branding discourse in the *Facebook* platform in the present study, and will be analyzed by applying a qualitative approach.

In the process of data collection, a few factors need to be acknowledged. *Facebook* posts were collected in the order of display in the archive of the timeline. Since the collection was not done day by day, the dataset includes the posts that *Facebook* platform showed as the most popular (collection of likes, comments, shares) and promoted and made relevant by the brand (pinned to the top of the page, promoted by payment, re-shared). Retrieving data from Hong Kong also affected the display of the posts because the editorial content was often localized to be shown to a selected audience; however, cross-checking from other IP addresses in other countries such as Europe and U.S.A. shows that the posts shared on the global page selected for collection appear to be posts shared globally. In this specific case, posts created to target, for instance, Chinese market but shared globally represent statements of market expansion.

3.2.4 Corpus-based approach and annotation schemes

The originality of this study lies in its innovative holistic approach to analyzing multimodal data, which combines corpus linguistics and discourse analysis (Bateman, 2008; Veloso, 2014) drawing on the same approach initially started by Baker (2006). The branding discourse is investigated as instances of situated discourse used for specific purposes; therefore, a contextualized analysis is necessary to identify how external factors produce semiotic effects that eventually indicate the context within which they are produced and distributed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Stubbs, 1996). This study applies a mixed-method approach, which enables the analysis of each

Facebook post through a quantitative and qualitative approach supported by corpus tools.

The corpus was analyzed and annotated with two corpus tools, namely *UAM CorpusTool* (O'Donnell, 2016) and *UAM Image Tool 2.1*[60] (O'Donnell, 2010). *UAM CorpusTool*, first launched in 2007, offers the opportunity to create users' customised annotation scheme, but at the same time contains preset annotation schemes based on SFL. It was used to annotate the transitiviy analysis of textual resources (see Appendix III). Once the annotation schemes had been created and the annotation is completed, the software generates a quantitative results which helped the accessibility to the categories annotated through the application of filters per category and sub-corpus proving tables with quantitative results and the opportunity to explore concordances.

Transitivity informs the construction of branding discourse in terms of experiential meanings realized by process-types, participants, and circumstances. The analysis has been conducted on samples of data, following Bateman *et al.*'s (2016) methodology for sampling, and based on the findings of previous studies (Nervino, 2013), and pilot studies conducted on social media discourse, which show that the dataset did not present much variety. The procedures to confirm the lack of variety and claim the reliability of the limited corpus included the random collection of 15 posts from each brand (7% of the whole corpus) to be analyzed first, and then 10 posts from each brand (5% of the whole corpus) as second sample to verify the results across these two different datasets. Additionally, results were also compared to the transitivity analysis conducted on 85 (50%) posts retrieved from *Burberry*. Having obtained the same types of participants, processes, and circumstances, the first sample of a total of 45 posts was considered representative of the whole corpus. The discussion of the

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[60] *UAM Image Tool*, http://www.wagsoft.com/ImageTool/index.html [20/05/2016]

finding of the textual analysis in Section 4.2.3 is based on this sample.

Multimodal texts have been analyzed using *UAM ImageTool. UAM ImageTool* is an open source corpus tool that enables the annotation of multimodal texts based on annotation schemes of various categories created by the user (see Appendix III). It is a development of *UAM CorpusTool*[61](O'Donnell, 2016), and allows the exploration of multimodal concordances (see Appendix III).

Overall, five annotation schemes based on existing frameworks were developed and used to analyze the dataset, namely transitivity system, representational meanings, interactional meanings, identity construction and marketing strategies, and intersemiotic relations.

The annotation scheme for transitivity has been created based on the framework provided by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) with the support of *UAM CorpusTool*. Representational and interactional meanings have been built based on the visual grammar, and integrated with the additional categories found out in the samples of data analyzed as pilot studies. The annotation scheme of the identity construction and marketing strategies has been developed based on the brand management strategies (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). The annotation scheme for the analysis of the intersemiotic relations has been designed based on the framework developed by Martinec & Salway (2005) and adapted to the dataset and the analysis of the individual semiotic resources. Other three annotation schemes have been drawn with the use of *UAM ImageTool* to facilitate the process of analysis (Appendix III).

The first representation scheme of the layout units of corporate *Facebook* posts

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[61] *UAM Corpus Tool*, http://www.corpustool.com/index.html   [20/05/2016]

was not designed for annotation, but to display the different elements involved in the production of the posts based on Eisenlauer's work (2013; 2014) (Chapter 4). The second annotation scheme has been created to facilitate the search across brands, and deployed to name the posts after the name of the brand that shared it. The third annotation scheme categorizes the different socio-semiotic processes and keeps track of the number of occurrences; however, the annotation of the socio-semiotic processes has generated blends that reflect its topological configuration that does not match with the typological nature of annotation schemes. Hence, the latter must be considered a tool for the sake of exploring the results in a more time-efficient way.

3.3 Theoretical framework

This study proposed a three-perspectival approach based on social/institutional, social action, and semiotic perspectives (Candlin & Chrichton, 2011). The social/institutional perspective informs the analysis of the socio-economic context in which texts are produced and distributed. It enhances both the annotation and the interpretation of the data by contextualizing the semiotic choices in a specific spatio-temporal dimension. The spatio-temporal dimension of the multimodal corpus refers to the way texts are shaped and simultaneously reflect aspects of the times in which they are forged and disseminated.

The social action perspective provides data analysis with professional insights collected from interviews and events organized by firms and associations that discuss issues related to luxury brand management in the digital era (see Appendix I; Chapter 1) and review of business studies focusing on marketing strategies (Chapter 2). Professionals agree on the challenges of bridging the exclusive luxury world to the

mass consumption contemporary society and the internet as its direct reflection. They also point out the difficulties of constructing the luxury aura in the digital environment and their lack of understanding of the potentials of the tools. Business studies have shown how the definition of luxury in the 21st century is facing an identity crisis, which has been mainly tackled by scrutinizing the UGC disseminated in the cyberspace and conducting interviews with luxury customers. This consumer-oriented approach contributes to the understanding of luxury but it derives from brand image instead of institutionalized brand identity, and it constitutes a clash between the conceptualization of luxury and its decoding in the society.

The semiotic perspective focuses on the analysis of the semiotic choices involved in the meaning-making process of the branding discourse. Luxury across time has always been defined according to the discourse disseminated by the brands of its pantheon an. This study aims to preserve this approach but not to dilute the boundaries between brand identity and brand image. The investigation into the discursive representation of luxury fashion brand identity in the texts that characterize the 21st century informs the conceptualization of luxury from the point of view of its institutionalized voices.

Together with the three perspectives, the data analysis is conducted at the intersection of field, tenor, and mode, across the different strata of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), and extended to multimodal discourse. Figure 3.5 synthetizes the different perspectives and angles of the analysis from above, from below, and from around (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).
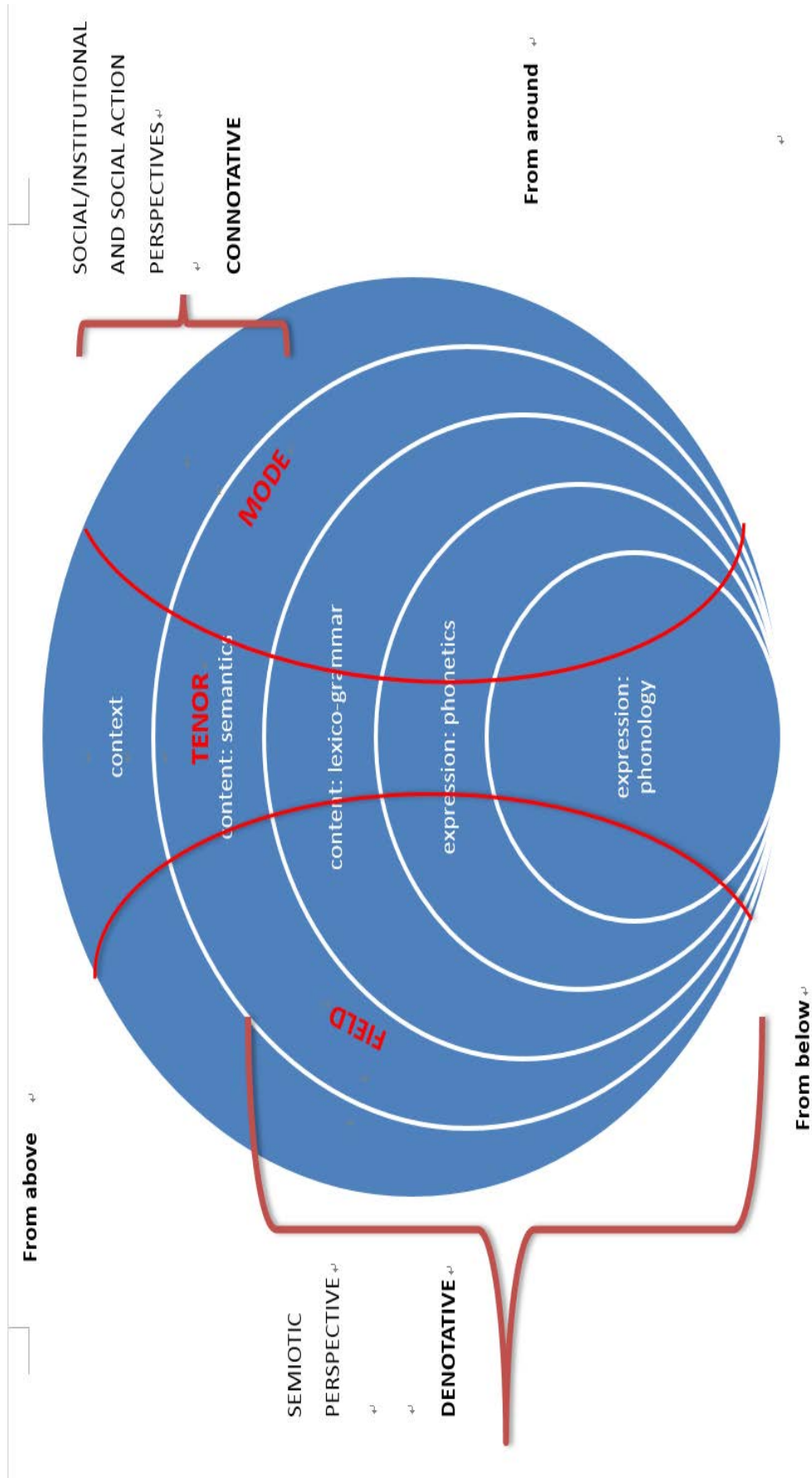
Figure 3.5 Systemic functional social semiotic stratification of language extended to multimodal discourse (adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 26; Hjelmslev, 1963; Barthes, 1988; and their latest combined configurations by Bateman, 2015, p. 253)

Figure 3.5 presents the systemic-functional social semiotic stratification of multimodal discourse and clarifies the relations between the different concepts in the analysis of branding discourse. The comprehensive investigation covers the different touchpoints by exemplifying the associations between the expression and content plane (Hjemslev, 1963), in their interwoven relation of forms and functions.

The study also explores the correspondence between denotative and connotative meaning (Barthes, 1988) in which one meaning is decoded by considering the literary denotation emptied of context and interpreted within the text, while the connotative meaning brings the understanding of the texts as constructed within the society they are conceived, produced, distributed, and consumed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Denotative meanings intersect with the semiotic and connotative meanings which intersect social/institutional and social action perspectives.

Field, tenor, and mode (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) are investigated as: the semiotic construal of reality and experience and its contextualized social practice (field); the social roles of the participants involved in the meaning-making process, in this case the power negotiation between brand and target audience (tenor); and the organization of the semiotic resources involved as shaped by the channel of communication, here identified as the *Facebook* platform with its internet features, and the post as canvas (mode).

The data analysis is extended across the different semiotic strata by exploring the multimodal texts, meaning the ensemble of different semiotic resources stretching from the context to specific colours and terms of textual resources, on the other hand, the analysis extends from the context to the lexico-grammatical features.

3.4 The multi-framework for the multimodal discourse analysis

The multimodal discourse analysis is articulated at a macro- and a micro-level and organized in different layers of analysis based on the semiotic resources involved. This section explains one by one the eight steps of analysis performed.

3.4.1 Data analysis steps

The research methodology includes the examination of different elements involved in the meaning-making process of branding discourse. The theories and frameworks are organized to address the three research questions (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Data analysis

RQ	Theories and frameworks
1) How are different semiotic resources used by luxury fashion firms to construct their brand values and establish their brand identity through corporate *Facebook* posts?	- Marketing strategies (Chapter 2; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; 2012) - Layout units (Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014) - Medium-specific features (Petroni, 2011) - Textual analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) - Visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2006)
2) How do the different semiotic resources interact with each other in the production of the branding discourse in the *Facebook* platform?	- Intersemiotic relations (Martinec & Salway, 2005) - Intertextual and interidscursive constructions
3) What are the socio-semiotic processes that frame the branding discursive practices of the corporate *Facebook* posts?	- Socio-semiotic processes (Matthiessen, 2015)
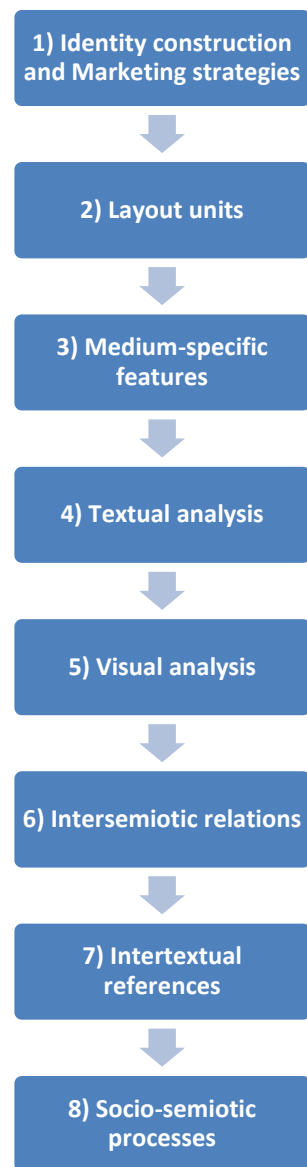
Figure 3.6 Data analysis steps

The different steps were performed on the full corpus. Figure 3.6 shows the sequence of analysis. The first step concerns the annotation of the type of identity and marketing strategies and provides information at a macro-level to foreground the function performed by each semiotic resource examined. The annotation schemes group the branding strategies, creating relations between the semiotic choices in terms of forms and their functions, and their association with the marketing strategies.

The following steps of analysis explore the dataset at a micro-level. The second step of data analysis aims to investigate the structure of corporate *Facebook* posts and to semiotically unpack the layout of the hosting platform, also defined as the medium. The representation of the *Facebook* posts based on Eisenlauer's (2013; 2014) work enhances the enabling and constraining properties of the *Facebook* platform. The third step detected the medium-specific features in the dataset and explored them in terms of form, destination, information construction, and function (Petroni, 2011).

The fourth step was the textual analysis, performed by applying the transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The fifth step was the visual analysis, conducted via the annotation of the narrativity structure and the interactive semantics as a result of the adaptation of Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) visual grammar. The analysis was driven by the interest of examining the representational and interactional meanings constructed through visual resources, which also provided findings related to the compositional meanings.

The sixth step of data analysis interpreted the results of textual and visual analysis to establish the intersemiotic relations between them. Since the annotation schemes are the result of several pilot studies conducted on the sub-corpus of *Burberry* posts, Martinec & Salway's framework (2005) has been modified by excluding the system network about the identification of the equal and unequal status of textual and visual resources. The motivation behind these choices lies in the fact that in the *Facebook* platform, none of the semiotic resources is privileged over the others in term of primary role. Differently from Instagram, *Facebook* can host individual semiotic resources independently.

The seventh step of analysis was concerned with the identification of the intertextual and interdiscursive constructions. The eight step categorized the socio-semiotic processes (Matthiessen, 2015) based on the social and semiotic order of the texts and its different components.

All the different steps were carried out to fulfill the semiotic perspective of this study. The findings of the study are interpreted by social/institutional and social action perspectives to satisfy the overarching aims of this project.

3.4.2 Annotation scheme for identity type and marketing strategies

The first step of analysis focuses on the annotation of the branding discourse at a macro-level. Figure 3.7 presents the categories for the annotation that have been extracted from the literature review on brand management and marketing (Chapter 2) and more specifically Kapferer and Bastien (2009, 2012).

Figure 3.7 Annotation scheme for identity construction and marketing strategies (adapted from Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012)

The annotation system of the identity type constructed through the post is divided into: brand, product, and corporate:

- Brand identity: Categories were assigned to all the discursive manifestations of the brand, including fashion shows, campaigns, events, and all brand activities aiming to build the image of the brand as an entity constructed on intangible assets;

- Product identity: Categories were assigned to posts that display products (iconic and seasonal, and revised version of the iconic ones) from different angles and perspectives (pattern-focused, and mixed intended as details, and other features of the items);

- Corporate identity: Categories were assigned to annotate the *Facebook* post that construct meanings related to the group owning the brand and its branding guidelines, such as CSR, intervention of the holding to award specific individuals related to the brand, joining particular events involving high financial investment for visibility, and showing strong partnerships or achievements based on governance, which is more than brand management.

Based on the above criteria, the dataset was annotated to understand the brand agenda behind the use of the *Facebook* platform.

The annotation scheme also includes the marketing strategies: 'ethos', 'rational claim', and 'holiday marketing campaigns'. Ethos stands for all the posts that operationalize a strategy based on the internal resources of the brand and the external ones recovered from the stakeholders involved in the negotiation of meanings. The

ultimate aim of ethos-oriented strategies is to build the credibility and authority of the brand to support its position in the market, and justify the price of its goods. The internal resources of the brand are based on its brand heritage that relies on 'history of the brand', elements leading to the 'country of origin', references to the 'founder', and its 'global presence' realized through the display of expansion of the market in terms of flagship stores in different countries, for instance, and diverse channels of distribution that entail a global reach. The external resources are grouped under the 'star system' that includes 'celebrity endorsement' and 'events'; the 'fashion system' used to annotate 'models', 'designers', but also 'media' in its sub-categories of 'new' and 'printed'; 'collaborations' is the category that gathers the partnerships initiated by the brand to produce positive associations with the brand such as artists, designers, and photographers; 'csr' is used to annotate cause-related activities aiming to contribute to the community; 'intertextual and interdiscursive references' are used to annotate the meanings are constructed in relation to other fields, such as music, cinema, and art, which require previous knowledge or they aim to clarify it.

Rational claim incorporates categories assigned to annotate instances of logical explanations behind the positioning of the brand given by the production process in relation to the artistic component (artist), handmade production (craftsmanship), and 'source of inspiration'; the use of the product that is realized through how-to posts constructing tutorials, for instance; and features of the product meaning in relation to 'quality', 'details', and 'coo'.

The holiday marketing campaigns category focuses on the location in time of the posts designed to accomplish a temporary need for the brand to take advantage of peak seasons to increase the revenues. The annotation schemes highlights 'festive season', and 'sharing values' emphasizing the evocation of feelings to be expressed through a

product created by the brand.

The following steps of analysis are conducted at a micro-level.

3.4.3 Unpacking the layout units of Corporate Facebook posts

This step of analysis examines the dataset at the micro-level and aims to elaborate a data-driven representation of the architecture of *Facebook* posts unfolded into layout units. The layout units are the 'automated text actions' (ATA), 'semi-automated text actions' (SATA) and 'creative text actions' (CTA). The ATA are "machine-authored" *Facebook* elements and include "propositions mastered by the software" (Eisenlauer, 2014, p. 312). The SATA are partially generated by the software hosting *Facebook* but they still give some authorship to the user who can modify and provide headlines to the posts. The CTA are "user-authored" and "mastered by a human agent" (Eisenlauer, 2014, p. 312).

These three types of text actions are further explained and exemplified in the following. The layout units are the elements involved in the construction of the infrastructure of the *Facebook* posts, identified as virtual canvas within which meanings are produced and distributed. Eisenlauer defined the mode-specific affordances at the disposal of *Facebook* users to generate meanings, and identified the categories which the present study borrows to investigate *Facebook* posts constructed by corporate users. Corporate pages are an evolution of individual account profile, the principles named by Eisenlauer are consistent in their formal representation, and are developed in their communication purposes.

The first component of *Facebook* posts is the ATA that includes all the elements that consistently occur in the post as they are automatically generated by the platform,

representing the frame within which the meaning-making process takes place and benefits in terms of availability of resources, freedom of choices, and constraints. An example of ATA are illustrated in Image 3.5 below:

Image   3.5   Automated text actions

On set with Mario Testino and the stars of the Prorsum Spring/Summer 2015 campaign, Jourdan Dunn, George Le Page and George Barnett

(1) Thumbnail

(2) Account name

(3) Date

(4) Call for action: like, comment, share
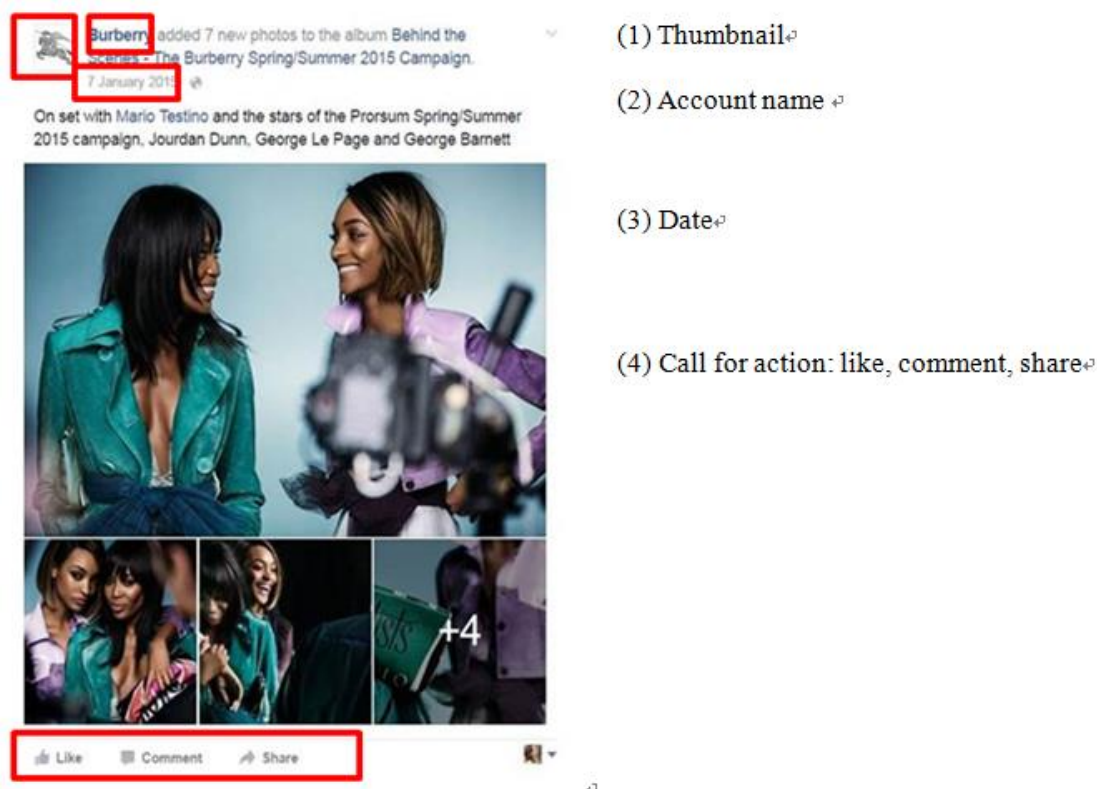
Source: *Burberry* Facebook page

The *Facebook* post as shown in Image 3.5 was shared on *Burberry* timeline on 7 January 2015. It reports on the brand adding 7 new pictures to the album, representing the campaign shot for the *Prorsum Spring/Summer collection* with the photographer Mario Testino as special guest. The post allows the audience to experience the 'behind the scenes' of the campaign and meet the celebrities on set. The ATA as highlighted in the red frames in Image 3.5 include the following: the 'thumbnail' picture (1), also named profile picture, that produces the repetition of the subject performing the actions for each post. The 'account name' (2), that reinforces the self-reference to the

owner of the page. The choice of these two elements carry meanings that contribute to the construction of the brand identity and make easier the search of the specific brand. The date (3) situates the texts into a specific timeframe. The call for action for the user (4) to like, comment, and share.

The second component of a post is the SATA as shown in Image 3.6. SATA includes elements that are automatically generated but with changes performed by the users. Those elements are visually signaled through deploying different colours for the wordings and the position of the information on the upper part of the post as headline to the text-actions. The colours used are: blue for all the tags, hashtags, and hyperlinks, which embed a link or a particular action; grey for the semi-automated text-actions, and black for the language typed as text-actions.

Image 3.6 Semi-automated text actions

(1) Action performed by the brand

(2) Object of the action

(3) Destination of the action

(4) Distribution

Source: *Burberry* Facebook page

The SATA in the example in Image 3.6 are: 'added' stands for the action performed

(1); the object of the action that is identified in the photos (2); the destination of the action that is the album that comes along with the tag on its title and it can be explored by clicking on it (3); and distribution of the content chosen to be 'public' (4) in this case with the icon of the globe. This choice is motivated by the promotional nature of the discourse, which is meant to be visible globally. These elements accomplish the task of granularity that enhance the usability of the platform by providing the user with orientation features in the digital environment.

The third component is named CTA as presented in Image 3.8.

Image 3.7   Creative text actions

The CTA in the dataset, as exemplified in Image 3.7, includes: textual resources (1),

text manually typed without any hypertext; or medium-specific features like 'tags' used to incorporate hypertexts and redirect the user to other pages. In the example reported above (Image 3.7) the tag refers to Mario Testino who is a world-famous photographer invited by *Burberry* to realize the seasonal campaign. The visual resources (2) that in this case appear in the form of a combination of different photos combined together in an album post.

3.4.4 Forms and functions of the medium-specific features

The medium-specific features that characterize the dataset are the following: hyperlinks, tags, and hashtags.

Image 3.8 Hyperlink **Image 3.9 Tag** **Image 3.10 Hashtag**
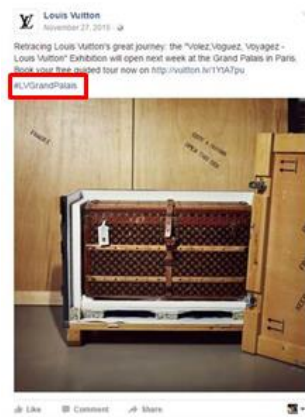
Hyperlinks, tags, and hashtags, are categorized and analyzed drawing upon the work of Petroni (2011). Each of them is unpacked in terms of form and function with particular emphasis on the its relevance to the marketing strategies in the following.

Hyperlinks are the major constituents of the infrastructure of the internet texts. In particular, a series of medium-specific features that connect pieces of information with each other, and users with each other, characterize the *Facebook* platform. Hyperlinks are classified into embedded, structural, and associative, and are analyzed based on

their formal structure, information embedded, destination, and function (Hammerich & Harrison, 2002; Nielsen, 2000; Petroni, 2011). The formal structure of the hyperlinks is examined to unpack the metalanguage used to categorize content in the Internet and make it searchable. Table 3.7 provides an example of the structural analysis.

Table 3.7 Structure of hyperlinks

Type of hyperlink	Description of the structure
1. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2015_1 (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' *Gucci* (domain) Cruise2015 (information) Destination is a sub-page of the official website of the brand

The analysis of the structure of hyperlinks is based on the examination of the html and conducted to understand the process of formation of the hyperlink. From the structure, the information embedded is found and confirmed through exploring the destination of the hyperlink. The destination construes the association between the actual information and its re-semiotization constructed through the *Facebook* post. Based on the destination, hyperlinks are also classified in terms of their function that falls into: enhancing, exemplifying, mode-changing and referencing/citing. An additional category has been found in the dataset as live streaming, because it freezes the destination of the hyperlink into a specific spatio-temporal dimension that is constructed in the broadcasting and consumption of a defined event.

Tags are *Facebook* features used to label content as the word suggests. *Facebook* explains that tags create "a link that people can follow to learn more"[62]. Tagging people on *Facebook* generates notification to the users tagged, and the content tagged

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[62] *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/about/tagging [23/05/2016]

may appear to their profile page according to the privacy setting, and spread in the news feeds of friends of friends. In the case of corporate pages, the notification is spread among the fans of the page. Tags are explored in this study in terms of categorization of the tagged items and the function of tags.

#hashtags first appeared on Twitter and accomplished the function to classify the content shared in the tweet in a specific category that could reflect a semantic field of a keyword that the brand makes searchable and easily available to be searched (Zappavigna, 2011). The #hashtag, incorporated by *Facebook* and Instagram, is contextualized in SFL as a typographic convention able to extend the potential meaning and work as a "linguistic marker" by construing evaluation (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 718). It makes the information "searchable" by affiliating more attributes to the same topic (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 788). It enhances the configuration of the Internet as database, by creating "searchable talk" (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 788). The #hashtags analyzed in terms of information categorized and function of the positive value attributed to the topic semiotized in its transformation into "'hyper-charged' with an additional semiotic pull that are likened to a gravitational field" (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 801).

Tags and #hashtags work as hyperlinks on *Facebook* and are tools that contribute to the construction of hypertext.

3.4.5 Textual analysis

The textual analysis focuses on the corpus analysis of the language extracted from the multimodal texts. The language was processed through the use of the *UAM CorpusTool.* The analytical framework adopted is the transitivity system (Halliday &

Matthiessen, 2014) that enables the understanding of the representation of aspirational reality that brands aim to construe through discourse. The transitivity analysis of the captions unpacks the semiotic labour of textual resources within the meaning-making process of construing branding discourse as experience of the reality that brands want to be perceived by the audience about their products. This experience of reality translated into language is explored through the transitivity system that configures the ideational metafunction in its experiential meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The transitivity system is summarized in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8   Transitivity system

	Typical preposition	Ergative function	Transitive function: material	behavioural	mental	verbal	relational: attributive	relational: identifying	Existential
process	–	1 Process							
participants		2 Medium	Actor [mid.]; Actor or Goal [eff.]	Behaver	Senser	Sayer [mid.]; Target [eff.]	Carrier	Token	Existent
	by	3 Agent	Initiator or Actor [eff.]	–	Inducer or Phenomenon ['please']	Sayer [eff.]	Attributor	Assigner	–
	to, for	4 Beneficiary	Recipient; Client	–	–	Receiver	(Beneficiary)	–	–
	at, on, etc.	5 Range	Scope	Behaviour	Phenomenon ['like']	Verbiage	Attribute	Value	–
circumstances	for, over, across, etc.	6 Extent	duration, frequency (temporal), distance (spatial)				how long? how far? how often?		
	at, in, on, from, etc.	7 Location	time (temporal), place (spatial)				when? where?		
	with, by, like	8 Manner	means, quality, comparison, degree				how? what with? in what way? like what? to what extent?		
	through, for, etc.	9 Cause	reason, purpose, behalf				why? what for? who for?		
	in case of, etc.	10 Contingency	condition, concession, default				under what conditions?		
	with, besides, etc.	11 Accompaniment	comitation, addition				who/what with? who/what else?		
	as, into, etc.	12 Role	guise, product				what as? what into?		
	about, etc.	13 Matter					what about?		
	according to, to, etc.	14 Angle	source, viewpoint				who says? who thinks?		

Source: Halliday & Matthiessen, (2014, p. 344)

The transitivity system is divided into processes, participants, and circumstances. The transitivity analysis maps the meanings conveyed through the semiotic labour of the textual resources. The textual components involved in the construction of branding discourse are identified in the clause (from 0 to 2 within one post). The essential element for the clause to exist is the 'process' instantiated through a verb that explain the action performed. Table 3.9 shows the different categories used to interpret the lexical choices used to construe the clause.

The analysis is concerned with the identification of the functions of the word in construing experience. The analysis focuses on the categorization of processes, participants, and circumstances. Table 3.9 reports examples of processes to clarify the data analysis of the processes construed through verbs and verbal groups.

Table 3.9 Examples of realizations of the processes

PROCESS TYPE	Range:	Examples:
material	Scope	he rode his motorbike to work you haven't signed your name on this letter I'm following your example
behavioural	Behaviour	the child wept copious tears
mental	Phenomenon	you can feel the pressure on your skull do you prefer tea for breakfast? I would recognize that face anywhere
verbal	Verbiage	he made a defiant speech she speaks Russian with her children what question did you want to ask me?
relational	Attribute	she is a captain
	Value	she is the captain
existential	–	

Source: Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 346)

As shown in Table 3.11 each verb necessitates a 'participant'; however, this could be elliptical. Participants are either subjects or objects of the processes. The third element that complete the triangular structure of a clause, not strictly necessary, is the 'circumstance' in its multiplicity of meanings conveyed and instantiations. The role of circumstances is to locate processes and participants in terms of location in time and place, ways of doing, cause, and additional information that enrich the meanings of the clause. This framework has been adapted to the dataset and modified accordingly to highlight how the lexical choices translated specific branding functions (see Appendix III).

The systems for the annotation of participants and the processes are repeated twice to analyze both manifested and elliptical elements. Circumstances have been further splitted into real and virtual because of the consistent self-reference to the medium. These adjustments were due to the peculiarity of the data. The dataset as instance of advertising discourse happens to be a type of discourse that is not easy to analyze. The analysis necessitated a cross-check with other two coders to disambiguate some constructions. The features of advertising discourse occurring in the dataset are namely: elliptical participants and processes, often related to text-image relations; nominalizations and long nominal group listing the evaluative features of the products promoted; reduction of the number of words for the sake of conciseness and immediacy of the message; and deictic words, typical of advertising discourse, but also further explored as contextual elements whose use is reinforced by the hypertextual structure of the texts (Cook, 1992; Myers, 2010; Riboni, 2014).

The annotation scheme resulted from the analysis is considered part of the theoretical contribution of this study, especially because of the underestimated use of transitivity for the analysis of advertising discourse emerged from the literature review.

3.4.6 Visual analysis of the photos

The annotation schemes for the visual analysis are designed based on the visual grammar and explore the representational (Figure 3.8) and the interactional meanings (Figure 3.9).

3.4.6.1 Representational meanings

The annotation scheme in Figure 3.8 investigates the representational meanings concerned with the way reality is constructed.

```
                               ┌burberry
                   BRAND        ┤gucci
                               └lv
                                        ┌doing──DOING-──┌actional
                                        │        TYPE   └reactional
                           ┌narrative──NARRATIVE-┤happening
                           │            TYPE     │saying
       PROCESS-            │                     │posing
       TYPE               ┤                      └sequencing
                           │             ┌classificational
                           └conceptual──CONCEPTUAL-┤analytical-(part-of-whole)
                                         TYPE      └symbolism
                                                          ┌models
                                              ┌generic──GENERIC-┤audience
                                              │          TYPE   │customers
                                   ┌group──GROUP-┤               └others
                                   │ >1     TYPE │          ┌named-models
                                   │             └specific──SPECIFIC-┤named-celebrities
                       ┌human──HUMAN-┤                      TYPE     └staff
                       │       TYPE │                       ┌founder-of-the-brand
                       │            │                       │designer
                       │            └individual──INDIVIDUAL-┤celebrity/testimonial
                       │                          TYPE      │artisan
                       │                                    │model
       PARTICIPANTS   ┤                                     └staff-member
                       │                       ┌brand
                       │                       │                ┌iconic
                       │            ┌non-human──NON-┤product──PRODUCT-┤seasonal-item
                       │            │ HUMAN-TYPE    │         TYPE    │brand-stretching
                       │            │               │                └exclusive-item
                       │            │               │connotative-elements
                       │            │               └other-elements
                       └resembling-human
                                              ┌past
                                              │fashion-season
                                     ┌time──TIME-┤festive-season
                                     │      TYPE │contemporary
                                     │           └live
                           ┌setting──SETTING-┤           ┌country-of-origin
                           │         TYPE    │           │abroad──ABROAD-┌target-market
                           │                 │           │        TYPE   └supplier
                           │                 │           │set
                           │                 └space──SPACE-┤visual-merchandising-display
                           │                        TYPE  │runway
       CIRCUMSTANCES      ┤                               │flagship-store
                           │                               │event-venue
                           │                               │behind-the-scenes
                           │                               └behind-the-camera
                           │        ┌means──MEANS-┌meta-representation
                           │        │       TYPE  └other
                           └accompaniment
                                                   ┌branding-(iconic)
                                    ┌extradiegetic──EXTRADIEGETIC-┤location-in-time──LOCATION-┌past-(black&white)
                                    │               TYPE          │                  IN-TIME-TYPE└festive-season-(linking)
                                    │                             └other-effects
       COLOUR-            ┤
       FUNCTION                                    ┌location-in-time-(background)──LOCATION-IN-TIME-┌fashion-season-(linking)
                                    │               │                            (BACKGROUND)-TYPE └festive-season-(packaging-or-merchandising-display)
                                    └real──REAL-┤additional-meanings──ADDITIONAL-┌connotation-(values)
                                         TYPE   │                     MEANINGS-TYPE└other-meanings
                                                └representation-of-reality
```

representational-meanings

Figure 3.8 Annotation scheme for the representational meanings (adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006)

200

In Figure 3.9, from top to bottom, the annotation starts from the brand name, which is created to facilitate the search of results across brands within the representational meanings. Process, participant, and circumstance type are directly reported from the visual grammar in the first degree of delicacy and further developed, and integrated with the layer of analysis of the function of the colour constructed drawing upon studies about picture books and films (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004; Painter *et al.*, 2013) and extended to different degrees of delicacy based on the instances tracked in the dataset.

Among the changes made to the original framework there is the narrative process of 'posing' (Table 3.10) added to annotate the explicit situated action that occurs under controlled conditions and according to a script.

Table 3.10 Differentiating the process of 'posing' and 'doing-actional'

Posing process	Doing – actional process

The 'posing' process is construed through the directed behavior of the participant enacting a specific action, in this case, walking. The 'doing-actional' instead is instantiated by models walking on a runway, they are moving participants. The moving

participants do not allow the photographer to capture a controlled action, but provide the photographer with the opportunity of choosing what to capture and when. In both posts, participants are walking, but in the first case the action is staged, in the second one; it is part of an actional flow.

Table 3.11 displays the relation between formal representation and identity of the participants, and explains in which way the connection is drawn.

Table 3.11 Participants and their role

	Group	**Individual**	**Role**	**Meaning**
Generic	Models		Displaying the product	Dehumanization of human beings in favour of the brand
	Audience		Creating desire	It is an acclaimed and supported brand
	Customers		Creating desire	It is an acclaimed and supported brand
	Others		Other	Other
Specific	Named models	Model	Belonging to fashion system	Establishing credentials based on the models
	Named celebrities	Celebrity/testimonial	Celebrity endorsement	Establishing credentials based on the celebrities
	Staff	Staff member	Personification of the brand	Handmade products
		Artisan	Personification of the brand	Handmade products
		Founder of the brand	Personification of the brand	Heritage
		Designer	Personification of the brand	Artistic component

The same implementation has been operationalized at the level of annotation of the

circumstances (Table 3.12).

Table 3.12 Circumstances and their functions

Circumstance-type		Category	Function
Setting	Time	Past	(hi)storytelling
		Fashion season	Time location (fashion calendar)
		Festive season	Time location (consumption calendar)
		Contemporary	Reader perceives it as broadcasting
		Live	Broadcasting
	Space	Country of origin	Heritage
		Abroad (target market/supplier)	Globalization
		Set	Unfolding campaigns
		Visual merchandising display	Displaying products
		Runway	Accessibility to the event
		Behind the scenes	Accessibility to the aspirational world, and unveiling the process
		Flagship store	Globalization
		Event venue	Accessibility to the event
	Means	Meta-representation	Focusing on the medium used to display the final product (e.g. magazine cover)
Other	Other	Other	Other
Accompaniment	Accompaniment	Accompaniment	Showing associations

Circumstances are examined in their division into time, space, means, and accompaniment. The categories used to annotate the dataset are based on the characterization of luxury fashion goods market.

The last layer of analysis of the representational meanings is the function of colours. Colour is a core feature of fashion because it also dictates trends and identifies seasons; however, in this study the colour feature is annotated when it performs a function that is not related to the product but to the contextualization of the discourse involved. The different categories are developed based on studies of picture books (Painter *et al*., 2013), and films (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004). From top to bottom, the colours are annotated in terms of extradiegetic and real. Extradiegetic colours are added to branding the post and assigning identity, locating the discourse in time, creating effects like black & white, and other effects. The real colours help to locate in time and represent the reality but also provide additional meanings based on connotation.

Table 3.13 Colours and their functions

Colour type	Colour function		Realization
Extradiegetic colour	**Branding (iconic)**		Establishing the belonging to the brand (e.g. *Burberry* iconic colour veiling a landscape)
	Location in time	Past	Colour effect to locate the photo in the past (e.g. black & white effect)
		Festive season	Colours added to enhance the festive theme of the posts (e.g. red for Chinese New Year)
	Other effects		
Real colour	**Location in time**	Fashion season	Use of theme season background for visual

			merchandising display
		Festive season	Use of festive theme background for visual merchandising display and packaging (e.g. Christmas gifts)
	Additional meanings	Connotative values	Veiling photos with white colour and light to suggest purity for instance
		Other meanings	
	Representation of reality		Colours remain faithful to reality and are not used to convey any additional meaning

The choice of colours is made according to the ruling trends established in the fashion system, and hence the analysis focuses specifically on the function of colours in the construction of the meanings. The background colour, that is the one annotated, indicates choices within the range of those already made *a priori*, and highlights the functional role of those. For instance, the interest is not in why *Burberry* chose *Tiffany & Co.*'s colour for its Spring Summer 2015 collection, but instead in the use that *Burberry* makes of the colour in the posts to link up different posts and create the narrative flow (Image 3.11 and 3.12).

Image 3.11 Use of Tiffany colour   **Image 3.12 Use of Tiffany colour**
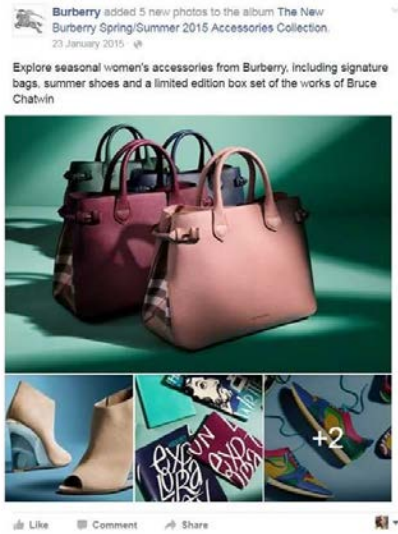
The two posts shown in Image 3.11 and 3.12 are shared on two different days, but they are linked up from the use of the same background. This situation suggests that the items belong to the same season and in this case also same collection. The motif and pattern provide information to gather products under the same collection; however, recognizing the seasons requires the viewer to be familiar with patterns.

The different categories of representational meanings interact with each other to construct the world of the brand and make it intelligible to the audience. In terms of production, they represent the semiotic choices and the instances of discourse characterizing the dataset. In terms of distribution, the categories are discussed within the area of potential and actual use in relation to encoding and decoding process (Hall, 2006; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

3.4.6.2 Interactional meanings

The interactional meanings (Figure 3.9) is concerned with the establishment of an interpersonal relationship between text-producer and text-consumer. Similar to the

representational meanings, the annotation scheme for the interactional meanings has been integrated with branding categories to enhance the connection between semiotic construction and application of branding strategies.
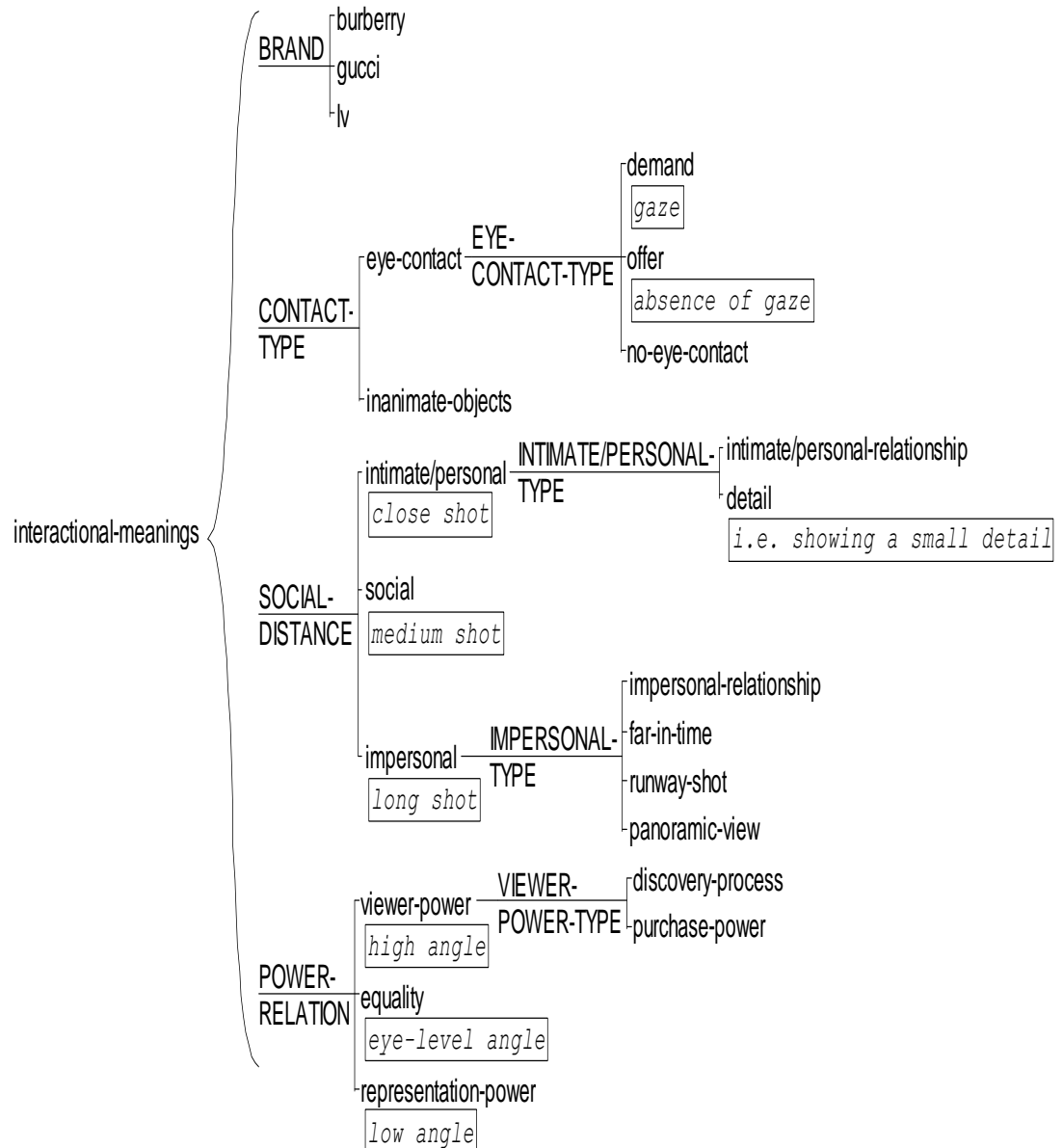

Figure 3.9 Annotation scheme for the interactional meanings (adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006)

The annotation scheme for the interactional meanings remains faithful to the original framework; however, the scheme is extended with an additional degree of delicacies and categories to intensify its realizations related to the context in which the discourse

operates. The first degree of delicacy maps contact-type, social distance, and power relation. Contact-type has been integrated with the additional category of 'inanimate objects' that differs from the category of 'no eye-contact' inserted in the category of 'eye-contact'. It is because in the first type, there are no eyes and in the second type, they are not depicted in the photo because the participant is showing the viewer his/her back.

'Social distance' is constructed through the use of close, medium, and long shot. The difference with the original framework (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006) lies in the motivation behind the distance construed and not the realization. 'Intimate/personal' relationship between brand and user conveys specific meanings, namely the connection initiated through the use of the social media and the display of the details. 'Social' equalizes the relationship between the brand and users. 'Impersonal' relationship is established when distance is desired between brand and users, or the perception of the participants constructed as being 'far in time', or a 'panoramic view' is offered, or the shot focuses on the runway.

'Power relation' is realized through the choice of the camera angle: high, eye-level angle, and low angle. Similar to the construction of social distance, power relation is realized through the same semiotic choices (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006); however, it construes associations governed by the power relations within the luxury goods market. High angle constructs viewer-power that is used to annotate the construction of the 'discovery process' enacted by the users towards information shared via the post. The 'purchase power' is, on the other hand, semiotically attributed to the viewer. Eye-level creates 'equality' between the brand and users. Low angle realizes representation of power for the elements in the photos.

Table 3.16 summarizes how each type of interaction is realized, the meanings constructed and their functions.

Table 3.14 Interactive semantics

Type of interaction	Meaning constructed	Function	Realizations
Contact	**Eye-contact**	Demand	Gaze
		Offer	Absence of gaze
		No eye-contact	Eyes are not visible
	Inanimate objects		Objects without eyes
Social distance	**Intimate/Personal**	Intimate/Personal relationship	Referring to a human participant depicted with a close shot (face or up to the shoulders)
		Detail	Detail from a product depicted with a close shot that leads the viewer to focus on the specific feature of the product
	Social		Medium shot
	Impersonal	Impersonal relationship	Referring to a human participant depicted with a long shot (face or up to the shoulders)
		Far in time	A long shot used to depict a scene that occurred in the past
		Runway shot	A long shot to capture the fashion show
		Panoramic view	A long shot providing a panoramic view (e.g. contextualizing an event)
Power relation	**Viewer power**	Discovery	High angle use to enhance the process of discovery of product details
		Purchase power	High angle used to enhance

|			the powerful position of the viewers over products put in a visual merchandising display on sale. It is used to construe affordability
	Equality		Eye-level angle
	Representation power		Low angle used to portray the brand and products in a higher position comparing to the viewer to construe unaffordability and desirability

The analysis of interactional meanings, given their relations with the power game in the luxury goods market, is across brands, and in its co-occurrence with the representational meanings, the identity construction, and the marketing strategies to understand when the distance and power are negotiated and intersect with other semiotic constructions.

3.4.7 Defining the intersemiotic relations within Facebook posts

The representational and interactional meanings have focused on the semiotic labour of the textual and visual resources individually. The sixth step of analysis explores the relation constructed among them through the adaptation of Martinec & Salway's (2005) framework to investigate the intersemiotic relations that occur between textual and visual resources. The intersemiotic relations map out the interaction of different semiotic resources and describe the division of the semiotic labour among them within the same *Facebook* post.

The framework was chosen among others because it has been used to analyze

digital media texts, including *Facebook* posts (Bezemer & Kress, 2014). The framework has been adapted to the dataset in which the layout units and the medium hosting the meanings play an important role, so that it has been necessary to exclude the annotation of equality and inequality relation between semiotic resources, text and image for Martinec and Salway, because different from Instagram, there is no hierarchy established between the modes. The dataset includes album posts which may suggest a nuclear role of the images over text, but its establishment will be based on evidence from the analysis more than assumptions at this stage. Figure 3.10 shows the annotation scheme used for the analysis.
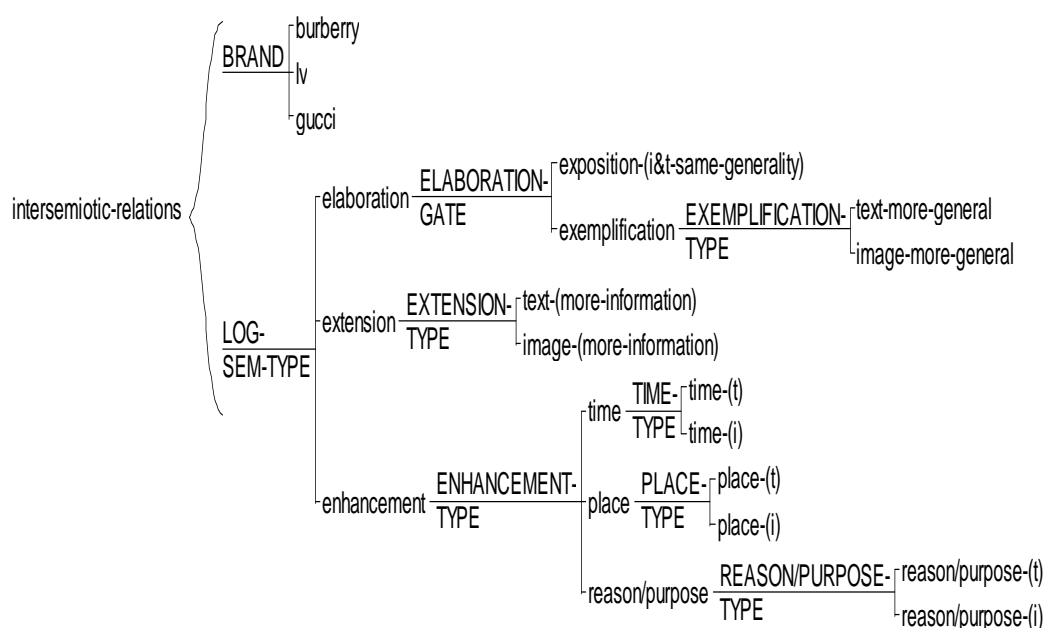
Figure 3.10 Annotation scheme for the intersemiotic relations (adapted from Martinec & Salway, 2005)

The annotation scheme is constructed based on the LOG-SEM relations. 'Elaboration' and 'extension' have not been modified from Martinec and Salways' (2005) system network, 'enhancement' has been made more explicit by adding the choice between (t) and (i), respectively standing for text and image, to identify where the additional

information is allocated.

3.4.8 Intertextuality and interdiscursivity: brand values and the (hi)story behind

Halliday (2003) maintained that each text has a history that is based on other texts, hence, 'intertextuality' comes as an embedded feature of each text. Kristeva (1969; 1986) defines 'intertextuality' by comparing texts to mosaics, and framing them as the result of the assemblage of other texts. Petroni (2011), explicitly referring to digital multimodal texts, describes intertextuality as the property of texts to be constructed based on the intelligibility of information that the reader has from other texts. Bhatia (2017) points out how intertextuality occurs with interdiscursivity, and presents the first one as an instance of internal association at the text-level, and the second one as a more context-related references external to the text. In both cases, there is an appropriation of semiotic resources, which signals the reference to another text.

These definitions contribute to the classification of the intertextual and interdiscursive construction based on the identification of the semiotic resources responsible for them, of the texts they are referring to, and their function. Intertextuality is realized by three means: through textual resources only, visual resources only, or as the product of the interaction between the two. Interdiscursivity is identified at the same level but it is more concerned with the context of use. The text which the texts examined refer to, is identified through the consultation of secondary data (e.g. editorials, articles about the brands, press releases) about the brands and their activities. The function of the intertextual and interdiscursive construction is identified in relation to the marketing strategies.

The findings related to intertextuality and interdiscursivity as instances of the strategies used by the luxury fashion firms are also examined across brands to find out

what other texts are used to build the branding discourse and why they differ or correspond among the brands.

3.4.9 Identification of the socio-semiotic processes

The eighth step of the analysis is concerned with the socio-semiotic processes enacted by the digital multimodal texts examined. The investigation of the different semiotic resources in their individual function, and interaction with each other, informs the definition of "what's going on in a given context" (Matthiessen, 2014, p. 169).

The identification of the socio-semiotic processes follows consistent parameters used in previous application of the registerial cartography (Matthiessen, 2014; 2015; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2016), and patterns that emerged from the annotation of the individual semiotic labour of the different semiotic resources and their interaction. Table 3.15 summarizes the criteria that motivate the annotation of a socio-semiotic process in its textual or visual rendition.

Table 3.15 Criteria for the annotation of the socio-semiotic processes

Socio-semiotic process	Sub-category	Textual rendition	Visual rendition	Function
Expounding	Explaining	Explicitly describing and event or a product		Informational
	Categorizing	Listing of items under a specific collection, campaign (list of nouns)	Album posts displaying different products	Defining collections and campaign (what it is a must-have within which

				season)
Reporting	Chronicling	Material processes construing actions performed by the brand	Material processes	Storytelling
	Surveying			
	Inventorying			
Recreating	Narrating	Evoking emotion during festive campaigns	Extradiegetic colour for festive campaigns	Brand entertainment
	Dramatizing		Facial expression of the participants	Brand entertainment
Sharing	Experiences	Sharing 'behind the scenes' details of events	Backstage settings	Enhancing the interaction between brand and users
	Values	Sharing the values of the brand that appeal to the community (e.g. CSR)	Sharing the values of the brand that appeal to the community (e.g. CSR)	CSR
Doing	Directing			
	Collaborating	Describing partnerships		Partnership
Enabling	Instructing	Giving directions to conduct specific activities	Tutorial steps	Advertorial
	Regulating			

Recommending	Promoting	Use the imperative forms to invite the users to consume information and goods		Engagement
	Advising			
Exploring	Reviewing			
	Arguing			

Table 3.16 shows the textual and visual instantiations of the socio-semiotic processes when they occur in the dataset, and predicts the function of the texts performing those processes. The socio-semiotic processes are annotated with the support of *UAM Image Tools* to facilitate the calculation of the quantitative results; however, the typological representation enabled by the annotation schemes was refined due to the topological nature of the field of activity. Table 3.15 helps deploying consistent criteria to systematize the annotation and provide workable results for the definition of the registerial territory within which corporate *Facebook* posts operate.

3.5 Summary

This chapter provides a detailed account of the theoretical and analytical frameworks of the study. It describes a comprehensive multi-perspective approach built on the choice of social semiotics as theory that lends itself to multidisciplinary studies. It introduces the dataset by listing and explaining the criteria for the selection of the data. It explains the data collection process by justifying the need for a manual collection of the data to preserve the characteristics of the hosting platform. It illustrates the organization of the corpus for the investigation through corpus tools.

This chapter also describes the eight steps of multimodal discourse analysis and presents the multi-framework of annotation scheme deployed.

The findings and discussion in Chapter 4 will provide examples of the categories annotated and highlight the need for the adjustment of existing frameworks to the dataset to capture the site-specific discursive practices.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the research findings, addressing each research question and aim. It describes the quantitative and qualitative results obtained from the different layers of analysis (semiotic perspective), and links the discursive strategies examined with the socio-economic context, in which discourse is produced and distributed (social action and social/institutional perspectives).

Section 4.2 describes the analysis results regarding the semiotic labour of each semiotic resource individually. Section 4.3 describes the intersemiotic relations among the different semiotic resources inventoried, identifies the intertextual and interdiscursive constructions, and categorizes the site-specific discursive practices constructed. Section 4.4 describes the findings of the socio-semiotic processes. Section 4.5 reconceptualizes luxury in the 21st century based on its semiotic construction provided in the dataset. It relates the discursive strategies with the specificity of the medium of communication utilized, and explains the evolution and the generation of the new features of luxury. This section also highlights similarities and differences across brands and explains how the semiotic choices reported in the findings are the result of the financial configuration of the brands.

4.2 The semiotic landscape of corporate Facebook posts

This section addresses the first research question: How are different semiotic resources on the *Facebook* posts of luxury fashion firms used to construct their brand identity and values? Section 4.2.1 presents the findings obtained from the macro-analysis of

identity construction and marketing strategies. Sections 4.2.2-4.2.4 focusing on the micro-level analysis, describe the semiotic resources individually, namely the layout and units and the medium-specific features along with their semiotic functions, the semiotic labour of the textual resources, and the semiotic labour of the visual resources.

4.2.1 From brand to product identity and from heritage to legitimacy

This section presents the types of identity marketing strategies, which indicate how brand identity and values are constructed. It also describes the differences across brands.

4.2.1.1 Brand, product, and corporate identity

The findings related to the macro-analysis of the *Facebook* posts in relation to identity construction and marketing strategies show how branding discourse disseminated in the social media shifts the focus from brand to product identity, and from heritage to legitimacy. The findings in Figure 4.1 demonstrate how the branding discourse on *Facebook* is used to construct brand and product identity mainly, and leaves out the construction of corporate identity (see Section 2.2.2 for a definition).
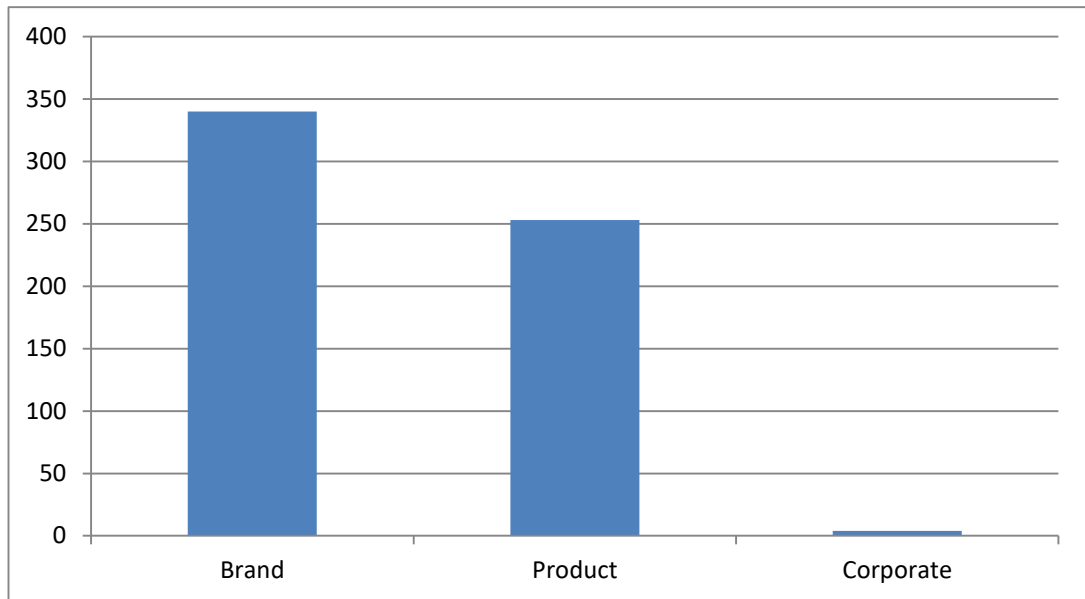
Figure 4.1 Results of identity construction

Figure 4.1 shows a high distribution of brand (N=340, 75%) and product identity (N=253, 57%), and present a very low frequency for corporate identity (N=4, 1%). The motivations behind this distribution are based on the brand agenda defined for the use of *Facebook*. *Facebook* is used to target the final consumers and build brand awareness; therefore, branding discourse focuses on the brand and the products, while corporate identity is destined to more official outlets. Among the official outlets, a high percentage of links pointing at the websites is used for the disclosure of information for shareholders, who are more interested in the corporate identity.

The construction of brand identity is instantiated through different discursive strategies deriving from the brand values. For example, brand identity is constructed through CoO (Image 4.1), references to the fashion system (Image 4.2), and art (Image 4.3).

| Image 4.1 CoO | Image 4.2 Fashion system | Image 4.3 Art |
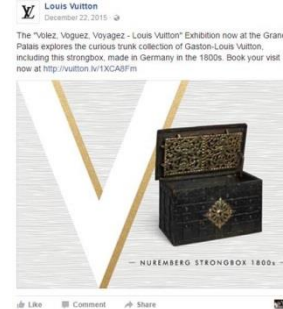
Brand identity, for *Burberry*, is constructed through its CoO, which is Britain and the brand uses it as an element of distinctiveness and a carrier of heritage of the brand (Bucci *et al.*, 2011; Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009). Specifically, this instance of CoO refers to a feature of luxury fashion brands that define their CoO as specific cities of origins. The city is often chosen in coincidence with fashion capitals, like in this case for London (Image 4.1), or for a particular relationship with the place, which the brand has established throughout time.

Other instances of brand identity constructed through references to the fashion system are media coverage in fashion magazines like *Vogue* (Image 4.2). This practice aims to establish credibility in the fashion system (Okonkwo, 2007). It is also an instance of attachment to the printed media because the text is constructed via a digitized version of the cover (see Section 4.3.2).

The findings also present brand identity as constructed through art (Image 4.3). *LV*, for instance, narrates the (hi)story of the brand by curating associations with art, history, and the concept of heritage (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008; Kapferer, 2015). In the Image 4.3, the trunk, which is the core product for the brand, is construed as an artwork and, as such, it is the protagonist of an art exhibition (see Section 4.3.2).

Following brand identity, a high percentage of construction of product identity is found. Figure 4.2 describes the tendency of luxury fashion brands to use *Facebook* for the promotion of seasonal products.
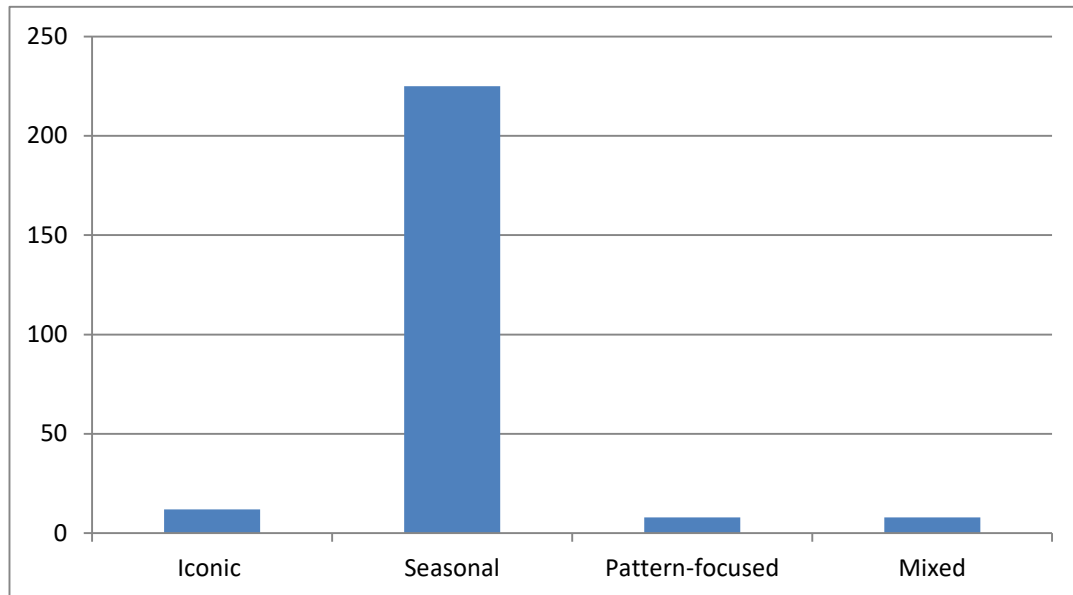
Figure 4.2 Results for product identity

Seasonal products display the highest percentage (N=225, 90%), showing how luxury fashion brands do not use *Facebook* to contribute to the narrative concerned with classic collections and core products; however, brands focus on building traits of distinctiveness for their new product to compete in the market. This is perhaps the result of the fast-pace which characterizes luxury fashion while going online. Consumers are no longer called to appreciate long-lasting products, but to be the first ones to show their ability to catch up with trends and buy many more products from different collections. It is no longer about accessing the brand, but accessing the brand quickly and continuously.

The construction of the seasonal product is instantiated through different strategies (Image 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6).

Image 4.4 Visual merchandising	Image 4.5 Advertising campaign setting	Image 4.6 Advertising campaign

Products are displayed in visual merchandising settings (Image 4.4), in advertising campaign settings placed for shooting (Image 4.5), or as part of advertising campaigns (Image 4.6). Image 4.6 reports a moment of a shooting of a campaign and the focus of attention is the product. The model is in a summer holiday location holding a handbag as if she wanted to protect it. There is no gaze in the photo, and the facial expression is empty, which is in alignment with Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) contact-type categories, constructing an offer to the audience, but not explicitly inviting people to take any action towards the product. The model appears as a mannequin, almost dehumanized, as her body serves to protect the bag. All the three examples depict products displayed in a controlled environment, where no external interference can impact the positive perception of the ready-to-sell products (see Section 4.2.4 for visual analysis).

Among the three types of identity, corporate identity is almost inexistent in the corpus. Despite its low frequency, which is symptomatic of the text-type examined, the examples presented (Image 4.7 and 4.8) provide insights into the choice of sharing them.

Image 4.7 Corporate identity　　　　**Image 4.8 Corporate identity**

The two examples of corporate identity represent the way brands engage the final consumers with back-office information, which is relevant to shareholders, in the establishment of brand awareness. Both examples frame a positive identity of the corporate group behind the brand. Consumers do not directly engage with *Kering* (Image 4.7) and *LVMH* (Image 4.8), but start to be exposed to luxury conglomerates as financial institutions owning the brands, even though, consumers are often not aware of the group, which the brands belong to.

Gucci, for instance, claims corporate socially responsible activities as a way to influence consumers (Image 4.7). It shares a post about its engagement in the community in defense of women victims of violence as part of its CSR activities. It is constructed through the adoption of cause-related marketing strategies, which, according to Adkins (2000), frames the purchase of the products with a way of making a difference in the world. Cause-related marketing strategies regard the corporate social responsible conduct of the brands, and consumers typically describe their purchase experience as positive while buying a product from social responsible brand.

LV instead shares a portrayal of the corporate group family (*LVMH*) celebrating craftsmanship and people as the pillars behind its brands (Image 4.8). It informs the viewer of the DNA of the group and provides directions for all the brands belonging to that group.

4.2.1.2 Ethos, rational claim, and holiday marketing strategies

The discursive representation of brand identity and values is based on the elaboration of content related to different marketing strategies. In this study, the strategies are grouped into ethos, rational claim, and holiday marketing campaigns. Ethos relies on a process of association between signifier and signified done by the audience, which frames brands as iconic entities. Ethos stands for the authority and credibility of the brand (e.g. Swiss brand watch is the signifier, and the high quality and craftsmanship associated with that is the signified); Rational claim describes logical statements about the USP of the brands and products (e.g. skincare products); Holiday marketing campaigns are more related to emotional campaigns created to increase sales during festivities and special occasions (e.g. chocolate).

Figure 4.3 shows the adoption of the different strategies. Ethos (N=350, 59%) scores higher than rational claim (N=195, 33%) and holiday marketing campaigns (N=52, 9%).
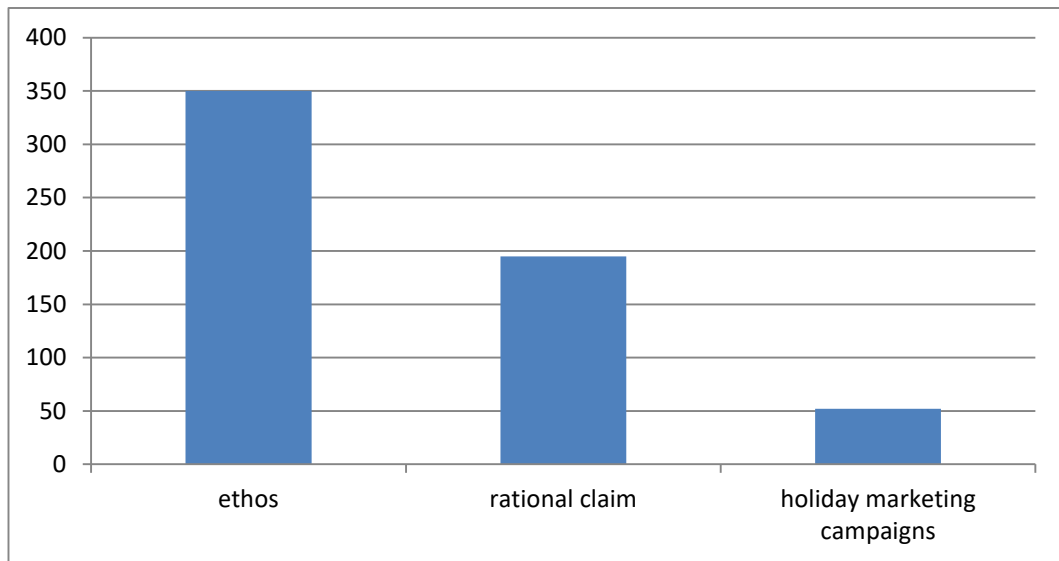
Figure 4.3 Results of the marketing strategies

The distribution is motivated by the specificity of the sector, which builds on the strong identity of the brand built through time; however, further analysis shows that the results of ethos come from external more than internal resources of the brand.

Figure 4.4 demonstrates the semiotic construction of ethos based on brand heritage and external sources.
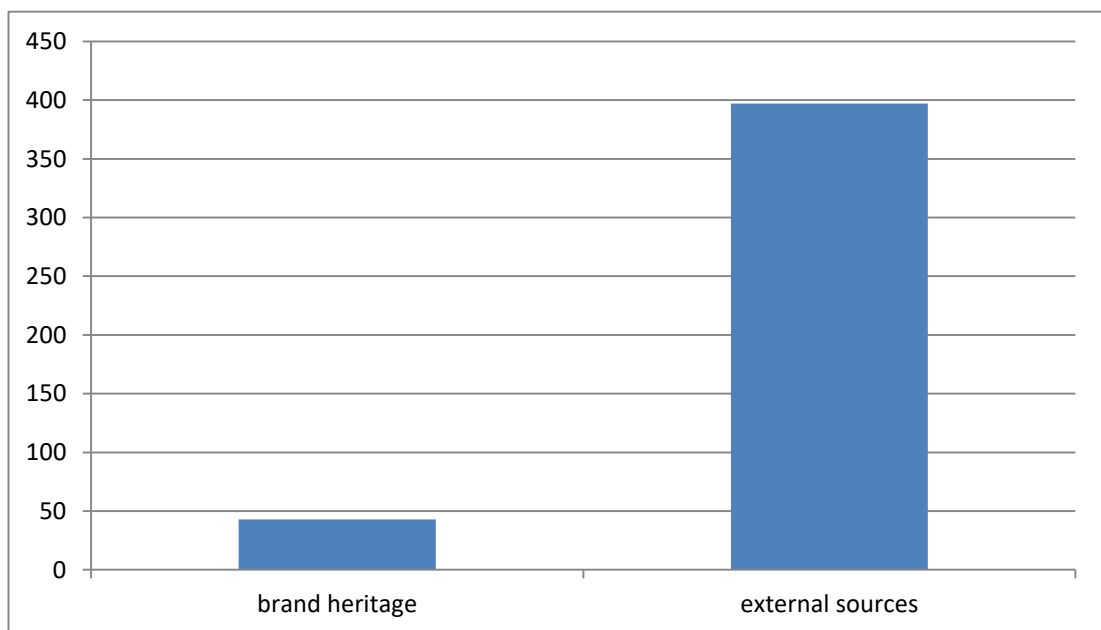

Figure 4.4 Results for the ethos elements

Brand heritage (N=43, 22%) scores lower than external sources (N=307, 78%). Brand heritage includes the history of the brand and references to CoO and founder of the brand, the geographical expansion of its distribution channel namely flagship stores and e-commerce, temporary pop-up stores, and exhibition. Luxury fashion brands focus on a heritage-oriented storytelling, which relies on the brand only and construct awareness (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015). The findings show inconsistency with the literature, which is the result of the evolution of the concept of luxury in the 21st century due to the adaptation of luxury, to the social media ecosystem.

External resources, including star system fashion system, collaborations, CSR, and intertextual references, have a higher impact framing the brand identity and values. In the social media, brands construct associations with star system and the fashion system, and rely on intertextual references to establish their brand identity and values (Figure 4.5).
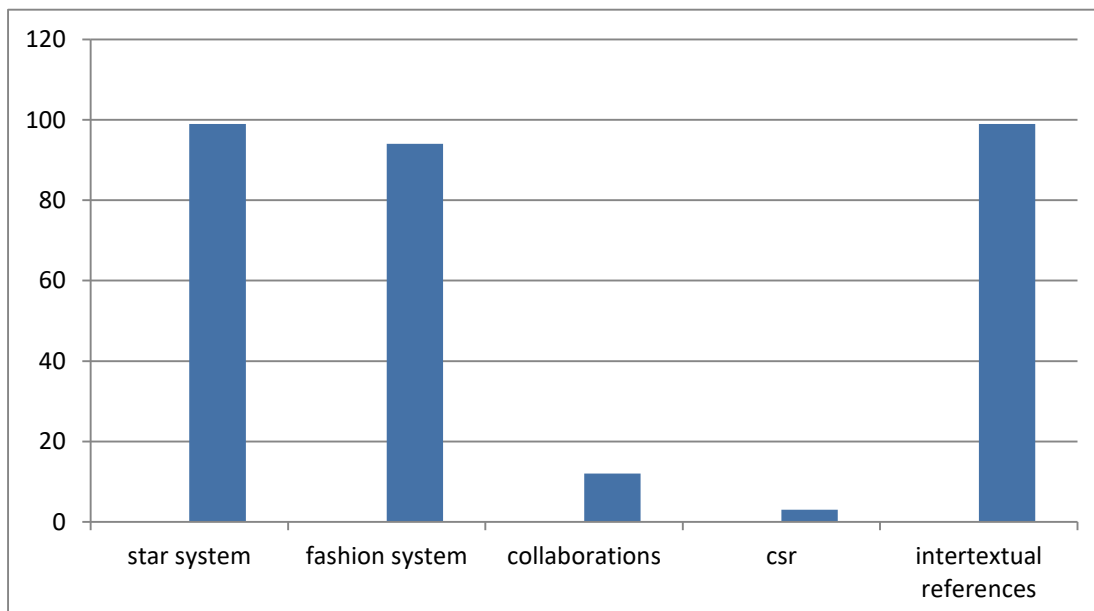

Figure. 4.5 Results of external sources of ethos

In order of frequency, the star system (N=99, 32%) scores higher than the fashion system (N=94, 20%) and intertextual references (N=99, 32%) (see Section 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 for data analysis and discussion of intertextuality). These findings represent a counter-trend to the conventional luxury branding strategies. The valorization of the elements encountered is found to be part of the set of new and evolving features of a segment that is in need of a revamped definition contextualized in its times (see Section 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). In a nutshell, in the new luxury, star system, fashion system, and intertextual references are key to remain relevant in the fast-pace social media environment.

Star system category indicates elements such as celebrity endorsement and events, which are equally distributed. Both celebrity endorsement and events always refer to very exclusive venues and occasions, comparable to cinema red carpets and sailing and golf sport events. Those latter examples are instances of Barthian constructions of wealth in society.

Different from the star system, the results for the fashion-system (Figure 4.6) and intertextual references present much more variety of elements, different from the conventional associations with luxury (see Section 2.2.3). In the category of fashion system (Figure 4.6), designers, models, and media references play a major role in the positioning of the brands in the social mediascape.
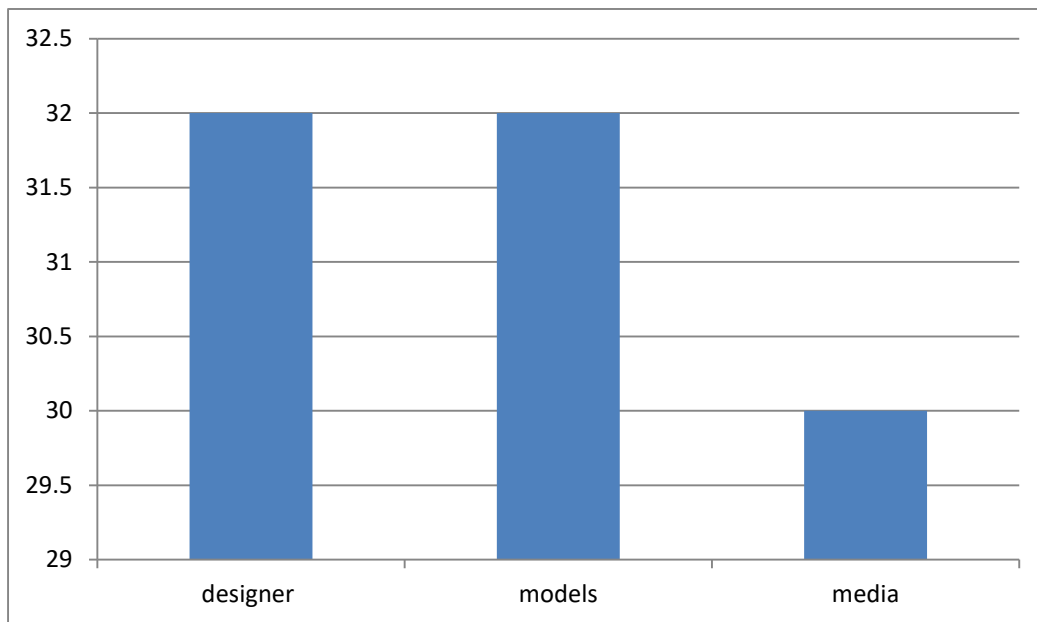
Figure 4.6 Results for the fashion-system elements

The elements of the fashion system formulated in the branding discourse are designers (N=32, 35%) (Image 4.9), models used for advertising campaigns and fashion shows (N=32, 35%) (Image 4.10), and media (N=30, 30%) (Image 4.11).

Image 4.9 Designer   **Image 4.10 Model**   **Image 4.11 Media**
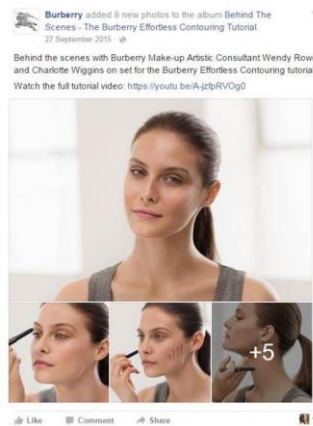
Designers (artistic and creative directors) in 2015 are found to replace the founders and incarnate the brands through social media. *LV*, for instance (Image 4.9), introduces the artistic and creative director Nicolas Ghesquière taking over the Instagram account of *LV* to bring the audience behind the scenes of the *maison*. The post transfers the authoritative voices of the brand to the artistic director and builds fashion narratives

based on personal relationships. In the same way, individual users are connected to their friends, they are connected to *LV* artistic and creative director.

The term 'artistic and creative director' reconfigures the role of designers as more polyedric and in charge of the collection, not only from the production side, but also for the distribution. The artistic and creative director is behind the creation of the collection, but also its both offline and online promotion. In the past, designers used to coincide with the founders of the brand such as Coco Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Guccio Gucci, and many more (Kapferer, 2009, 2012; Okonkwo, 2007). Over the years, considering that most of the brands with a strong heritage have more than one century of history and founders are no longer alive, brands have hired different designers for their collections, and left them in the shadow to preserve the association of the brand with the founder's creative mind. This practice has recently changed, transforming the designers into brands, enhancing their mobility from one firm to another, as artists used to do from one count to another in the Renaissance.

Other players in building brand identity and values in the fashion system are models (Image 4.10); however, unless they are introduced by name, models are used to display the products, as dehumanized mannequins in a shopping window. *Burberry*, while presenting its cosmetics, chooses to display the backstage of a tutorial. The tutorial is a how-to text (see Section 4.3.3), which enables the viewer to understand how to use the products and achieve the result displayed on the model. The post (Image 4.10) is also created in collaboration with a make-up artist, who built her career through YouTube tutorials, and *Burberry* experiments those new influencers by merging advertising and tutorials into advertorials (Keinan *et al.*, 2015; Laurel, 2014; Peretti, 2011; Pedroni *et al.*, 2015;).

The annotation of the fashion system also shows the use of media reference (Image 4.11). *Gucci*, for instance, portrays Anna Wintour, British-American editor-in-chief of *Vogue* since 1988, in a *Gucci*'s outfit. She is a recognized fashion icon, and *Gucci* transfers that definition onto its outfit. Wintour's approval works as positive association and promotion for the brand, but mostly as a recognition of brand value for the fashion system.

The category of media references focuses on both old and new media. The results accounting for 60% for new media and 40% for old media. The results demonstrate a high integration across new media reinforced by the hypertextual elements used in the *Facebook* posts, but also confirm an attachment to old media, which reflects a search for authenticity. This shows a different approach to printed media, which were initially considered instances of digital illiteracy (Okonkwo, 2010; Nervino, 2013).

Following ethos, the second category of marketing strategies is rational claim (Figure 4.7).
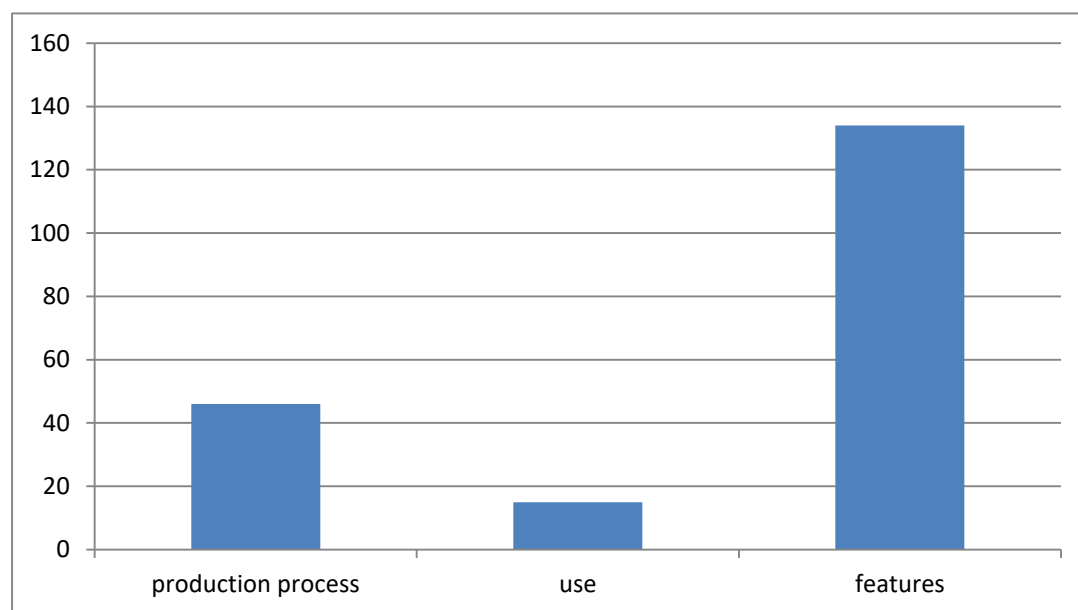

Figure 4.7 Results for the rational claim elements

In the social media, brands tend to focus on the features of the product (N=134, 69%), their production process (N=46, 24%), and their use (N=15, 7%), all constructing rational claims to achieve the sales.

The three examples (Image 4.12, 4.13, and 4.14) display a handbag. It is no coincidence, as handbags are typically the protagonists of social media branding discourse. This choice is motivated by the high profits generated by this product, which is included in the wish list of the fast-growing middle-class, given its affordable price and seasonal versions and continuously contributing to the revenues (Rambourg, 2014).

Image 4.12 Features | Image 4.13 Production process | Image 4.14 Use
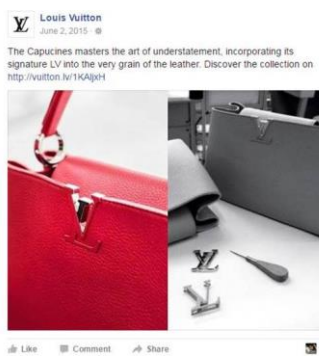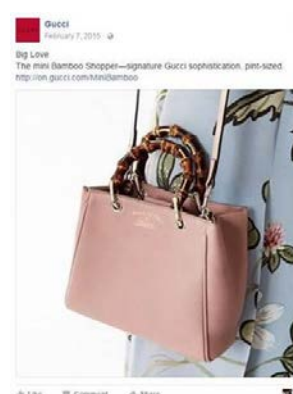
The three examples show how those features, production process, and use of products are semiotically constructed. Image 4.12 shows the details of the products, whose applications and embroidery symbolize the need for a handmade work behind. Image 4.13 shows part of the production process. The photo displays the manual application of the lock of the handbag. It is mainly related to the role, which craftsmanship plays in the luxury goods market, and it evokes the artisanal origins of the brands. Image 4.14 is an example of the use of the product, it is a shoulder bag, and it can be matched with the dress in the photo.

Following ethos and rational claim, the third category of marketing strategies is holiday marketing campaigns. It has been annotated into sharing values, festive-related, and other types of posts. The findings for this category show a high percentage of festive-related posts over the others (Figure 4.8).
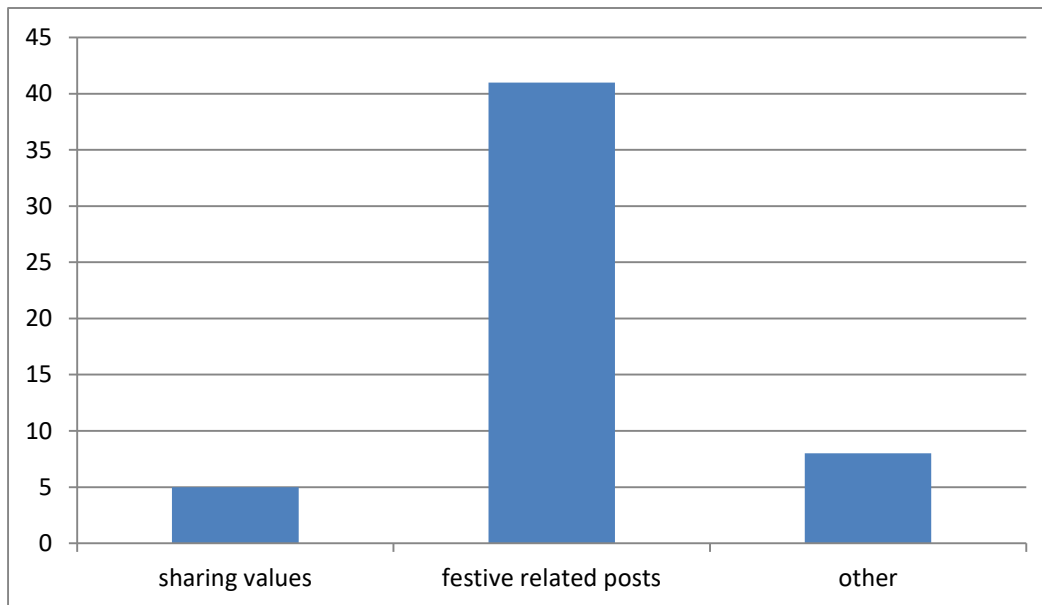
Figure 4.8 Results for holiday marketing campaign categories

Findings demonstrate that the high percentage of festive-related posts is given by the numerous instances of promotional activities created by the brands with the aim of increasing festive season revenues (N=41, 79%). Following this percentage, the category of 'sharing values' and 'other' cover respectively 10% and 11% of the remaining holiday marketing campaigns.

Examples of festive-related posts are festive campaigns such as Christmas, Chinese New Year, and Valentine's Day (Image 4.15, 4.16, 4.17).

Image 4.15 Festive-related   **Image 4.16 Festive-related**   **Image 4.17 Festive-related**
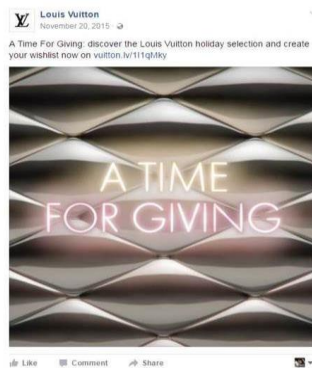
The first example showing the Christmas campaign from *LV* (Image 4.15) is a post on 20 November 2015 in preparation for Christmas, which is promoted as a 'time for giving' referring to the gift exchange culture. It is used to suggest the creation of a wish list in advance for which *LV* has already made a selection to ease people's life.

The second example (Image 4.16) is a shot of the festive film created by *Burberry* for Christmas and re-utilized for Chinese Lunar new year starring Romeo Beckham. *Burberry* is pioneer in the realization of branding entertainment, and its festive films have become an appointment for its *aficionados*. This particular movie was used to engage the youngest potential consumers and frame the brand as provider of kidswear to grow the new generations. The third example (Image 4.15) refers to Valentine's Day. The use of the sentence "from *Burberry* with love" is an intertextual reference (see Section 4.3.3), which evokes feelings. The aim of the brand is to suggest that the way to celebrate love is to choose its branded items. All the three examples present an overarching construction, which is aspiration. Consumers are invited to consume branded items to celebrate those festivities in the same glamorous way, which is portrayed in the posts.

4.2.1.3 Identity construction and marketing strategies across brands

Overall, the major findings for the identity construction and marketing strategies show that branding discourse constructs a high percentage of brand and product identity through strategies based on ethos, rational claim, and holiday marketing strategies, in order of frequency.

Findings demonstrate that the three brands behave differently in respect to their brand agenda, vision, and CoO. The findings obtained from the comparison of the three brands are summarized in Figure 4.9 and 4.10.
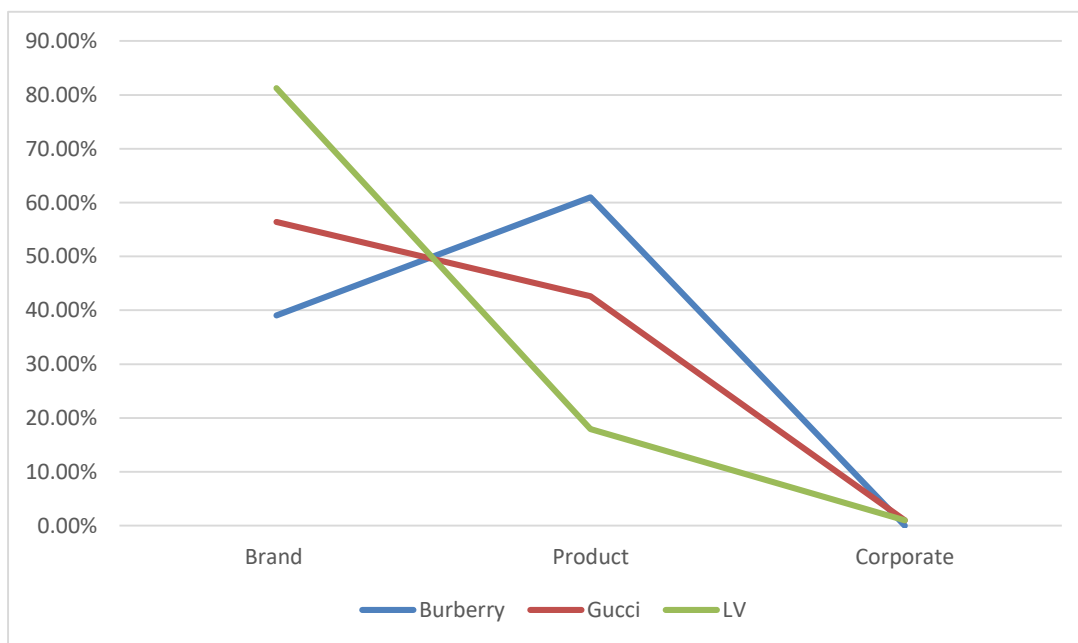
Figure 4.9 Results of identity construction across brands

Burberry, reading Figure 4.9, is found to focus on the product identity, while *LV* has its peak in the construal of brand identity. *Gucci* has a better balance between the two, but with a tendency to brand identity. Those differences confirm *Burberry*'s detachment from conventional luxury in favour of an innovative approach which aims at revamping iconic products to target younger generations (Nervino, 2016). *Gucci*,

on the other hand, has a more balanced prospectus for its social media marketing plan which integrates brand and product identity; *LV* scores higher in brand identity and this confirms that *LV* as representative of French firms is connected with a sense of nostalgia to luxury as institution linked to the heritage and not needing to promote products, but only feeding the imaginary.

Figure 4.10 shows the differences across brands in terms of marketing strategies adopted.
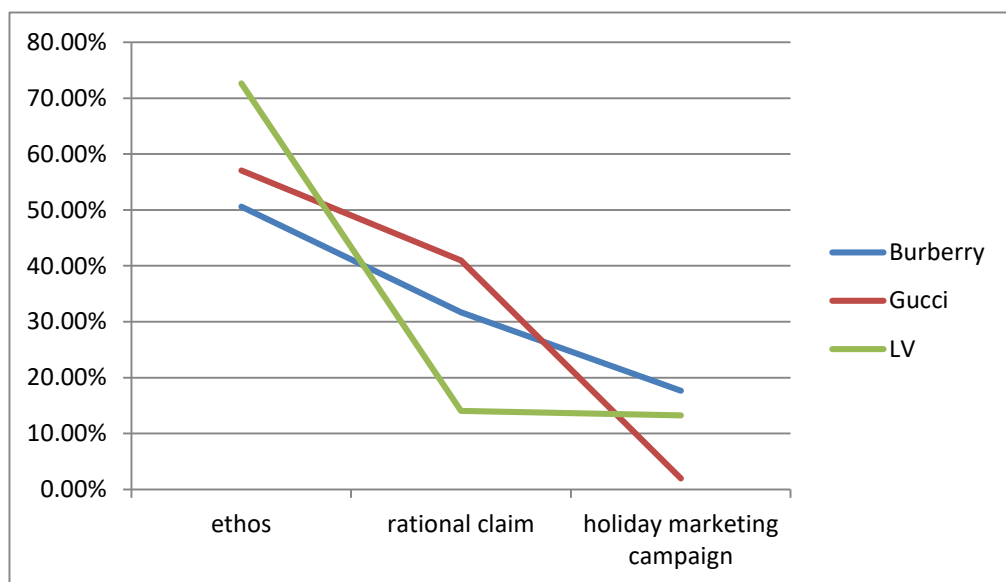
Figure 4.10 Results of the marketing strategies across brands

The findings obtained from the comparison of the three brands in relation to the marketing strategies shows that there are no significant differences. All three brands use ethos in higher percentage. Only *LV* has a large difference between ethos and the adoption of rational claim and holiday marketing campaigns.

Overall, *Burberry* appears to be more sales-oriented because it constructs product identity, while *LV* remains faithful to brand identity. *Gucci* has a more balanced distribution between the two. In terms of marketing strategies, the three brands respect the same curve of distribution; however, *LV* disregards rational claim and holiday

marketing campaigns and focuses on ethos.

The conclusion is that *Burberry* uses *Facebook* to increase sales, *Gucci* is willing to experiment different practices by building brand identity, but also promoting its products; *LV* constructs brand identity via ethos and, in doing so remains faithful to the conventional definition of luxury.

4.2.1.4 Discussion

Overall, the findings for identity construction and marketing strategies demonstrate how the deployment of *Facebook* platform creates a clash between the anti-law of luxury marketing (see Section 2.2.3.1) and the discursive representation of brand identity and values.

The highest percentage of brand identity suggests the brand itself is conceived as its own *USP* in luxury goods market (Okonkwo, 2007; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; 2012); however, the quantitative results point out an increasing percentage of product identity, in the luxury goods market, play a key role in the definition of the brand, for instance, the trench coat for *Burberry*, the bamboo bag for *Gucci*, and the trunk for *LV*. Those specific items are stand-alone brand icons. Similarly, Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2016) have also obtained the same findings while conducting interviews with luxury consumers. For very well established brands, the concept of luxury, brands, and products blend into one entity in consumers' minds. Additionally, the increasing focus on the products is motivated by a more sales-oriented re-defined luxury goods market culture, in which the agenda behind the branding discourse is no longer to construct brand awareness, but instead to openly increase revenues (Rambourg, 2014; Kapferer, 2015).

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The findings also show that the product-related posts depict seasonal products following the short-termism ideology of the instant generation. The so-called instant generation, also known as millennials, no longer sees luxury as a long-term investment; therefore, it is no longer looking for a timeless piece. Millennials do not want to be the only ones to access the goods, they want to be the first ones over and over again, being able to buy seasonal items before their peers (c.f. Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Okonkwo, 2007). This buying practice pushes brands to elaborate a rhetoric of newness to engage the audience.

The lowest percentage of corporate identity, as shown in the research findings, frames the role of *Facebook* platform in corporate communication. *Facebook* is not meant to convey official statements, it can refer to them in order to redirect the audience to the official source of information, which is typically the corporate website. Moreover, the findings provide other insights into brands' practice. The only two instances of corporate occur in the sub-corpora of *Gucci* and *LV* only. This indicates how the business model of *Gucci* and *LV* differs from *Burberry*'s one. The first two belong to two luxury conglomerates, while *Burberry* is a group, holding different sub-brands named after collections distributed in different segments, from ready-to-wear to high-end.

Interestingly, the audience is not often aware of the corporation behind the brand (Kapferer & Tabatoni, 2011). *Gucci*, for instance, appreciated for its Italianness, belongs to the French *Kering Group*, and it would sound quite controversial to promote this detail. The same would apply to the Italian Fendi belonging to the French *LVMH*. These are just two examples of a long story of French colonization of Italian brands, and Italian production licensed for French brands (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Chevalier *et al.*, 2012). In other words, the luxury goods

market is able to transverse these nationalistic conflicts; however, consumers are not involved in the bigger financial picture and elaborate at brand-level only.

The findings for the marketing strategies show that the brands analyzed construct ethos; however, in contrast with the conventional luxury marketing strategies, the discursive representation of the brands examined construct ethos through external sources in most cases, instead of brand heritage elements. Even the few instances of the brand heritage present a controversial construction. The heritage-oriented storytelling, which conventionally relied on the brand only to construct awareness (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015), in the digital era, does not include only the history of the brand, references to CoO, or founder of the brand, but instead is reinforced by the geographical expansion of its distribution channel namely flagship stores and e-commerce, temporary pop-up stores, and exhibition (Nervino, 2013; Rambourg, 2014; Kapferer, 2015).

The external sources of ethos, emerged from the findings, include star system, fashion system, and intertextual references. Star system is mainly instantiated through celebrity endorsement, which is an advertising resource validated through time in different sectors (Cook, 1992; Patpong, 2008); however, the anti-laws in marketing that characterize the luxury goods market define luxury goods as autonomous entities able to sell themselves based on their own ethos rooted in internal elements and do not necessitate any endorsement (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015).

Models and celebrities promoting a brand, as emerged from the findings, are instead conceived as the materialization of the financial and negotiation power of the brand (Gnoli, 2012; Kapferer, 2008, 2012; Okonkwo, 2007). Models and celebrities are chased by different brands for campaigns, fashion shows, and to display the

products during events. While a brand is associated with models and celebrities, there is a mutual branding between the brand and the model or celebrity. On the one hand, this mutual branding occurs in the process of establishing the brand as able to afford the specific model or celebrity and win the competition with others, not only because of the monetary bargain, but because at the same time the model or celebrity accepts the association with the brand based on its reputation and convenient association in return. On the other hand, models and celebrities are brands, and being branded by a specific brand represents the peak of their career.

If brands are corporate entities, which are aimed to survive centuries, models and celebrities are temporary trends and the high percentage of different models and celebrities in the corpus also shows a consistent search for new testimonials and the need for different stakeholders to contribute to the brand identity. In the social media age, brands no longer rely on the family culture of the brand founder, core values, and product features, but seek for external ways of legitimizing their business. This counter-trend anticipates the recent introduction of influencers and key-opinion leaders (kol), which have emerged in small percentage in the findings, but have become established figures in the fashion system, destined to increase their relevance in the fashion system (Laurel, 2014; Peretti, 2011; Pedroni *et al*., 2015; Keinan *et al*., 2015).

Within the fashion system, designers define the brand ethos by establishing the brand as powerful negotiator to attract talents. The designer has always been the soul of the brand; however, in the past and in the (hi)stories constructed around the brand, the designer was often overlapping with the founder of the brand and internal to the brand. This is the case for the three brands examined (Thomas, 2007; Gnoli, 2012). The founders of the brands were responsible for the production process. They were

artisans taking care of the production line of the creations. Today, instead designers travel from one brand to another, they are mercenaries that look for brands to build their names, but also easy to be replaced if unable to cope with the instant demand for newness, which according to designers killed creativity (Gnoli, 2012; Kapferer, 2015).

Based on the findings, designers are no longer designers only, but called to be artistic and creative directors, as their new positions read, and entrepreneurs, who manage different aspects of both information and goods production. *LV* is an example of how a brand from the 19th century with its aura of heritage was able to embrace innovation by shifting the media coverage from the founders of the brand to its temporary designers engaging in the construction of brand identity. Marc Jacobs, who joined *LV* and led the firm for 16 years (13 consecutive years)[63], according to a study conducted by Kapferer (2015), marked the moment in which consumers started perceiving *LV* as glamorous and fashionable. This was motivated by the personification of the brand as no longer associated with the founder, but with the creative mind of the firm, whose aim is to continuously innovate to shape and being shaped by the society.

The research findings identify the process of personification at two levels. Firstly, the designer is declared artistic and creative director of the collections (e.g. Nicolas Ghesquière and Kim Jones for *LV* announced in 2015). The findings attribute this practice to *Louis Vuitton* that allows the sharing of photographs of the artistic and creative director taking selfies to legitimize the announcement. Secondly, the designer takes over the social media accounts to add a personal touch to the editorial content. It creates two divergent consequences. On the one hand, the social media account becomes the 'behind the scenes' eye for the users, which establishes a personal

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[63] *Louis Vuitton*, http://eu.louisvuitton.com/eng-e1/articles/marc-jacobs-for-louis-vuitton [20/04/2017]

affection with the designer, positively rendering users part of the process. On the other hand, the leading of social media account is left in the hands of the artistic and creative director conveying his view and not influenced by the marketing department (Kapferer, 2015).

Either based on internal or external sources, ethos frames branding discourse as a carrier of the function of gathering meanings to build the brand name, precisely linking positive associations to the brand (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Keller, 1996; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012).

Moreover, among the different sources of ethos, the use of models and celebrities creates aspiration, which is at the basis of marketing (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015). Drawing on the definition of marketing as the process of creating the need, and in case of unnecessary goods, the desire[64], advertising discourse works as the producer of additional value to sell people goods "by selling them an identity: a 'new look', a 'make-over', a 'new me" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 29). Brands need to be aware of their task and craft their own brand identity in order to create desirable features for the consumers to generate the purchase intention.

Similar to individual identities (Chapter 2), brand identity is also construed within discourse, and "produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (Hall, 1996, p. 4); therefore, in the process of production of content, brands need to take into consideration the effect they want to generate in the potential buyers and carefully make choices to construe meanings.

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[64] Kotler, P. (2001-2012), *Kotler Marketing Group*, http://www.kotlermarketing.com/ [Last access 20/02/2015]

The research findings also point out the increasing deployment of rational claim, which is destined to grow, because directly linked to the increasing construction of product identity (Rambourg, 2014; Kapferer, 2015). At the same time, the era of rationality pervade luxury fashions goods market and reshapes communication. The description of the intangible assets is leaving space to the description of tangible features of luxury goods, which the findings confirm to be concerned with the display of details. Details are meant to be applied manually and represent the linkage with the old workshop tradition of artisanal, handmade work in the era of industrialization (Belfanti, 2014). Details blend with the construction of production process, with the purpose of educating consumers about the distinctive traits of the products justifying the high price. Additionally, rational claim also includes tutorial and how-to texts to teach consumers how to make the most out of the products.

The findings also indicate the presence of holiday marketing campaigns in forging the branding discourse. The multimodal corpus presents a high percentage of festive-related posts constructed via promotional activities created with the aim of increasing festive season's sales (Chevalier *et al*., 2012). This contributes to the short-term interest of the brands as manufactured from their financial-oriented mission, which is the result of affiliation to conglomerates and listing in the stock-exchange (see Section 4.5).

Moreover, Section 4.1 has presented the findings of identity construction and marketing strategies across brands. These findings provide information, which enables a preliminary positioning of the three brands based on their discursive representation. *LV* is closer to the conventional definition of luxury because it focuses on the semiotization of brand identity though ethos; *Burberry* displays products and uses star system and fashion system to create aspiration; *Gucci*, somehow, in between; however,

it constructs product identity through rational claim based on the features of the product in higher percentage comparing to other resources.

Branding discourse framing the brand identity and brand values through identity construction and marketing strategies is instantiated through different semiotic resources. The semiotic resources identified namely layout, medium-specific features, textual, and visual resources interact with each other to frame meanings. This order also reflects the organization of the following sections.

4.2.2 Corporate Facebook posts as hypertextual advertisements

Corporate *Facebook* posts consist of different layout units, namely 'automated text-actions' (ATA), 'semi-automated text-actions' (SATA), and 'creative text-actions' (cta), which are unpacked in Section 4.2.2.1. Additionally, corporate *Facebook* posts are characterized by medium-specific features, namely tags, hashtags, links, and hyperlinks, which are described in Section 4.2.2.2. All these elements together construe corporate *Facebook* posts as hypertextual advertisements.

4.2.2.1 Unpacking corporate Facebook posts

The analysis of the corporate *Facebook* posts provides a representation of the digital multimodal artefacts as multimodal ensembles divided into the ATA (Figure 4.11), SATA (Figure 4.12), and CTA (Figure 4.13). Figure 4.11 shows the findings for the different semiotic systems involved in the meaning-making process.

THUMBNAIL-PICTURE — no-image / still-image

ACCOUNT-NAME — full-name / acronyme

DATE-OF-THE-POST — contemporary-to-the-event / located-in-the-past

automated-text-actions
Facebook post

CALL-FOR-ACTION-TO-THE-USER
- call-for-action — CLICK-ON-HYPERCHARGED-ELEMENTS — ata / sata / cta / other-elements
- feedback
  - LIKE — like / no-like
  - SHARE — share / no-share
  - COMMENT — comment / no-comment
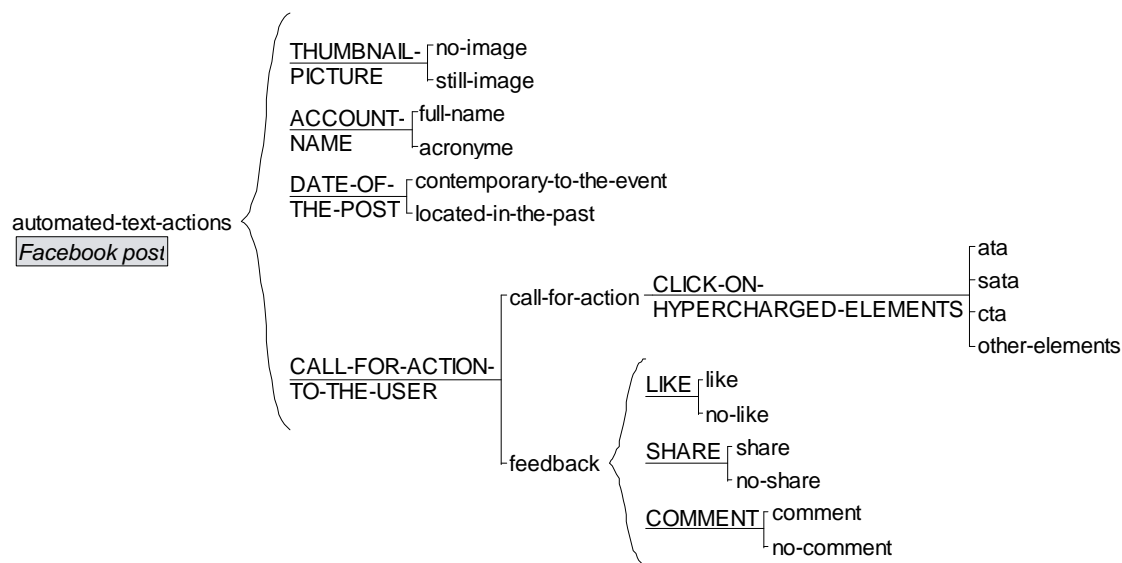
Figure 4.11 Data-driven representation of ATA of Facebook posts (adapted from Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014)

The ATA include the 'thumbnail' picture - profile picture - which indicates the subject performing the actions for each post, in this case the brand. The same function of identifying the subject of the action is constructed through the 'account name'. Profile picture and account name are essential parts of the branded page because they state the ownership of the page in the same way of logo and web domain. The choice of the account name as well as the profile picture contributes to the construction of the brand identity by facilitating the search of the specific brand in the cyberspace.

The account name is used for self-reference as the corporate page, which gathers the information about all the activities of the firm. The profile picture and account name remain the same and consistently create repetition from one post to the other, by recalling the authorship of the post. In contrast, the cover picture contextualizes the editorial content into the fashion calendar by displaying images of seasonal collection, or any specific festive campaign or upcoming event.

Among the ATA, findings also report other two elements, which are the 'date' and 'call for action to the users'. The date provides information about the moment in which

the post appeared and becomes a tool to locate the post in time'; call for action consists of the bar of tools to like, share, and comment on the posts. It is semiotic construction under the form of buttons that invites the users to contribute to the content through other hyper charged elements, which carry opportunities to perform actions distributed in either the ATA, SATA, or CTA.

The second layout unit identified is the SATA (Figure 4.12), which are visually signaled through the deployment of different colours for the wordings and the position of the information on the upper part of the post as headline to the CTA. The colours used to signal them are: blue for all the tags, hashtags, hyperlinks, as well as all the words, which embed a link or a particular action; grey for the SATA, and black for the language typed as text-actions.
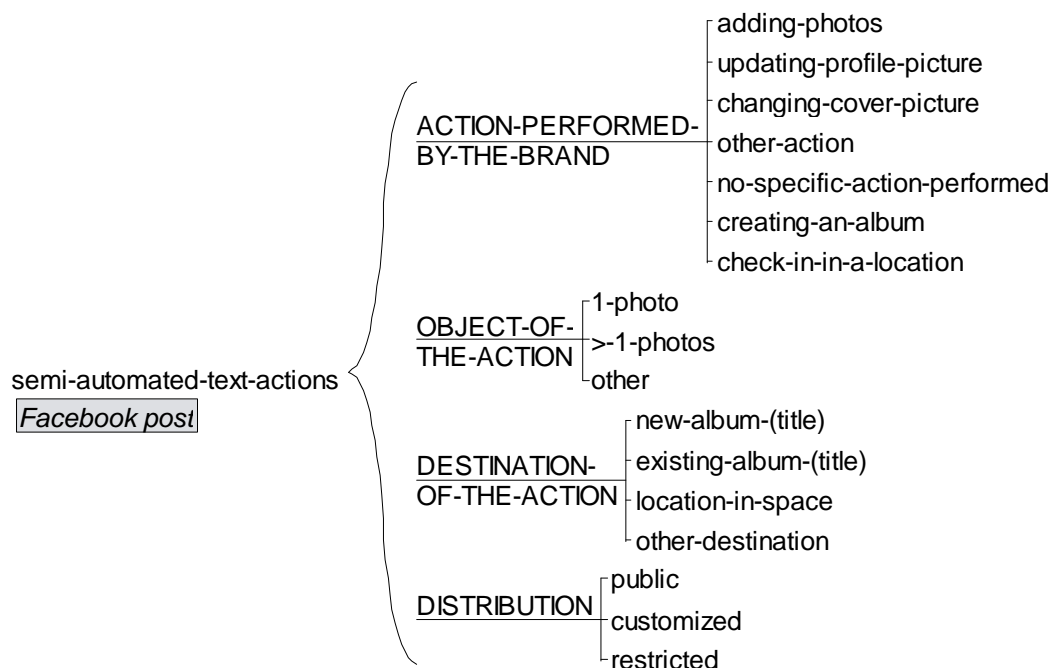

Figure 4.12 Data-driven representation of SATA of Facebook posts (adapted from Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014)

The SATA are 'actions performed by the brand' and documented through a feed, which appears along with those actions, for instance, adding photos to an album (title). Additionally, SATA are the object of the action, which refers to the actual number of

photos added; the destination of the action, which is an album coming along with the tag on its title, and then explored as a whole with one click like a hyperlink; and the distribution icon of the content, which is chosen based on the target audience. The predominant use of 'public' feature is indicated with the icon of the globe, the most suitable choice for promotional discourse as it is meant to be globally visible.

The third component is the CTA explored in both verbal and visual instantiations (Figure 4.13).
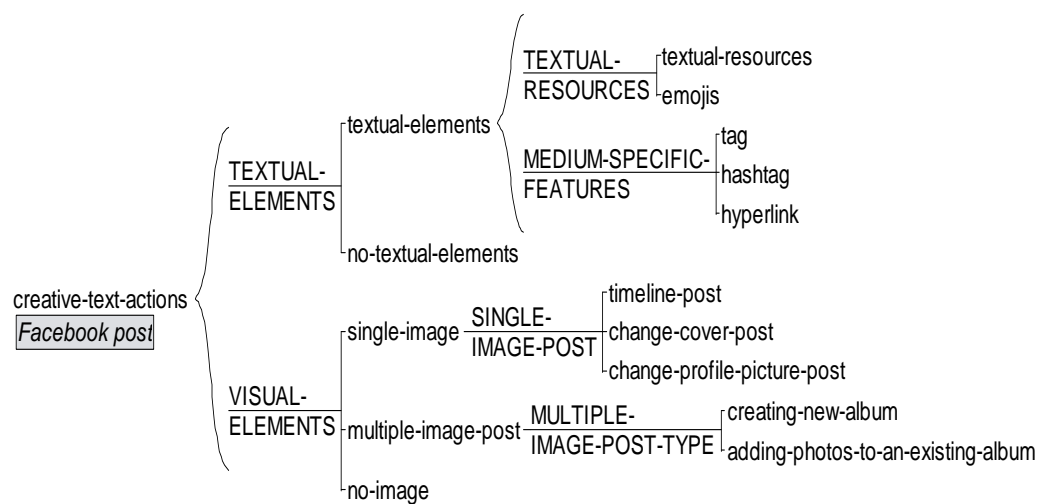
Figure 4.13 Data-driven representation of CTA of Facebook posts (adapted from Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014)

The CTA are both textual and visual resources. Textual features are words, manually typed (textual resources); emojis generated by a combination of characters, which are elaborated from the platform and transformed in images; and medium-specific features such as tags, hashtags, and hyperlinks.

Tags are used to incorporate hypertexts and redirect the user to different entities such as human beings namely the founder, key-opinion leaders (kol), and celebrities; and material entities such as the brand itself, a specific product, or a business partner. Tags are also used to virtually locate the message to a specific location in space like a flagship store, which provides information about the target market, or a location

temporarily branded for an exhibition, or an external property, which carries specific meaning such as a monument or a landmark.

Findings also demonstrate that there are other features which characterize *Facebook* posts such as #hashtags; however, being potentially available are not used in the dataset examined. 'Hyperlinks' are high in percentage, instead, and used as the tools to create integration between media. Hyperlinks aliment the referential relationship between the different channels deployed to create the brand identity. Hyperlinks lead the user to internal sources such as the corporate website, which links to the homepage or a specific content page according to the message, or other social media accounts and external domains, such as blogs, websites of business partners and their social media pages. The use of the hyperlinks embeds the call for action to the reader to click on the link and consume the video. Hyperlinks perform a specific function, which is to grab the attention of the user and construct a persuasive rhetoric aimed to lead readers to another platforms such as YouTube and Twitter.

Overall, elements such as tags, #hashtags, hyperlinks, are all semiotic pulls, and create a constellation of nominal groups, which resemiotize the brand name into titles of campaigns and special events.

Findings also show how the CTA are constructed through visual elements, for instance, the two different types of posts encountered are single-image and multiple-image posts. Single-image posts include announcements of change of profile and cover picture, and timeline posts, which contain one image only. Multi-image posts are album posts, which can either initiate an album or contribute to an existing one by adding more photos.

Findings indicate that single-image posts are used to introduce and describe

unique events, announce the change of the cover photo of the corporate page. This type of post occurs 14 times in the posts and signals the mark of a specific timeframe in the life of the brand that is usually materialized into the fashion season. Multi-image posts instead gather different elements under the same frame categorized from the ATA and SATA. They present an embedded link, which indicate additional elements contained in the album (+N). Additionally, multi-image posts generate a structural compilation of photographs automatically organized by the platform with minor intervention of the brand, which create patterns in terms of relation among photographs (see Section 4.2.4.5).

Moreover, multi-image posts represent the potentiality of the platform to process the actions performed by the brand, create an album and add photos to it, transform those photos into a post, which appears on both corporate page timeline and newsfeed on the timeline of the users, who previously liked the page (Kim & Yang, 2017). Multi-image posts are characterized by compositional frames generated by the medium, which contribute and enhance the meanings constructed by the textual and visual resources. These compositional meanings construct the enabling and constraining frame for the semiotic potential. Image 4.18 highlights the compositional frame within the post, which in this study is explored in its intersection with representational and interactional meanings (see Section 4.2.4.5).

Image 4.18 Compositional frame

The framing lines illustrated in Image 4.18 show the features of a multi-image posts. Table 4.1 reports the quantitative data regarding the distribution of single-image and multi-image posts within the dataset.

Table 4.1 Single-image and multi-image posts

Brand	Single-image posts		Multi-image posts		Total	
Burberry	68	41.46%	96	58.54%	164	100%
Gucci	143	46.88%	162	53.12%	305	100%
Louis Vuitton	112	87.5%	16	12.5%	128	100%
Total percentage	323	56.96%	274	43.04%	597	100%

The distribution of single-image and multi-image posts is different across brands. The choice between single-image and multi-image presents different meaning potential.

Overall, *LV* constructs its meanings with single photographs, which emphasizes the uniqueness of the editorial content crystallized in one shot. *LV* concentrates its branding discourse in narrating facts about the brand, all unique facts. *Burberry* and

Gucci, instead, concentrate their digital media strategy on the display of products and report on events.

Image 4.19 Single-image   **Image 4.20 Single-image**   **Image 4.21 Multi-image**

On the one hand, *Burberry* uses single-image posts while semiotizing ethos (Image 4.19), and holiday marketing strategies (Image 4.20), and to construe the brand as unique or sharing values. On the other hand, it uses multiple-image posts to construe rational claim (Image 4.21), and highlight the several reasons why the brand is considered a high-end.

Gucci manages the choice of sharing single images or fold them into an album as shown in Image 4.22, 4.23, and 4.24.

Image 4.22 Single-image   **Image 4.23 Single-image**   **Image 4.24 Multi-image**

Single-image posts are used to introduce novelties in the brand world such as the

announcement of a new creative director (Image 4.22); and cause-related news, which are at the core of *Gucci* philosophy as direct implementation of the *Kering* directions (Image 4.23). A more consistent pattern is encountered in the use of multi-image posts, which is the description of products (Image 4.24) and display of their details.

Louis Vuitton which prefers, overall, single-image posts (Image 4.25, 4.26), uses them for different purposes and to convey the brand heritage and share values among others. Multi-image posts (Image 4.27) instead, besides displaying products, are used to report on events.

| Image 4.25 Single-image	Image 4.26 Single-image	Image 4.27 Multi-image
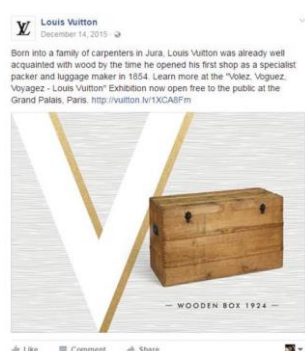
The choice depends on the content of the post, which tend to be semiotized through single-image posts while focusing on brand or corporate identity to construe strategies based on ethos and pathos. Multi-image posts instead prevails in the logical construction of product identity (rational claim), but also reporting on events, which need various images to tell stories.

The posts described above present a multimodal construction consisting of textual and visual resources framing the CTA. In those posts, it is evident how visual elements play a key role in fashion because they feed the imaginary of its follower. In contrast, at its pioneering stage *Facebook* was mainly used to sharing textual resource (Nervino, 2013); however, the findings present 14 instances of entirely visual posts

(Image 4.28).

Image 4.28 Cover picture

The posts excluding textual resources is a semi-automated text action and reports on the change of the cover signaled as event in the brand *Facebook* life. The cover displays a flower theme which is typical of *Gucci* and, which was also recalled in the following fashion show during the Milan Fashion Week A/W15, which started the week after the post was shared.

Cover and profile picture change are the only instances of only-image posts in the dataset. No instances of text-only posts has been encountered in the dataset.

4.2.2.2 Medium-specific features

Medium-specific features characterize new media, and *Facebook* as part the ecosystem shares some of them, namely hyperlinks, links[65], tags, and hashtags. Those elements, analyzed in terms of construction of information, destination, and the

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[65] This category has been kept separated from hyperlinks as it addresses a linkage within the same post which extends the readability content of a post in terms of length of the wordings displayed on the timeline (i.e. See More). This link is also automatically generated by Facebook which does not show the full text for the sake of symmetry in terms of layout size among posts.

functions, create the net, in which the meanings are shared and interchanged among platforms to create complementarity and aliment media convergence (Jenkins, 2006).

Hyperlinks build a constellation of nodes among platforms, and account for 321 linkages between the *Facebook* page and other virtual places. All the 321 hyperlinks are embedded hyperlinks (Nielsen, 2000), which present the conventional structure signaling the interactivity of the text through the blue colour (Image 4.29). Hyperlinks add information to the text, lead to specific destination, and perform specific functions according to Hammerich and Harrison's taxonomy (2002).

Image 4.29 Example of hyperlink

Hyperlinks are used to provide more information about collections, products, self-reference to *Facebook*, classification products into collections and categorization of products for specific purposes such as wish lists, festive seasons, colours. Other hyperlinks lead to fashion shows, which play a major role in the construal of the branding discourse and marking the fashion calendar as an essential part of brands' life (Chevalier *et al.*, 2012).

In terms of destination, hyperlinks inform the reader about fashion shows leading

him/her to the live streaming of the runway as document archived, and the collection from the runway available for sales. The live video of the fashion show is a novelty brought by the new media which allows the user to virtually seat in the front-row (Halliday, 2015; Mohr, 2013). Along with this opportunity, other communicative events take place in the new media such as the paper invitations for the *Facebook* fans or the share of photos taken from different angles to provide the illusion of being part of the show. Fashion shows are also reported from the backstage to bring the reader behind the scenes of the event.

Other omnipresent discursive practices in the fashion industry is the campaign, which varies from season to season and it is shot either in photos or videos and resemiotized (Iedema, 2001) through different resources. Campaigns are also reported from the backstage, and the looks advertised are reported separately. Hyperlinks are used to lead *Facebook* users to the other internet pages, which host different projects, such as art projects, music projects, exhibitions and reservation for it, testimonials' stories, events, information about events, sport events, how to follow them, Tumblr UGC projects, tutorials, films, apple music, apps. Those projects contribute to the establishment of credentials of the brand in different worlds and also the construction of a strong brand identity able to span from one area to the other by filling out each moment of people's life and playing on intertextual references to stories of success (see Section 4.3.3). Table 4.2 summarizes the types of structure of the hyperlinks found in the corpus.

Table 4.2 Structure of the types of hyperlinks

Type of hyperlink	Description of the structure
2. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2015_1 (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' *Gucci* (domain) Cruise2015 (information)

		Destination is a sub-page of the official website of the brand
3.	*on.Gucci.com/MFW15_1 (hyperlink)*	*Gucci* (domain) MFW15 (information) Destination is a sub-page of the official website of the brand
4.	*https://youtu.be/16GvbiRq1Gg (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'https://' Youtu.be (social network) Destination is a specific video on the official channel of *Burberry* (the sequence of letters and numbers specifies the video)
5.	*http://vuitton.LV/1AFODjRZ (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' Vuitton.*LV* (domain) Destination is a sub-page of the official website of the brand which provides a specific information identified by the sequence of letters and numbers
6.	*vuitton.LV/1NLHE0y (hyperlink)*	Vuitton.*LV* (domain) Destination is a sub-page of the official website of the brand which provides a specific information identified by the sequence of letters and numbers
7.	*http://brby.co/3bt (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' Brby.co (domain) Destination is a sub-page of the official website of the brand which provides a specific information identified by the sequence of letters and numbers
8.	*http://on.Gucci.com/AlternativeView2 (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' *Gucci* (domain) 'AlternativeView2' identifies a theme used to define the use of Pinterest, the hyperlink redirects to https://www.pinterest.com/*Gucci*/the-alternative-view/ which is the html code to *Gucci* Pinterest images grouped as 'The Alternative View'
9.	*Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)*	*Facebook* (social network) *Burberry* (page identification)
10.	*http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' www.louisvuitton.com (homepage)
11.	*Gucciconnect.com (hyperlink)*	Virtual space hosting e-vents and allowing users to watch in live-streaming events such as fashion

	shows
12. *Burberry.com (hyperlink)*	*Burberry*.com (home page)
13. *http:www.instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' www.instagram.com (social network) *Louis Vuitton* (account identification)
14. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	*Gucci* (domain) *GucciGram* (sub-page)
15. *http://on.Gucci.com/Pint_MenTailoring (hyperlink)*	Hyperlink signaled by 'http://' *Gucci* (domain) 'Pint' (Pinterest) 'MenTailoring' identifies a theme used to define the use of Pinterest, the hyperlink redirects to https://www.pinterest.com/*Gucci*/*Gucci*-tailoring/ which is the html code to *Gucci* Pinterest images grouped as 'MenTailoring'
16. *Burberry.tumblr.com (hyperlink)*	*Burberry* indicates the theme of the Tumblr blog Tumblr.com (domain)
17. *on.Gucci.com/WhiteRibbon (hyperlink)*	*Gucci* (domain) White Ribbon (sub-page)

Hyperlinks are signaled by colours or underlined. The colour signals which the text is charged with an interactive property and it is also introduced by 'http://'. Overall, html language allows the identification of the destination and information embedded in the hyperlinks from the structure. The different examples described in the Table 4.2 provide an understanding of the feature of granularity of the new media, which aims at facilitating the navigability of the content for the reader. Hyperlinks embed the ownership of the virtual space to which the hyperlink leads to (domain), which in the data is either the website of the brand or the platform used such as social media.

Additionally, hyperlinks also indicate the distribution of the information and the target audience, which is '.com' to suggest the international coverage, and followed by the final destination and topic of discussion. This last piece of information is

explicitly indexed such as '*GucciGram*' (13), which describes the name of a project of the brand, which is a sub-page of the official website; or it could be implicit such as sequence of letters and numbers leading to a specific item for instance a YouTube video (13). The informative structure is displayed in Image 4.29.

The examples reported in Table 4.2 are representative of the full corpus. The findings reported show the differences among the brands in the hyperlinks, which highlight their approach to new media and their understanding of the opportunities offered by the internet. All brands lead the traffic to their website, increasing their visibility and reinforcing their authoritative voice. For example, *Gucci* adopts the strategy of redirecting users to social media through the website such as the case of Pinterest accounts (examples 7 and 14). This attributes reliability to the link, being mediated by the official website, confirms the reliability of the account. *Burberry* stands out for its pioneering attitude towards the media and the unique use of Tumblr (15) for its project *The Art of Trench*. It reinforces its willingness to colonize the cyberspace in original ways, relying on UGC. *The Art of trench* is a blog, which tells stories about the trench coat and those one who wear it (Tams, 2012); however, among the hyperlinks *Burberry* scores higher in keeping the user within *Facebook* platform and engaging with other pages and profiles, while *Louis Vuitton* and *Gucci* prefer self-referencing themselves on other platforms or using other entities to establish positive association such as in cases of sport events external to the fashion system.

Findings regarding the destination of the hyperlinks are summarized in Figure 4.14, while the full analysis is attached in Appendix II.
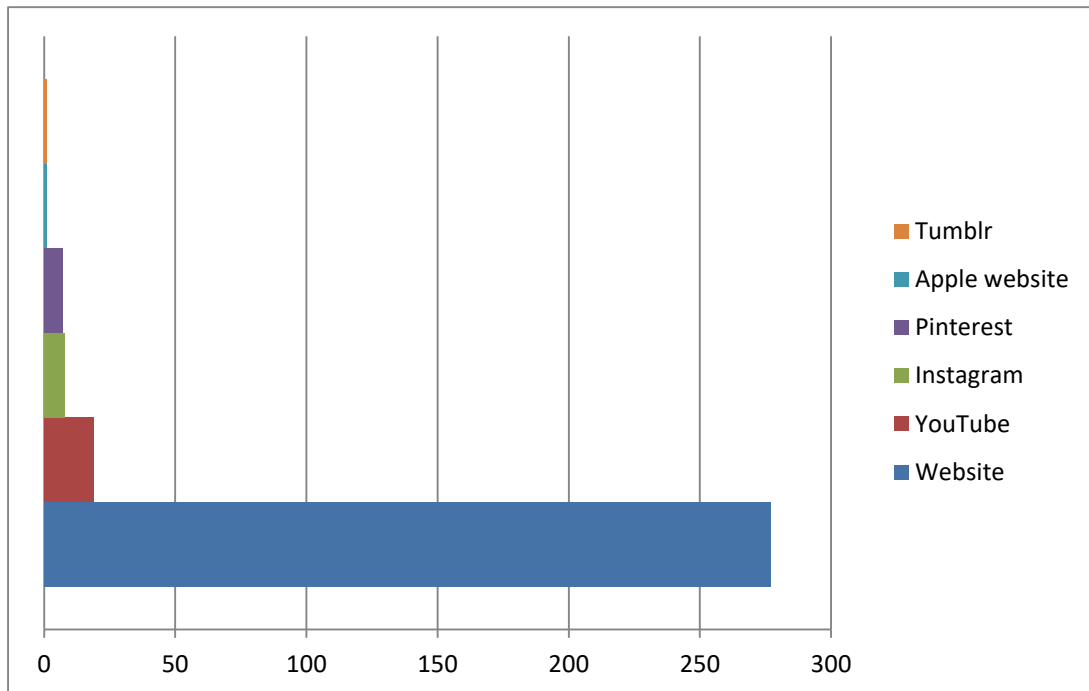
Figure 4.14 Results for destination of the hyperlinks

Findings show that 277 (88%) of the 321 hyperlinks link the posts back to the official website of the brand which represents the authoritative source, in which all the information is officially made available (Chevalier *et al.*, 2012). The website offers a topic page for each of the pieces of information. According to the structure of the link, it is possible to understand the nature of the page, which has been linked. The second most used hyperlink lead to another social media, which immediately signals a mode-changing and resemiotization of the content from text and images to videos as YouTube is a platform which hosts videos. In addition to YouTube, Instagram has also seen its growing popularity among brands, boosted by the increasing number of potential customers on it. Consequently, this pushed business from different sectors to create their own account, and in fashion specifically it comes natural as it is by default a visual-oriented sector. Following Instagram, also Pinterest, another visual social media, is used and it is defined in the findings as an 'alternative view' window onto the events; however, it has not earned as much popularity as Instagram as it is mainly

based on UGC.

Figure 4.15 illustrates the functions of the hyperlinks based on the distribution of taxonomies by Hammerich and Harrison (2002), which further adjustments required by the dataset (full analysis in Appendix II).
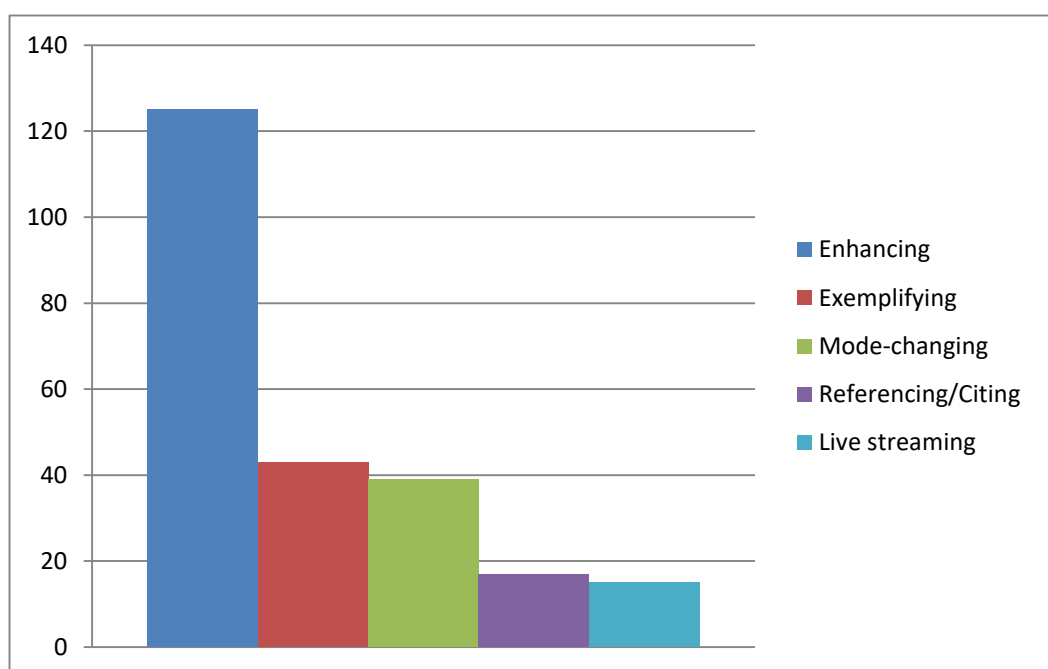

Figure 4.15 Results of the functions of the hyperlinks

The distribution of the five categories of functions is the following: enhancing (N=125, 54%), exemplifying (N=43, 16%), mode-changing (N=39, 16%), referencing/citing (N=17, 8%), live streaming (N=15, 6%). 'Enhancing' is exemplified in Table 4.3, and shows how hyperlinks performing this function provide and extend information about the topic introduced with the post.

Table 4.3 Example of Enhancing
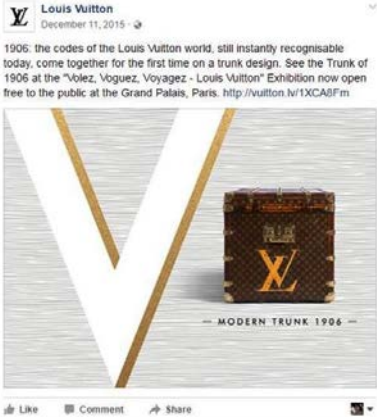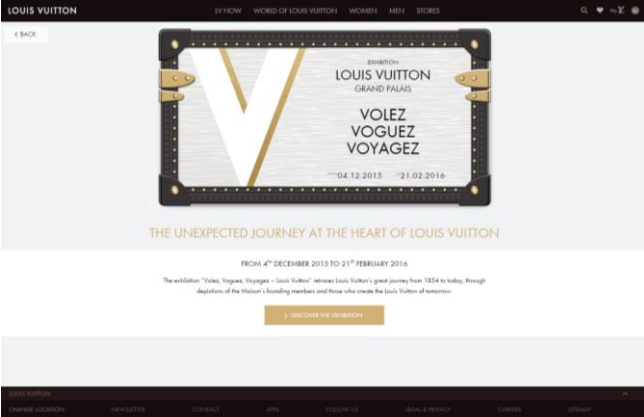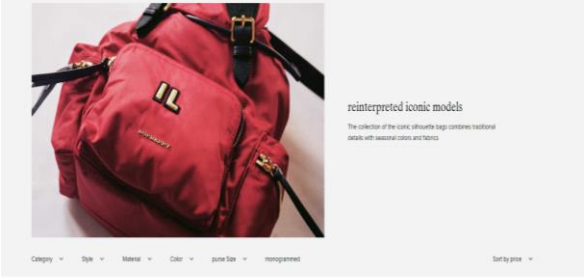
| Facebook post with hyperlink	Materialization of the hyperlink

Table 4.3 provides an example from *Louis Vuitton*, in which the post introduces the exhibition "Volez, Vogues, Voyagez – *Louis Vuitton*", and the hyperlink shows details about the event which are not included in the post.

'Exemplifying' resemiotizes the same information presented in the posts such as showing a specific product or selection of products described. 'Exemplifying' indicates complementarity between the post and the hyperlink by displaying the same item in two different places in the cyberspace such as the case of The Clifton bag reported in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Example of Exemplifying

Facebook post with hyperlink	Materialization of the hyperlink

The hyperlink performing exemplifying brings the user to the e-commerce platform which displays the full collection and the specific item.

The function of 'mode-changing' (Table 4.5) reports the announcement of the tutorial on YouTube through *Facebook*. 'Mode-changing' describe a hyperlink which leads to a different way of consuming the texts which involve other cognitive processes.

Table 4.5 Example of Mode-changing

Facebook post with hyperlink	Materialization of the hyperlink

The example above describes those hyperlinks leading to a further explanation of the content shared in the post through a process of resemiotization leading to videos.

The function of 'referencing/citing', redirects the user to the authoritative sources of the content shared or to partners joined to create positive associations such as the one with Apple. Referencing/citing indicates the function of hyperlinks which explicitly direct to another source of information for example in the case of sports event. In most cases, hyperlinks are used when the hosting platform cannot exhaust the intended semiotic construal of media events such as fashion shows and their entire experience.

The last function 'live streaming' (6%) was added as an emerging feature from the findings, and extention of the 'mode-changing' category. It is used to lead the user to the streaming video of a particular event (e.g. fashion show) as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Example of live streaming

Facebook post with hyperlink	Materialization of the hyperlink

Branding discourse presents patterns in terms of linkage of the content of the post and the destination of the hyperlink. The relation between the content shared and the hyperlink given as complementary material is built through proportional association in terms of information shared. For example, 'enhancing' is assigned when the hyperlink materializes an extended version of the information given in the posts such as posts dedicated to collections, campaigns, further information about events or exhibitions.

Additionally, hyperlinks which are well established the internet-specific discursive practices, the findings present structural links (Table 4.7). Structural links are classified as SATA, and appear when the content input as text of the posts does not allow the display in the timeline as whole text because too lengthy. Structural links represent an extension of *Facebook* layout hosting the editorial content shared and they allow the text to be consumed on the timeline without redirecting to a separate *Facebook* page.

Table 4.7 Structural links

Structural links (Nielsen, 2000)	Number	Function	Information	
See More (link)	6	Extension of the content	Text missing for structural constraints	

One example of structural links is reported in Image 4.30. The length of the text does not allow a visualization, which keeps the conventional layout of the posts the text is limited and the link appears to invite the reader to click and expand the text.

Image 4.30 Example of structural link

The example is extracted from *Gucci*'s sub-corpus. Gucci presents instances of long texts and resembles of printed media discursive practices, which extend the discussion about the attachment to printed media.

The findings also show the presence of the tags (Table 4.8). Tags, as well as #hashtags, whose findings are discussed in this section, are semiotic pulls in form of a constellation of nominal groups which aim at resemiotizing individuals, spaces, events.

Table 4.8 Facebook tags

Tags	Number of tags	Percentage of tags	Tagged items	Function
Romeo Beckham, James Corden (tag) and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley (tag)	24	30%	Celebrities	Celebrity endorsement
Burberry 121 Regent	19	24%	Flagship store	COO

			London	
Street (tag)				
Rebel (tag)	19	24%	Partner (Flower shop London)	Partnership
Mario Testino (tag)	8	10%	Photographer	Association with fashion photographer (art)
Naomi Campbell (tag)	1	1.09%	Model	Celebrity endorsement
America's Cup (tag)	1	1.09%	Event	Sport involvement
The Business of Fashion (tag)	1	1.09%	Magazine	Media coverage (printed)
@fuckingcoolthings (tag)	1	1.09%	Searchable talk	Sematic category
Apple Music (tag)	1	1.09%	Partner (Apple Music)	Partnership
Colette Paris (tag)	1	1.09%	Partner (Boutique)	Partnership
Burberry, Pacific Place (tag)	1	1.09%	Flagship store Hong Kong	Target market
The *Louis Vuitton* America's Cup World Series Portsmouth (tag)	1	1.09%	Event	Sport involvement
RHODES (tag)	1	1.09%	Musician	Celebrity endorsement
Wendy Rowe (tag)	1	1.09%	Make-up Consultant (new celebrity)	How-to
@salmahayek (tag)	1		Actress	CSR
Total	**81**	**100%**		

Burberry uses tags to refer to other *Facebook* pages or profiles. In order of frequency,

Burberry uses tags to lead the reader to celebrities' fan pages, its flagship store in London, and partnerships. Three examples are displayed as follows: the common practice includes profiles such as photographers (Image 4.31), events, and again celebrities, flagship stores (Image 4.32), and partners (Image 4.32). There are also two tag realizations, which are different from the others: @fuckingcoolthings (Image 4.33) @salmahayek.

**Image 4.31 Tag**   **Image 4.32 Tag**   **Image 4.33 Tag**
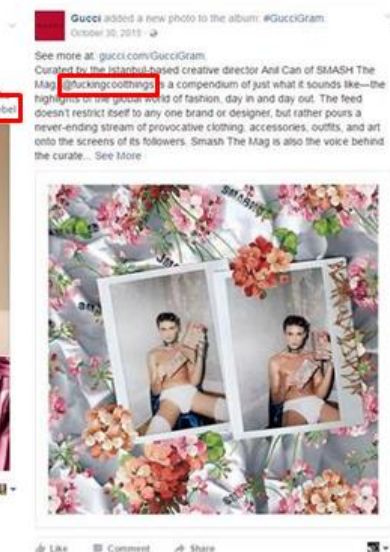
Among the examples, the two different tags are instantiations of tags, which have not been recognized by the medium and do not directly link to different pages. The first one @fuckingcoolthings seems to be intended to categorize the content more than leading to a different page.

Following up on tags, the attention shifts to hashtags (Table 4.9). Hashtags are identifiers of searchable talk and are native elements borrowed from Twitter, which perform the action of semantically categories for the content (Zappavigna, 2011). Although their integration has not been very successfully as few instances are reported in the findings, hashtags show their function of labeling content and make it available

for the *Facebook* search engine. In the findings, hashtags categorize specific branded activities.

Table 4.9 Hashtags

Hashtags (searchable talk)	Number of hashtags	Percentage of hashtags	Item	Function
#GucciGram (hashtag)	10	30.31%	Art project	Association with art
*#LV*SERIES3 (hashtag)	5	15.15%	Campaign	Setting appointment with *Facebook* fans
#ladyweb (hashtag)	4	12.12%	Music project	Music involvement
*#LV*GrandPalais (hashtag)	4	12.12%		
#BeHerVoice (hashtag)	4	12.12%	CSR campaign	CSR
#WhiteRibbon (hashtag)	2	6.06%	CSR campaign	CSR
*#LV*Series2 (hashtag)	2	6.06%	Campaign	Setting appointment with *Facebook* fans
#SnapchatShow (hashtag)	1	3.03%	Snapchat show live	Medium-specific activity (new media coverage)
#SnapchatCampaign (hashtag)	1	3.03%	Snapchat campaign	Medium-specific activity (new media coverage)
Total	**33**	**100%**		

The findings reported in Table 4.9 show the set of activities categorized through hashtags such as use of other media like Snapchat (image 4.34), CSR campaigns (Image 4.35), and art references (Image 4.36).

Image 4.34 Snapchat   **Image 4.35 CSR**   **Image 4.36 Art**
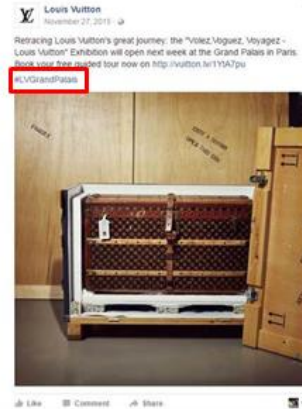
The examples above (Images 4.34, 4.35, 4.36) show the use of #hashtags, and indicate the activities, which can be searched individually; therefore, the need for a #hashtag is in the nature of the activity itself. The use of the #hashtag on *Facebook* slightly differs from its Twitter and Instagram use, where it is an embedded feature of the platform used to make the content searchable according to themes. On *Facebook*, using a hashtag is a motivated choice, while on Twitter and Instagram it is the medium suggesting it.

4.2.2.3 Discussion

Overall, the ATA and SATA accomplish the task of granularity (Bettetini *et al.*, 1999), which enhances the usability of the platform by providing the user with orientation features in the digital environment. In this vein, the medium of communication becomes an important player in the construal of texts affecting the lexical and design choices of the brands (Kress, 2010; Bateman *et al.*, 2016).

The medium-specific features construing the hypertextual references tend to redirect the user to dedicated pages for provision of information. In the multimodal corpus, 277 of the 321 hyperlinks link the posts back to the official website of the

brand which represents the authoritative source in which all the information is officially made available (Chevalier *et al.*, 2012); however, besides the function of explaining and adding information to the content already consumed, the higher percentage of hyperlinks leading to the official websites of the brands re-opens the discussion about power.

Corporate websites represent the authoritative voice of the brand (Okonkwo, 2010). The level of interactivity in those media is a web 1.0, in which the brand is the producer of content and the user can only consume it and does not participate in the meaning making process. This infers a re-establishment of top-down relation between brand and user in which the brand redefines its role and the user goes back to be a spectator.

A website is a mark for existence, the ownership of a web domain stands for authority (Okonkwo, 2010). If we think about our daily check for credibility of business and institutions is very much related to the existence of reliable sources on the internet; however, social media are slowly gaining some authority. In the past the existence of a business would be checked on the phone number books, where the ownership of a landline would symbolize reliability, web 1.0 shifted the trustworthy manifestation towards the official website, web 2.0 and 3.0 allow business to prove their credibility via social media pages.

Among the social media platforms, Knobbs (2015) explains how Pinterest population is made of UGC branded accounts, which are not controlled by the brands, but they would not benefit from shutting them down. Those accounts are fandom representations, which enhance the brand identity through worshipping rituals symbolizing the aspirational attitude towards the brand (Lebom & Voyer, 2015).

The findings also show the use of blogging platform like Tumblr to host a UGC projects, *The Art of Trench*, for instance, launched by *Burberry*, which reflects the nature of the project and exemplifies the evergreen McLuhan's (1964) statement describing the medium as the message. Its blog configuration aims at collecting visual and textual stories of brand *aficionados* of the trench from all over the world in order to enhance the image of the trench as versatile across countries but also generations. This realized *Burberry*'s objective to rejuvenate the trench trough digital marketing strategies by using the medium as a statement of targeting a young market.

Other destinations are not branded spaces but instead external sources of information such as websites of events, profiles of celebrities, location of partner stores. Those latter elements indicate other entities having an account on *Facebook*. In this case the provision of information is based on an extensive set of sources aim to display the engagement and influence of the brand in other sectors such as sport, art, local community engagement, celebrity endorsement and legitimacy, and physical presence in target markets (c.f. Okonkwo, 2007; Kapferer, 2015). In the case of hashtags that make the content searchable in the *Facebook* search engine, the categories reflect loaded topics. Hashtags refer to CSR, art and music projects, new adventures like Snapchat use, which enables live streaming. These are further proofs of how the medium chosen for communication is already a semiotically loaded choice worthy the exploration in its potentiality and instantiation in specific contexts of practice.

The medium-specific elements analyzed materialize the intertextual property of all texts as part of the process of construing meanings (Halliday, 2003) and new media in this case as they refer to each other and to old media (Petroni, 2010). The data are the result of a pervasive process of "marketization" (Petroni, 2010, p. 18) of the

content which blurs the boundaries between web domains and link back to the printed media to establish credentials. Boundaries among representations of meanings (Iedema, 2001; 2003) undergo a process of resemiotization, which leads to the manufacturing of texts, which are construed in the minds of individuals by linking up different media texts available in the society. Those meanings are the result of the ultimate stage of remediation which when dealing with the cyberspace has been named "hypersemiotisation" (Petroni, 2010, p. 18).

Corporate *Facebook* posts as hypertexts are to be considered texts which benefit from their interactive property in stimulating two different cognitive activities in the reader: reading and navigating the texts while consuming them (Garzone *et al.*, 2007). A hypertext presents features such as: multilinearity, nonsequentiality, granularity, connectivity, reticularity, and interactivity which guide the reader through the journey of consumption of a text and semiotized in hyperlinks (Bettetini *et al.*, 1999) and links, tags, hashtags, in this case (Zappavigna, 2011); however, #hashtags more than other features have been extensively investigated in Twitter by Zappavigna (2011) and from a linguistic perspective they are types of tags and links which redirect users to more contents related to the same topic or at least categorized as such. #hashtags accomplish the function of classifying the content shared in the tweets into a specific category that could reflect a semantic field of a keyword that the brand makes searchable in order to facilitate tracking the content available and the search more user-friendly. The #hashtag, now core element of Instagram and also borrowed from *Facebook* but without any impressive success, is found to be contextualized in SFL (Zappavigna, 2011) as being a typographic convention able to extend the potential meaning and operates as a "linguistic marker" by construing evaluation. An additional value provided by the #hashtag is to make the language "searchable" by affiliating more

attributes to the same topic (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 788). #hashtags allow social networks to overcome their limited function of "online conversation" and turn them into "searchable talk" (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 788) that actually reflects the idea of the web as a database. Moreover, the #hashtag attributes a positive value to the topic categorized by making it "'hyper-charged' with an additional semiotic pull that are linked to a gravitational field" (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 801). Additionally, in new media the reader plays a more active role in the construal of meanings because the texts are dynamic meaning-making entities which are co-created with the audience and deeply connected to the context in which they are produced, distributed, and consumed.

Hypertextual elements have changed the texts at the level of design, discourse, production, and distribution (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), by reinforcing the transmedia storytelling strategy of the brands, and contributing to the convergence of branding discourse from different sources towards the overarching narrative of the brand centralized in the website and spread across media (Jenkins, 2006). This connectivity as property of the internet has become ideology (van Djick, 2013) and transformed social media in ideological tool as well (Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014).

Moreover, hyperlinks work as a bridge between the digital and the physical space and contributes to the 'phygital' (Lawry, 2016) practice of luxury fashion firms. They are considered tools to build media integration and increase the traffic towards the platform privileging the official website that works as authoritative voice for the brand and an archive of all branding discourse. The word 'archive' here is used in digital humanities terms to describe the fact the internet is not always exploited in all its potential, but sometimes used as a repository for texts that do not embrace hypermodality.

Linking up different sources and providing a quick path to more information about a certain topic is a characteristic of hypertexts that affect the reader's behaviour while surfing a text. The internet has pushed readers to scan through texts and focus on the information of their interests (Garzone *et al.*, 2007), but also offered them the opportunity to quickly locate new related information in other virtual places. The arrangement of those virtual domains attributes meanings to the editorial content shared within the cyberspace, because destinations such as *GucciGram* and *GucciConnect* not only provide specific information but are labeled as dedicated spaces for unique content.

At the same time, hyperlinks to external resources such as sports event websites aimed to contribute to the prestige through the association with institutionalized manifestation. The use of sports events also is symptomatic of a lifestyle approach to branding that was a feature of American brands, but recently has been shared by European brands as well (Kapferer, 2008, 2012). Arguably, this tendency towards lifestyle could be the result of a more consumer-oriented approach driven by millennials. Other external sources of information can be business partner entities as in the case of *Rebel* for *Burberry* which are part of a strategy to increase the sales under the frame of a festive campaign and generate an immediate profit.

The access to a huge amount of information forged a new generation of luxury consumers, more educated and knowledgeable about the products comparing to the past (Rambourg, 2014). Hyperlinks provide a destination for additional content, tags expand the articulation of the text, hashtags help tracking related texts, and all these elements make the navigation of branding discourse more user-friendly (Nielsen, 2000). As a consequence, consumers become more demanding not only for products, but in terms of retail experience, and service in which very often millennial consumers

know products better than brand ambassadors. This is only one among the several contemporary challenges that luxury brands are dealing with as a result of the digital disruption.

The mode-changing function of hyperlinks is an instance that leads to the concept of "hypermodality" which allows users to move from one mode to another, from one domain to another, based on the "fluidity of the medium" (Petroni, 2010, p. 18) which is a specific property of the internet and all its products; therefore, the next sections will further unpack the multimodal nature of digital artefacts to understand how different modes are orchestrated within hypertextual configurations.

4.2.3 Textual construction of fashion captions

Facebook platform was projected to host both textual and visual resources, and the length of text is set to 500 characters. When brands first landed on *Facebook*, they mainly used it to share textual resources (Nervino, 2013). Few years later, with the launch of visual social media such as Instagram and Pinterest, luxury fashion brands shift *Facebook* usage towards a visual-oriented material, which match with fashion nature, without giving up on the use of textual resources. Textual resources, which actually are transformed into captions to photographs.

Transitivity analysis of the captions describes the lexical choices made to produce branding discourse. Transitivity system has been conducted 'above the clause' (Stubbs, 1983) to take into account the social content and define the semiotic labour of the textual resources. The findings are presented at a macro- and micro-level of analysis and organized as such.

The distribution of the semiotic labour across the lexical choices in terms of

participants, circumstances, and processes is reported in Figure 4.16.
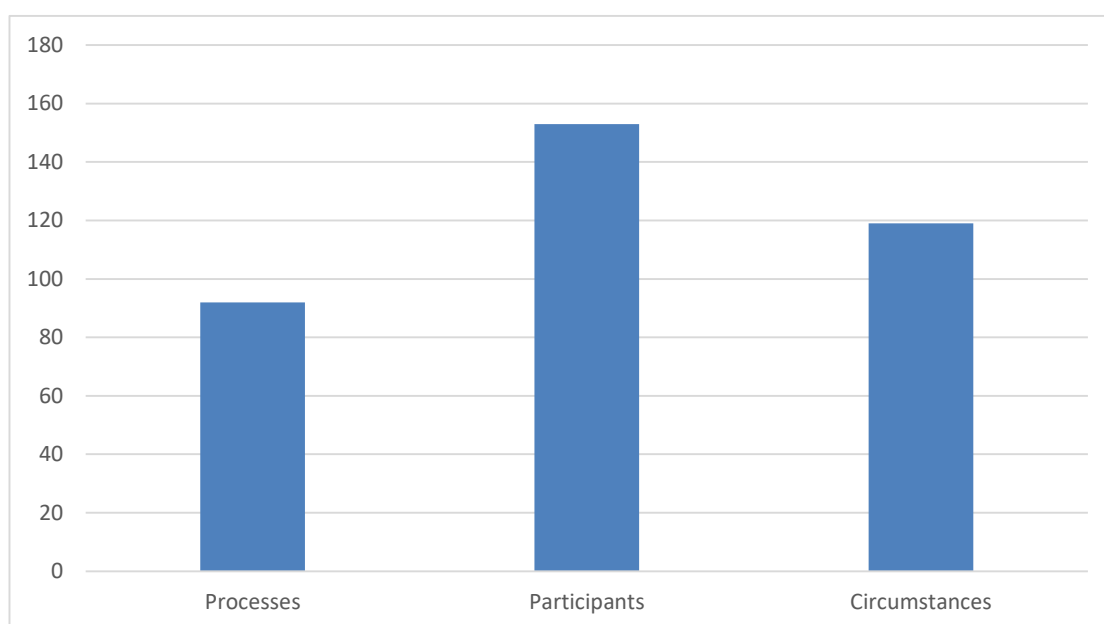
Figure 4.16 Overview on the results for transitivity system

This first macro-analysis reported in Figure 4.16 indicates a high frequency of participants populating the corporate *Facebook* posts (N=153, 42%). Participants are followed by circumstances (N=119, 33%). These two elements score higher in frequency because they are constructed through nominal groups. Last elements, in terms of frequency, are the processes (N=92, 24%), instantiated through verbs instead.

This is justified by the fact that verbs are easy to embed and in the specific case of the verb 'to be', which occurs in a high percentage, it is easily replaced by punctuation or easily embedded in the LOG-SEM relations constructed with the pictorial elements (Cook, 2001; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). At the same time, processes do not occur in all corporate *Facebook* posts because the dataset also includes captions to images, which do not present any clause, but are constructed through sequences of nouns and adjectives describing the pictorial entities.

4.2.3.1 Participants

The high percentage of participants reflect the essential identification of players within the luxury goods market, which legitimates the different activities enacted by the firms. Within the participants, additional categories are annotated to disclose the choice of manifested and elliptical forms (Figure 4.17).
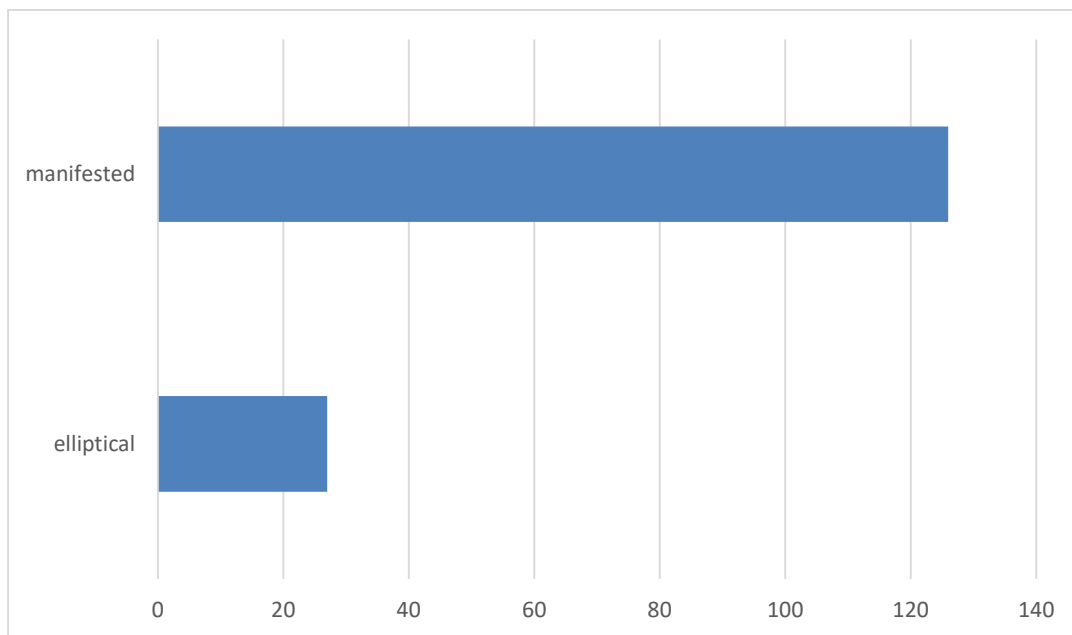

Figure 4.17 Overview of types of Participants

Manifested participants (N=126, 85%) name the entities, which are used to construct the branding discourse. Naming specific entities such as brand, products, celebrities is a characteristic of advertising discourse because of its objective of uniquely identifying and promoting specific products. Whereas the elliptical participants (N=27, 15%) typically refer to the addressees of the branding discourse targeted by the brand and identifiable with the pronoun *you*. Elliptical participants characterize the posts constructed to engage the audience. Those posts present instantiations of mental processes which are grammatically construed through verbs in imperative forms.

The manifested participants are spread across the ergative elements grouped in Figure 4.18.
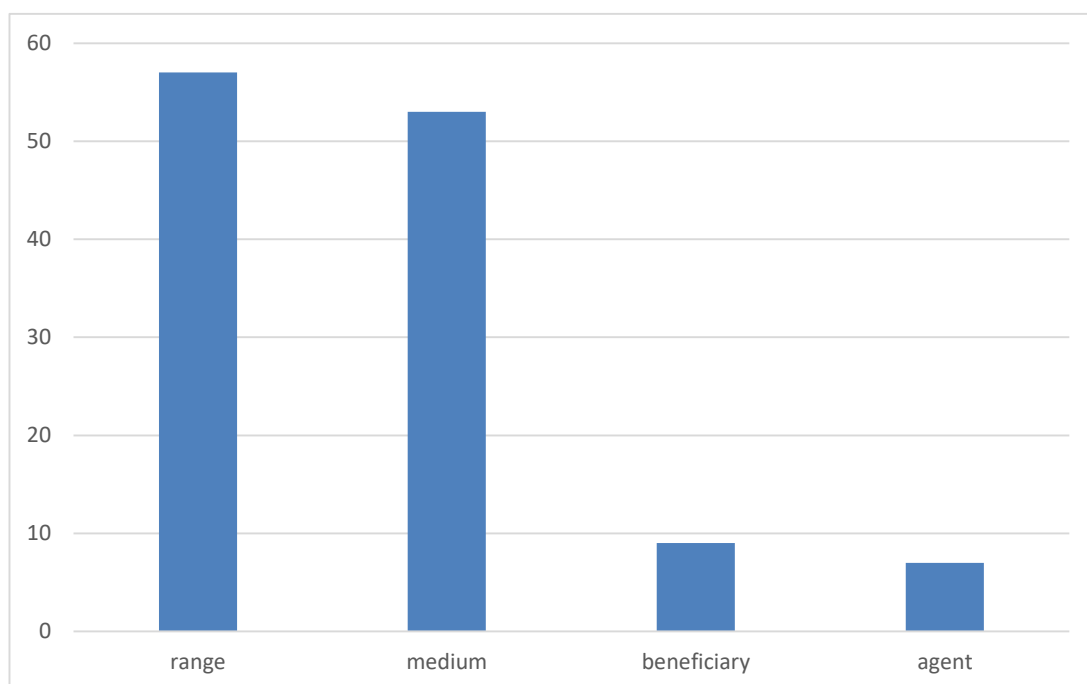

Figure 4.18 Results of the participants within the manifested entities

Range (N=5, 45%7) and Medium (N=53, 42%) occur in higher percentage, representing the potential object of a specific action affected by a process, and the potential subject of the process. In order of frequency, Range occurs in higher percentage because the Medium is often elliptical.

Among the types of participants classified as Range, Figure 4.19 shows the dominance of Value (N=21, 37%), Phenomenon (N=16, 28%), and Attribute (N=10, 18%), over Verbiage and Scope occurring 5 times each accounting for a total percentage of 18% together.
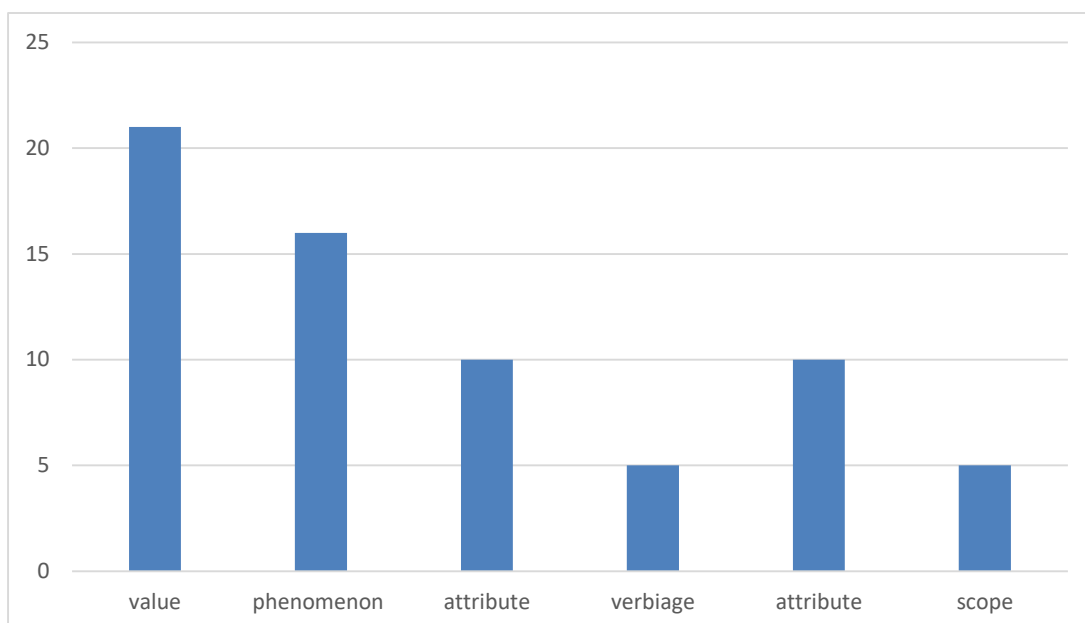
Figure 4.19 Results for types of participants classified as Range

The types of participants classified as Range foreground the types of processes, which affect them. Value co-occurs with identifying processes, sub-category of relational processes, for instance. Phenomenon is related to a mental process, and it is defined as the entity felt by the 'Senser', which is typically elliptical and identified as *you*. Attribute corresponds to the characteristics assigned to a specific subject, which in the case of branding discourse, is very likely to be a product. Examples for each type in the twenty-one texts are provided below for a better contextualization of the quantitative results (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Examples of Value

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF VALUE	CO-TEXT
1	*Burberry/Burberry* 11.txt	the runway:	the guests	from Monday's Menswear
2	*Burberry/Burberry* 12.txt	the runway:	the guests	from Monday's Menswear
3	*Burberry/Burberry* 2.txt	On set	Mario Testino (tag) and the stars of the Prorsum Spring/Summer 2015	

			campaign, Jourdan Dunn, George Le Page and George Barnett	
4	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt		A glimpse of the *Burberry* Prorsum Menswear A/W15 collection	Watch the collection revealed
5	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt	design studio:	a preview of the new *Burberry* Menswear A/W15 collection	Join us on facebook.com/*Burberry*
6	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 7.txt		All the look	s from the *Burberry*
7	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 8.txt	mirror embellishment -	Menswear accessories	from *Burberry* for A/W15
8	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	the runway:	the guests	from Monday's Menswear
9	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 12.txt	. Here,	a first look at the season	in full.
10	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 13.txt	messenger bags,	the Fall/Winter 2015-16 accessories	were poetically indulgent.
11	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 6.txt	It's	time to give your classic black and brown accessories a day off	and let the color
12	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 7.txt		Spring Awakening	A fresh fabric (
13	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt		A modern and unexpected reinterpretation of a fashion show.	*Louis Vuitton* presents "
14	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt	LOS ANGELES is	the first touchdown destination	for this unconventional exhibition
15	*LV*/*LV* 11.txt		*LV* at first sight...	This Valentine's Day
16	*LV*/*LV* 12.txt		The opening of the *Louis Vuitton* SERIES 2 Exhibition	in Los Angeles.
17	*LV*/*LV* 15.txt		An odyssey through the terrains of fashion.	A journey exquisite in

18	*LV/LV* 15.txt	of fashion.	A journey exquisite in its elegance.	Introducing the new Spirit
19	*LV/LV* 2.txt		Bruce Weber & Juergen Teller	for the *Louis Vuitton*
20	*LV/LV* 3.txt		Men's Fashion Week	through the eyes of
21	*LV/LV* 7.txt		Guests	at the *Louis Vuitton*

Table 4.10 shows the discursive practices that characterize the corpus. All the examples, except example 14, present an elliptical token that is actually materialized through visual resources. The participants categorized as Value identify the subject, which is pictorially construed in the image attached to the caption. Additionally, by examining the co-text, the element preceding the Value is the location, which hosts the participant, such as *runway* in example 1, 2, and 8, which embed the verb 'to be' with the use of semi-colon, or *here* in example 9, which replaces the verb 'to be' with a comma. Also the two types of references to the place, in which the entity defined by the Value, either refer to the physical location represented in the image (e.g. runway), or directs the attention to the text itself (e.g. here) meaning the text that the audience is reading. The use of punctuation to infer the verb 'to be' is a characteristic of the dataset that applying rules of netiquette as well as advertising discourse strives for conciseness (Cook, 1992; Posteguillo, 2003). The co-text following the Value that attributes meanings to it is identifiable as a circumstantial element of 'provenance' (e.g. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8). It contributes to the construction of the 'expounding' field of activity (see Section 4.4) because it provides additional information. Its purpose is to accomplish the categorization of the post within a certain brand activity to help the audience to navigate the editorial content and relate it to the production of goods. Differently, from other examples, example 14 refers to a token that is textually constructed. It identifies *Los Angeles* as the first city chosen to host an exhibition. The

use of Value instantiates the text-image relation, and at the same time the identification of a specific entity within the spatial dimension either real or virtual as reflected in the circumstances.

The second type of participants within Range is 'phenomenon' that materializes the object of a mental process (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11 Examples of Phenomenon

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF PHENOMENON	CO-TEXT
22	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 10.txt	Kensington Gardens Watch	the show	live on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry*
23	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 11.txt	in London Watch	the highlights:	http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV* (hyperlink)
24	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	in London Watch	the highlights	: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV* (hyperlink
25	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt	A/W15 collection Watch	the collection	revealed live on facebook.com/*Burberry*
27	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 6.txt	A/W15 runway See	the show	live on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry*
28	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	in London Watch	the highlights:	http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV* (hyperlink)
29	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 10.txt	're invited Watch	our Men's Fall/Winter 2015-16 runway show	live on Monday,
30	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	collection. Watch	the show	live from Milan,
31	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 9.txt	collection. Watch	the show	live on Monday,
32	*LV*/*LV* 13.txt	Kurokawa. Learn	more	about the collection and
33	*LV*/*LV* 14.txt	motion.	the collection and the	at http://vuitton.*LV*/1ArCjnt

		Discover	MoVers	(hyperlink)
34	*LV/LV* 5.txt	Watch	the *Louis Vuitton* Men's Fall 2015 Fashion Show	from Men's Style
35	*LV/LV* 6.txt	Watch	the *Louis Vuitton* Men's Fall 2015 Fashion Show Men's Style Director Kim Jones	now on http://www.louisvuitton.com
36	*LV/LV* 8.txt	collection. Watch	the Fall 2015 Fashion Show	and see all the
37	*LV/LV* 8.txt	Show and see	all the looks	now on http://www.louisvuitton.com
38	*LV/LV* 9.txt	Collection, inspired	by the masks of Gaston-*Louis Vuitton*.	http://vuitton.*LV*/1tyB7NP (hyperlink)

The phenomena mapped out in the examples summarize the topics talked about through the corporate *Facebook* posts, namely fashion show (e.g. 22, 27, 29, 30, 31, 3536), collection (e.g. 25, 33), topics evaluated as relevant for example 23, 24, and 28 defined as *highlights*, or undefined objects like *all the looks* in example 37, or simply *more* 32. In all cases, the objects categorized as phenomenon identify the themes elaborated through a multiplicity of corporate *Facebook* posts. The preceding co-text gathers together the different mental processes, whose subject is elliptical.

The co-text following the phenomena reveals a pattern, which explains how the captions are constructed through mental processes. The co-text following the phenomenon provides information about the way and the place to accomplish the action called through the imperative form of the processes. This is the case of all examples, excluding 32, which completes the clause with a circumstance of matter 34 focusing on the provenance, while examples 35 and 37 provide information on the time and space in which the information is available.

The third element categorized, in order of frequency, as Range within the

participant role is 'attribute', whose examples are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Examples of Attribute

	EXAMPLES	CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF ATTRIBUTE	CO-TEXT
39	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 10.txt	Final preparations	are underway	at the *Burberry* Menswear
40	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 14.txt	the festive campaign	starring Romeo Beckham	
41	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 6.txt	*Burberry* eyewear	set to be unveiled	on the Menswear A/W15
42	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 10.txt	You're	invited	Watch our Men's
43	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	Lights	Up	Inside fitting for the
44	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 13.txt	accessories were poetically	indulgent.	
45	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	Naomi Watts was	a vision	in a silk chartreuse
46	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 7.txt	this two-button suit	one cool number.	http://on.*Gucci*.com/MenCruise8 (hyperlink)
47	*LV*/*LV* 14.txt	bags to carry	for a life in motion.	Discover the collection and
48	*LV*/*LV* 4.txt	Fashion Show is	live	on http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)

The Attribute is the object, which follows the relational process in its sub-category of attributive instantiated through the verb 'to be'. The verb 'to be' is either manifested as in examples 39, 42, 44, 45, and 48 or elliptical as in the others. All instances of attributes reported in Table 4.12 do not provide additional information about the subjects of the process. The subjects are products (e.g. 41, 44, 46, 47) or activities performed by the brand for example campaigns (e.g. 40) and fashion shows (e.g. 48, but also external stakeholders for instance the audience (e.g. 42) or celebrities (e.g. 45). Similar to previous elements, the co-text following the participant provides more information related to location in place.

The high percentage of participants is also categorized as Medium of the processes. The Medium is the potential subject of the clause or in any case actively involved into it, and along with the process constitutes the essential elements of the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Medium is instantiated through different types of participants whose percentages of occurrence are summarized in Figure 4.20.
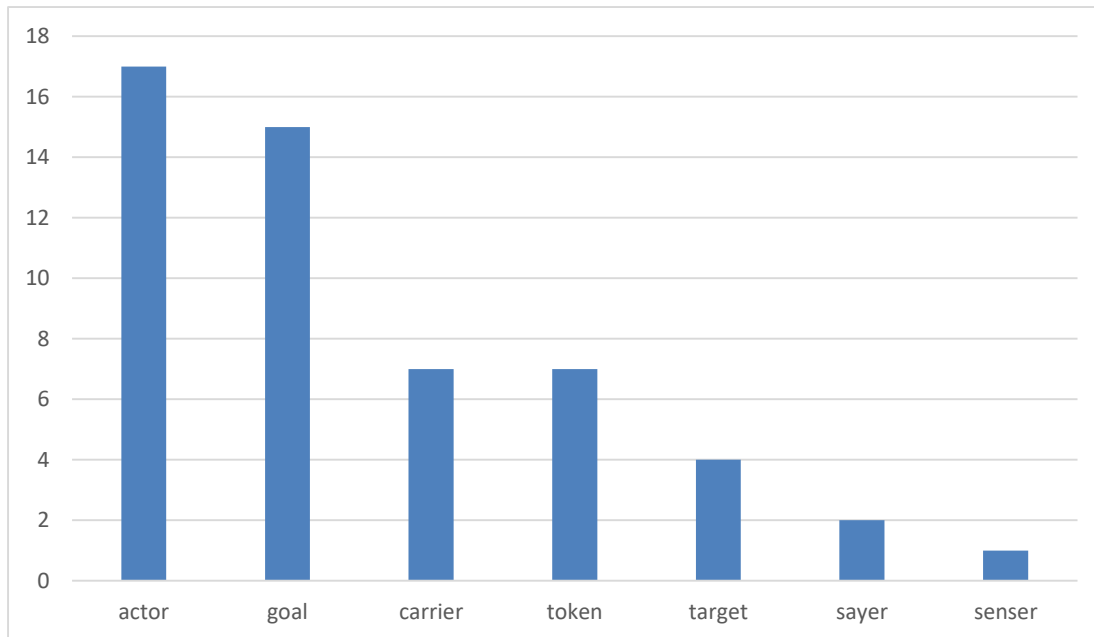
Figure 4.20 Results for types of participants classified as Medium

Findings summarized in Figure 4.20 show how the Medium is spread out across different types of participants. Actor (N=17, 32%) and Goal (N=15, 28%) occur in highest percentage and are the subject and object of a material process. The high percentage of actor is instantiated through the use of nouns to materialize the entities of brands, fashion shows, collections, social media platforms, celebrities, exhibitions, directors, colors, to name a few (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 Examples of 'actor'

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	ACTOR	CO-TEXT
49	*Burberry/Burberry* 14.txt		*Burberry*	celebrates Lunar New Year
50	*Burberry/Burberry*		The *Burberry* Prorsum	is coming this Monday

	3.txt		Menswear A/W15 show	
51	*Gucci/Gucci* 12.txt		The *Gucci* Men's Fall/winter 2015-16 collection	dreamily blurred the masculine
52	*Gucci/Gucci* 15.txt	front row,	our exclusive *Gucci* Men's fall/Winter 2015-16 Pinterest Boards	gives you every fashion
53	*Gucci/Gucci* 5.txt		*Gucci*	kicked off the 2015
54	*Gucci/Gucci* 5.txt	chartreuse column gown	while Salma Hayek Pinault	radiated elegance in a
55	*Gucci/Gucci* 5.txt	amethyst *Gucci* Premiere number.	The men,	also turned heads Best
56	*Gucci/Gucci* 5.txt	also turned heads	Best Actor winner Eddie Redmayne	wore a striking grosgrain
57	*Gucci/Gucci* 5.txt	grosgrain *Gucci* tux	while Jake Gyllenhaal	went the Made to
58	*Gucci/Gucci* 8.txt		Dusty colors	meet modern tailoring in
59	*Gucci/Gucci* 9.txt	into Focus:	a sneak peek	at a detail from
60	*LV/LV* 10.txt	fashion show.	*Louis Vuitton*	presents "SERIES 2
61	*LV/LV* 10.txt	touchdown destination for	this unconventional exhibition	that will then travel
62	*LV/LV* 13.txt		*Louis Vuitton*	introduces the new V
63	*LV/LV* 3.txt	Follow him as	he	takes over the official
64	*LV/LV* 4.txt	Kim Jones as	he	takes over the official

The actor of the material processes are typically proper nouns. The preceding co-text is usually irrelevant because it refers to another clause. Whereas, the following co-text provides information about the process initiated by the actor that is automatically recognized as material, but informs the reader about the actions taken by the protagonists of the corporate *Facebook* posts.

Examples 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 60, 61, and 62 show instances of brands used to initiate processes. They are used to construe actions, whichh are performed by human beings, and here it reflects the personification of the brand. The people behind the brand, meaning the staff working behind the curtains of a fashion show, is embedded in the brand name, and it qualifies the use of the brand name as it was using the pronoun 'we' deployed in its exclusive form (Kuo, 1999). Examples 54, 56, and 57 are human actors, all celebrities. Example 55 instead identifies the male audience to highlight the fact that the actor *Eddie Redmayne* wearing a *Gucci* suit was stunning enough to please male gaze in addition to the expected reaction of women. Example (58) refers to detail of the product and instead of simply saying that the dusty colors are combined with *modern tailoring and* personifies the two entities talking about an encounter between the two. Examples 63 and 64 refer to the creative director Kim Jones and specifies the author behind the content shared on the *Facebook* page by highlighting it as a reason to consume information from the site.

Examples of 'goal', which refer to the object acted upon by the actors discussed above are show in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Examples of 'goal'

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF GOAL	CO-TEXT
65	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 1.txt		A first look at our new Spring/Summer 2015 campaign	, shot by Mert
66	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 12.txt	collection dreamily blurred	the masculine/feminine divide.	Call it the new
67	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 15.txt	Boards gives you	every fashion angle.	http://on.*Gucci*.com/AlternativeView (hyperlink)
68	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 2.txt		A first look at our new Spring/Summer 2015	shot by Mert Alas

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			campaign,	
69	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 3.txt		A first look at our new Spring/Summer 2015 campaign,	shot by Mert Alas
70	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	*Gucci* kicked off	the 2015 red carpet season	n dazzling and dapper
71	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	Eddie Redmayne wore	a striking grosgrain *Gucci* tux	while Jake Gyllenhaal went
72	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt	*Louis Vuitton* presents	"SERIES 2 - Past, Present, Future."	LOS ANGELES is the
73	*LV*/*LV* 13.txt	*Louis Vuitton* introduces	the new V Line Men's Leather Collection	exploring movement with MoVers
74	*LV*/*LV* 13.txt	Leather Collection exploring	movement	with MoVers Alex Olsen
75	*LV*/*LV* 15.txt	elegance. Introducing	the new Spirit of Travel Campaign	from *Louis Vuitton* photographed
76	*LV*/*LV* 3.txt	he takes over	the official *Louis Vuitton* Instagram account	counting down to the
77	*LV*/*LV* 4.txt	he takes over	the official Instagram account	with his inspiration and
78	*LV*/*LV* 6.txt	) and catch	all the details	from the new collection
79	*LV*/*LV* 9.txt	Day, gift	a *LV* story	with the *Louis Vuitton*

A high percentage of participants is identified as 'goal' is instantiated in the use of nouns to materialize the entities such as campaigns (e.g. 65 and 69), products (e.g. 71), exhibitions (e.g. 72), collections (e.g. 73, social media accounts (e.g.e 76 and 77), details (e.g. 78), and elements related to the star system for instance *the red carpet* 70, or examples such 67, 74, and 79 , which describe elements used in the branding narrative such as the blurred divide between feminine and masculine style as leit-motif of a collection, *movement* for the *MoVers* campaign, and *LV story* for the promotion

of St. Valentine's Day, respectively.

Findings also show how branding discourse as an instance of advertising discourse also presents elliptical participants Figure 4.21.
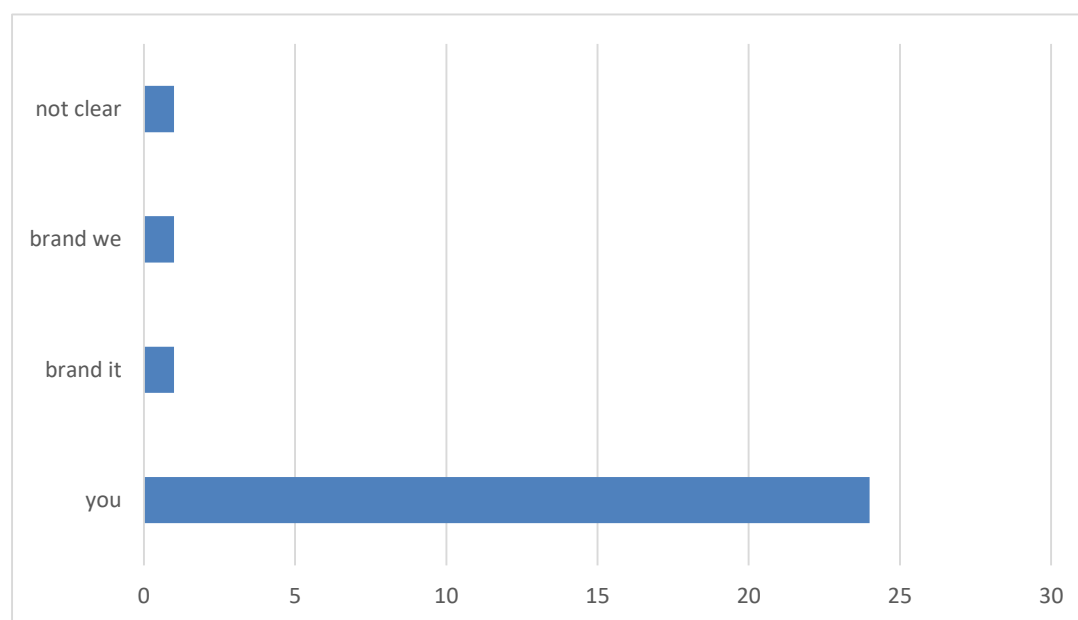

Figure 4.21 Results for elliptical participants

The high percentage of 'you' (N=24, 89%) as elliptical participant construes the engagement enacted by the brands as symptomatic of the use of social media platforms. Instances showing this are reported in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Examples of 'you' as elliptical participant

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF ELLIPTICAL PARTICIPANT 'YOU'	CO-TEXT
80	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 10.txt	in Kensington Gardens	(you) Watch	the show live
81	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 11.txt	show in London	(you) Watch	the highlights: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV*
82	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	show in London	(you) Watch	the highlights: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV*
83	*Burberry*/*Burberry*	Menswear	(you) Watch	the collection revealed live

	4.txt	A/W15 collection		
84	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt	Menswear A/W15 collection	(you) Join	us on facebook.com/*Burberry*
85	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 6.txt	Menswear A/W15 runway	(you) See	the show live on
86	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 8.txt	*Burberry* for A/W15	(you) Join	us on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry*
87	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	show in London	(you) Watch	the highlights: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV*
88	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 10.txt	You're invited	(you) Watch	our Men's Fall/Winter
89	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	runway collection.	(you) Watch	the show live from
90	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 12.txt	feminine divide.	(you) Call	it the new urban
91	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 9.txt	runway collection.	(you) Watch	the show live on
92	*LV*/*LV* 11.txt	's Day,	(you) declare	your *LV* with a
93	*LV*/*LV* 13.txt	Ryoichi Kurokawa.	(you) Learn	more about the collection
94	*LV*/*LV* 14.txt	in motion.	(you) Discover	the collection and the
95	*LV*/*LV* 3.txt	Kim Jones.	(you) Follow	him as he takes
96	*LV*/*LV* 4.txt	Paris Time.	(you) Follow	Men's Style Director
97	*LV*/*LV* 5.txt		(you) Watch	the *Louis Vuitton* Men
98	*LV*/*LV* 6.txt		(you) Watch	the *Louis Vuitton* Men
99	*LV*/*LV* 6.txt	hyperlink) and	(you) catch	all the details from
100	*LV*/*LV* 8.txt	new collection.	(you) Watch	the Fall 2015 Fashion
101	*LV*/*LV* 8.txt	Fashion Show and	(you) see	all the looks now
102	*LV*/*LV* 9.txt		(you) Fall in *LV*...	This Valentine's Day
103	*LV*/*LV* 9.txt	's Day,	(you) gift	a *LV* story with

The examples in Table 4.15 map out the call for actions, which the brands invite the

audience to perform. Examples 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 87, 88, 89, 91, 93, 94, 97, 98, 100, 101, and 102 will be discussed in the mental processes. Those invitations are aimed to accomplish the educational experience that the interviews suggested as a fruitful deployment of social media platforms (Chapter 1; Appendix I).

The other instances of elliptical participants are associated with other types of processes. Examples 84 and 86 for instance are material processes. The action that the audience is called to perform is to *join* the brand on the *Facebook* platform. Material process, because in order to join the brand on the platform, the audience has to like the corporate *Facebook* page. This type of action equalizes the relationship between the brand and the audience. Examples 90 and 92 present *you* as sayer participant. Examples 95 and 96 in the same way refer to the same material processes related to social media platforms, in this case *follow* refers to the creative director. *Follow* can be considered as mental process; however, in this context it implies the action of following the Instagram account that has been taken over by the director. These examples highlight the self-reference to the *Facebook* platform and the cyberspace in its different instances. This practice boosts the integration among digital platforms. Example 90 invites the audience to define the new style proposed by *Gucci new urban*, while example 92 invites the audience to *declare* their love via the purchase of *LV* products. Associating luxury goods with love is not only a promotional strategy to increase the sales during St. Valentine's Day and festivities to suggest products for the beloved ones, but instead a consistent linkage boosted by the jewelry industry (O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2009). The uniqueness of love is metaphorically materialized into the luxury goods that are supposed to reflect the features romantically assigned to love such as uniqueness and rarity. Example 103 follows the same theme, by switching to a material process *gift* (used as verb in the dataset) that reinforce the message of *LV*

in picturing the brand as provider of products that incarnate love.

In these examples, the co-text is not relevant to identify the role of the participants and it will be explored in the discussion of the process-types.

4.2.3.2 Circumstances

Following participants, circumstances are the second most frequent transitivity element occurring in the dataset. This is due to the fact that circumstances, as well as participants, are constructed through nouns, adjectives, adverbs, all grammatical features that characterize advertising discourse (Cook, 1992; Patpong, 2008). Circumstances provide additional information not necessary and essential to the formation of the clause, in contrast with processes and participants, which instead represent the nucleus of the clause; however, in the dataset circumstances occur in higher percentage in comparison to the processes. This is motivated by the fact that branding discourse in the luxury goods market devotes high importance to the ways (manner) and the locations in both time and place (location) that the participants perform the specific actions. Figure 4.22 summarizes the different types of circumstances detected in the corpus.
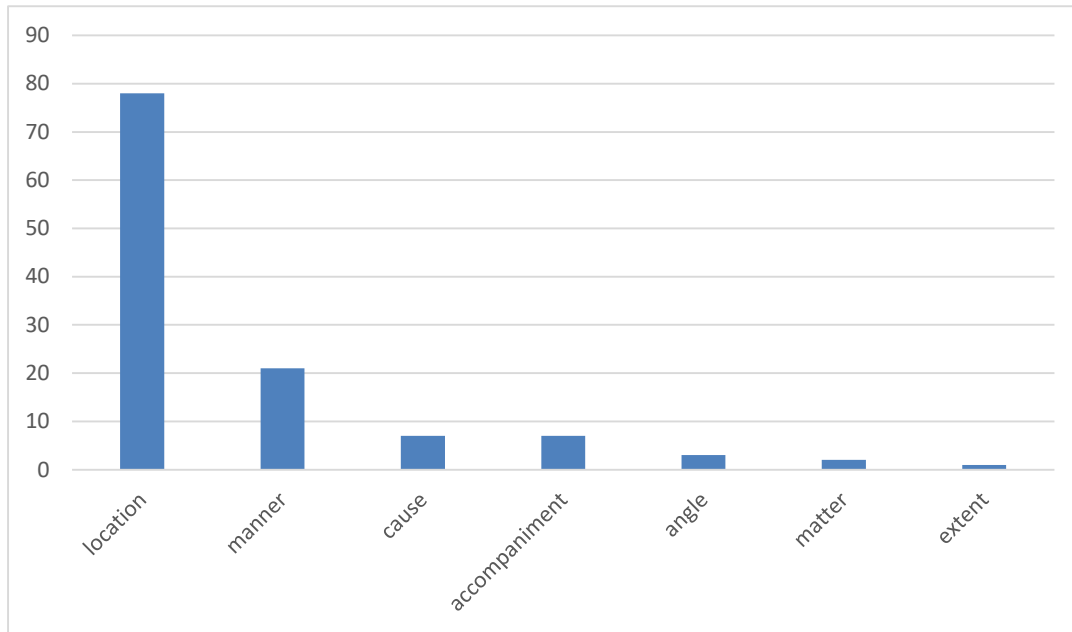
Figure 4.22 Overview of circumstance-types

'Location' (N=78, 65%) are the circumstance-types, which dominate the corpus. Location in both time and place refer to specific frames of time, in which brands and products are conceived, and CoO of the brands. Those elements reflect the features of branding discourse in the business literature review (Chapter 2); however, the examples show instances of location in time and space, which are more related to the use of the social media platforms and the construction of the meanings shared more than the actual features of brands and products.

In terms of location, circumstances have been annotated into a further degree of delicacy, which diversifies between temporal (time) and spatial dimension (place) of the information (Figure 4.23).
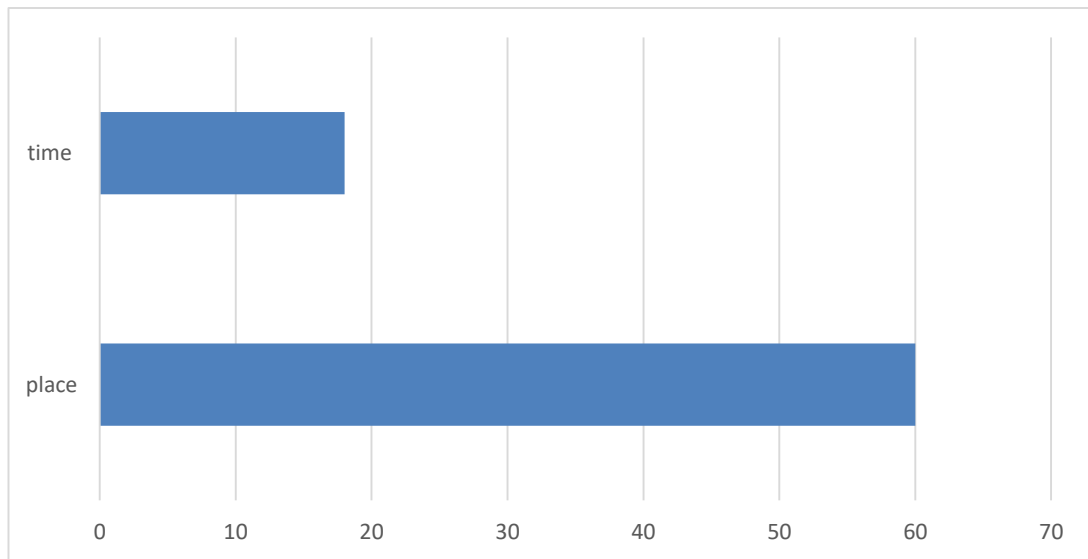
Figure 4.23 Results for circumstance of location in time and place

Findings from the annotation of the sample report a higher frequency of location in place (N=60, 77%). Location in place is articulated into a definition of space that refers to venues and provenance, and are used in a figurative way to draw connection among different elements. Provenance includes all the locations, which claim the origin or belonging of items.

Venue is instead more related to a specific location hosting a particular event described by participants and processes. Figure 4.24 shows the distribution of percentage between provenance and venue.
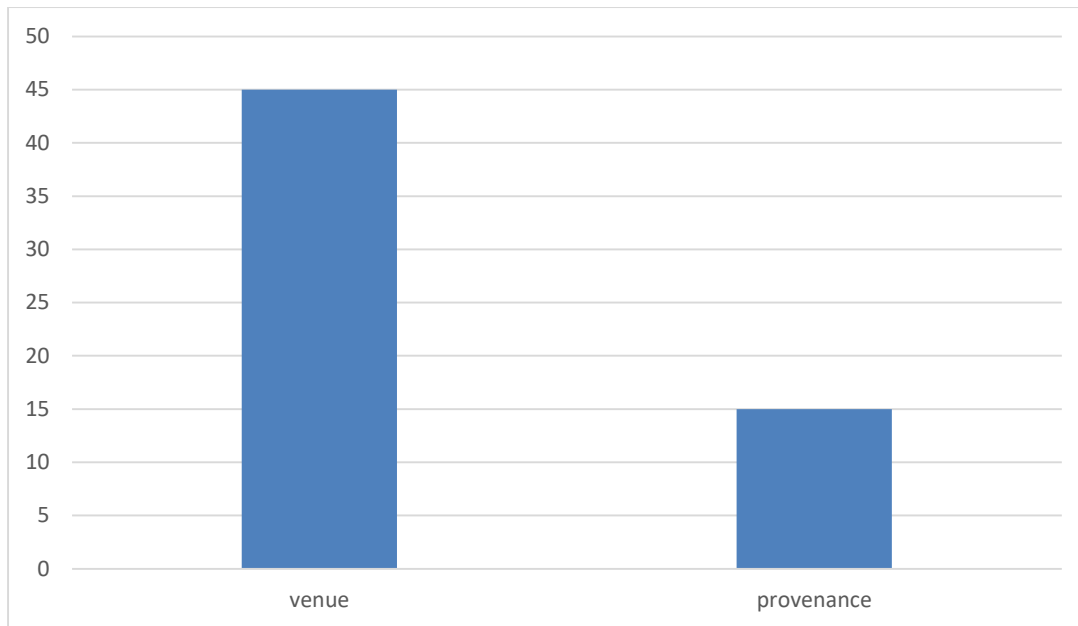
Figure 4.24 Provenance and venue

Venue is notably the most frequent type of circumstance (N=45, 73%). Venue occurs in higher percentage because the brand does not need to reiterate the origins of items on a page, whose visitors are brand *aficionados*. Also, the examples that follow, provide instances of a more figurative way of using circumstances in location in place to reinforce the categorization of products.

Notably, provenance (N=15, 27%) is not intended as country of origins. It refers to fashion shows and collections, and other places. Also, fashion system expressions are categorized under location in place (Figure 4.25).
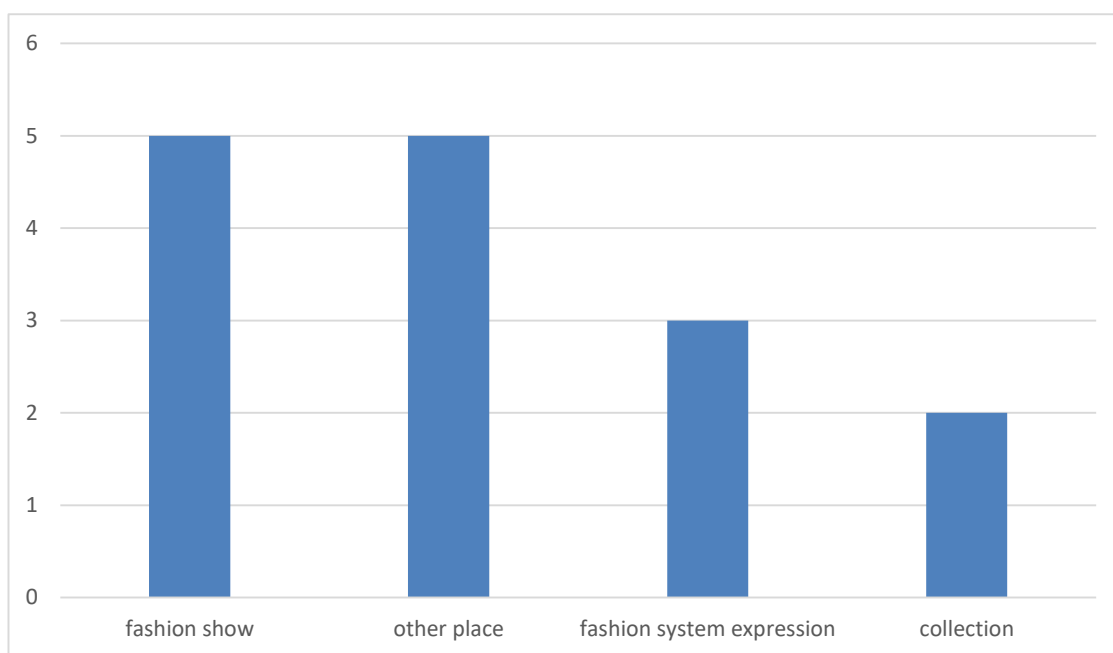
Figure 4.25 Examples of location in place describing provenance

A high frequency of location in place describes provenance and is realized through the fashion shows (N=5) and other places (N=5) accounting for a total of 66%. Examples of references to fashion shows are reported in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16 Instances of fashion show

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF FASHION SHOW	CO-TEXT
104	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 11.txt	: the guests	from Monday's Menswear show	in London Watch the
105	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	: the guests	from Monday's Menswear show	in London Watch the
106	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 7.txt	All the looks	from the *Burberry* Prorsum Menswear Autumn/Winter 2015 runway	, featuring bohemian layering
107	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 8.txt	- Menswear accessories	from *Burberry* for A/W15	Join us on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry*
108	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	: the guests	from Monday's Menswear show	in London Watch the

Surprisingly, the examples provide insights on menswear collections (e.g. 104, 105, 106, 108), despite example 107, which refers instead to accessories. The second item in order of frequency is 'other place', whose examples in Table 4.17 provide instances of what else can be described in the posts.

Table 4.17 Instances of other place

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF OTHER PLACE	CO-TEXT
109	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt		From the design studio:	a preview of the
110	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt	the 22nd at	1135 N Highland Ave.	Los Angeles. #*LV*Series
111	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt	N Highland Ave.	Los Angeles.	#*LV*Series2 (hashtag)
112	*LV*/*LV* 12.txt	SERIES 2 Exhibition	in Los Angeles.	
113	*LV*/*LV* 5.txt	2015 Fashion Show	from Men's Style Director Kim Jones	now on http://www.louisvuitton.com

From the findings, example (109) refer to a *design studio*, which emphasize the creative aspect of the production process, and examples 110, 111, and 112 locate different events in Los Angeles. When specific cities are mentioned, they always have a meaning. In this case, Los Angeles is related to the world of cinema in the USA.

Example 113 is constructed in the same way of location in place and provenance, but it actually construes agentivity. The fashion show comes directly from the style created by the director Kim Jones. The examples demonstrate how this category of 'other place' includes different instances materializing provenance, but not necessarily being physical space. In case they are, the space referred to it has not been defined earlier.

Within circumstances of location in place categorized as venues, an additional

classification has been proposed because of the peculiarity of the dataset. Results have

been further annotated into 'real' 12 and 'virtual' location 33 (Figure 4.26).
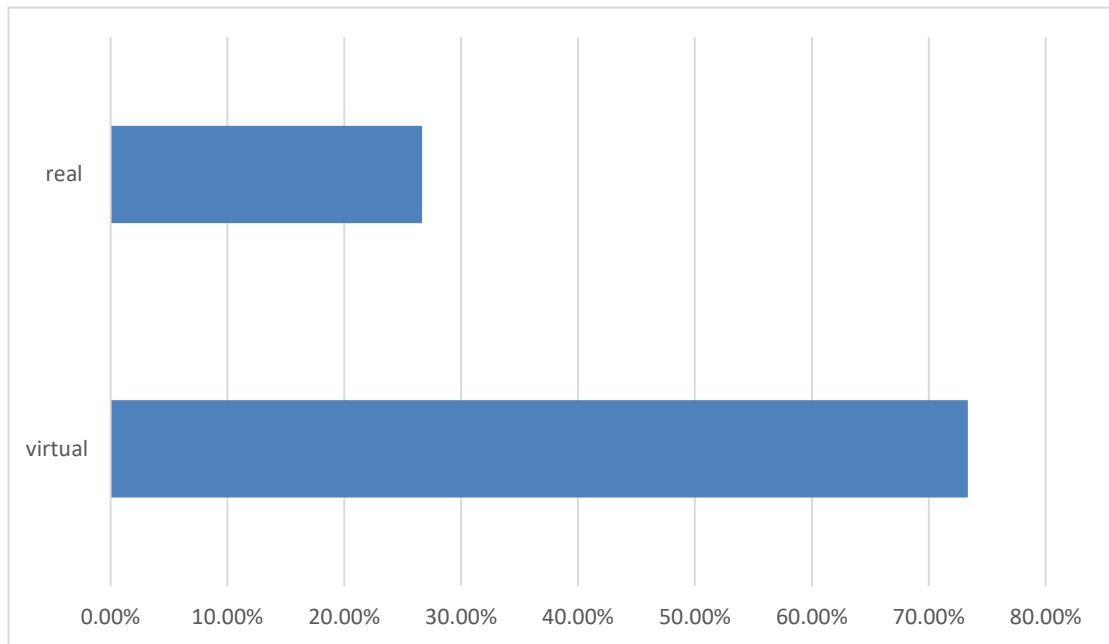
Figure 4.26 Results of Real and Virtual location in place

A higher percentage of virtual location (73%) is symptomatic of the self-reference to

the cyberspace and the promotion of integration of diverse media aimed to lead the

traffic from one platform to another. Findings displayed in Figure 4.27 provide a map

of the media targeted, and summarize the distribution of the platforms to which the

audience is redirected.
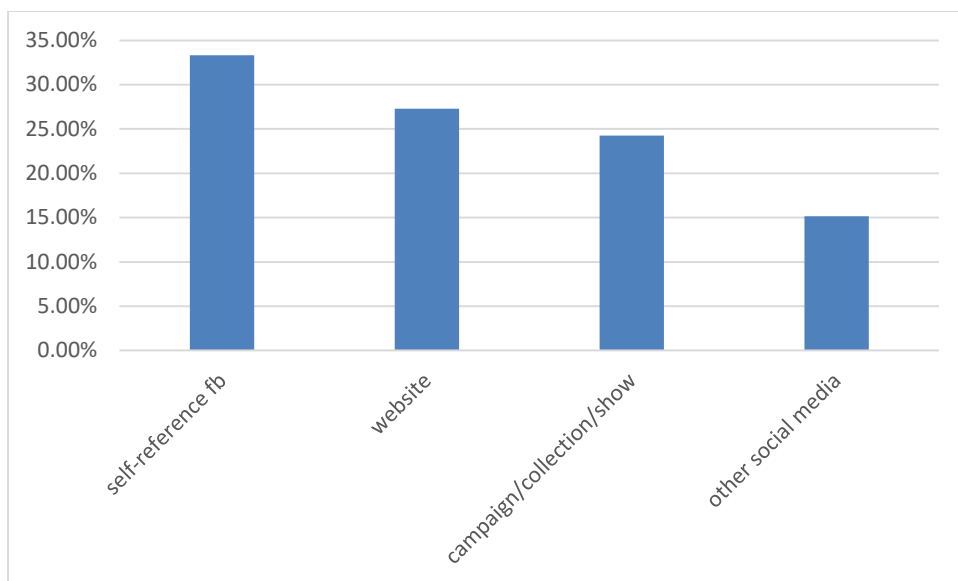
Figure 4.27 Virtual locations

The location in virtual places in order of frequency from the highest to the lowest are: self-reference to *Facebook* (N=11), website (N=9), campaign/collection/show (N=8), and other social media (N=5). The references to virtual locations reflect the reticular structure of branding discourse in the internet. The highest percentage of 33% is 'self-reference to FB' and examples are reported in Table. 4.18.

Table 4.18 Instances of self-reference to Facebook

	EXAMPLES	CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF SELF-REFERENCE TO FB	CO-TEXT
114	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 10.txt	the show live	on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry* (hyperlink)	at 1pm London
115	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt	collection revealed live	on facebook.com/*Burberry* (hyperlink)	on Monday at 1pm
116	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt	collection Join us	on facebook.com/*Burberry* (hyperlink)	on Monday at
117	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 6.txt	the show live	on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry* (hyperlink)	, tomorrow at 1pm

118	Burberry/Burberry 8.txt	A/W15 Join us	on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry* (hyperlink)	tomorrow at 1pm London
119	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 10.txt	pm, CET	right here on *Facebook*.	
120	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	12.30 pm CET	right here on *Facebook*.	
121	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 12.txt	urban romantic.	Here,	a first look at
122	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 9.txt	pm, CET	right here on *Facebook*.	
123	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt	Los Angeles.	#*LV*Series2 (hashtag)	
124	*LV*/*LV* 2.txt	Series 2 Campaign	#*LV*Series2 (hashtag)	

Examples 114, 115, 116, 117, and 118 construe self-reference to the *Facebook* platform to the deployment of hyperlinks already discussed in the previous Section. Examples 119, 120, and 122 use the proposition *right here on Facebook* to clarify the venue that will host the fashion show. Along with example 121, these instances of self-references to *Facebook* present a deictic construction.

The location in place are categorized as real instead refer to fashion cities, behind the scenes, and the other categories of: target market, set, runway, specific places, CoO, and around the world (Figure 4.28).
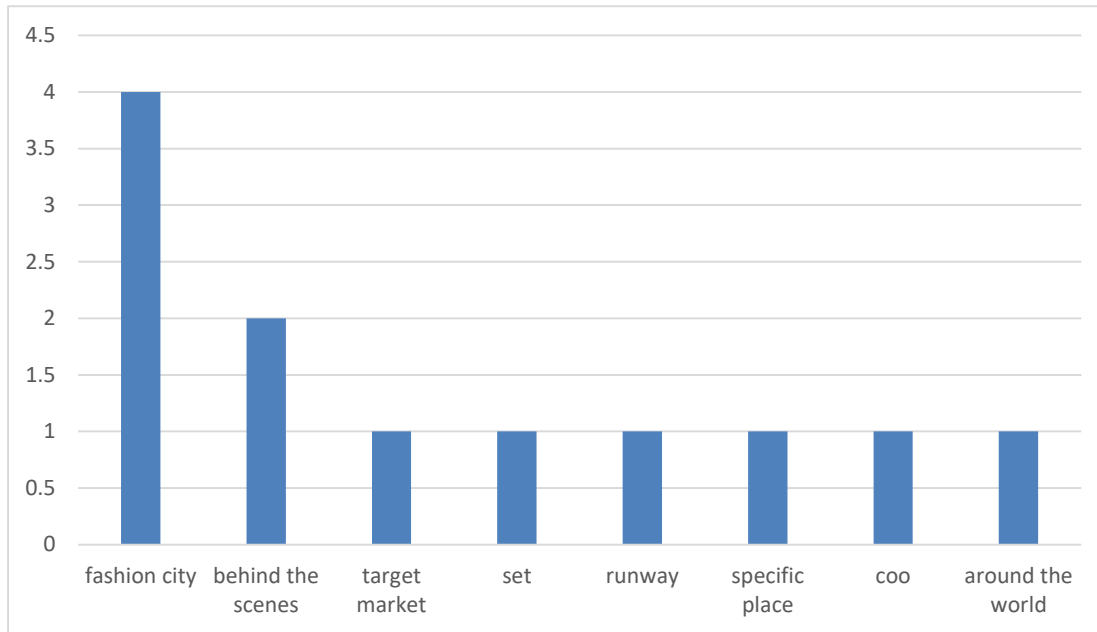
Figure 4.28 Results for Real location in place

The highest percentage is related to fashion cities (33%) and Table 4.19 shows how they are lexically instantiated and constructed in relation to the co-text to understand in which way and with which function it enriches the clause.

Table 4.19 Examples of fashion cities

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF FASHION CITY	CO-TEXT
125	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 11.txt	's Menswear show	in London	Watch the highlights:
126	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	's Menswear show	in London	Watch the highlights:
127	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	's Menswear show	in London	Watch the highlights:
128	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	the show live	from Milan	, today at 12.30

Findings provide examples of circumstances categorized as location in real places and fashion cities specifically semantically refer to cities that have been construed as fashion capitals through time such as *London* (e.g. 125, 126, 127) and *Milan* (e.g. 128).

300

Both occurring in posts shared by brands with their CoO in the same country of the city necessitate of an understanding beyond the lexical choices to be annotated. Both London and Milan are referred to for fashion shows and for fashion weeks. In this way, the CoO effect shifts to a second degree of relevance as it is not construed in the post.

Circumstances, identified as location-type, also refer to temporal situation of the discourse. Location in time is identified in three different types according to the lexical choices used to indicate the timeframe (Figure 4.29).
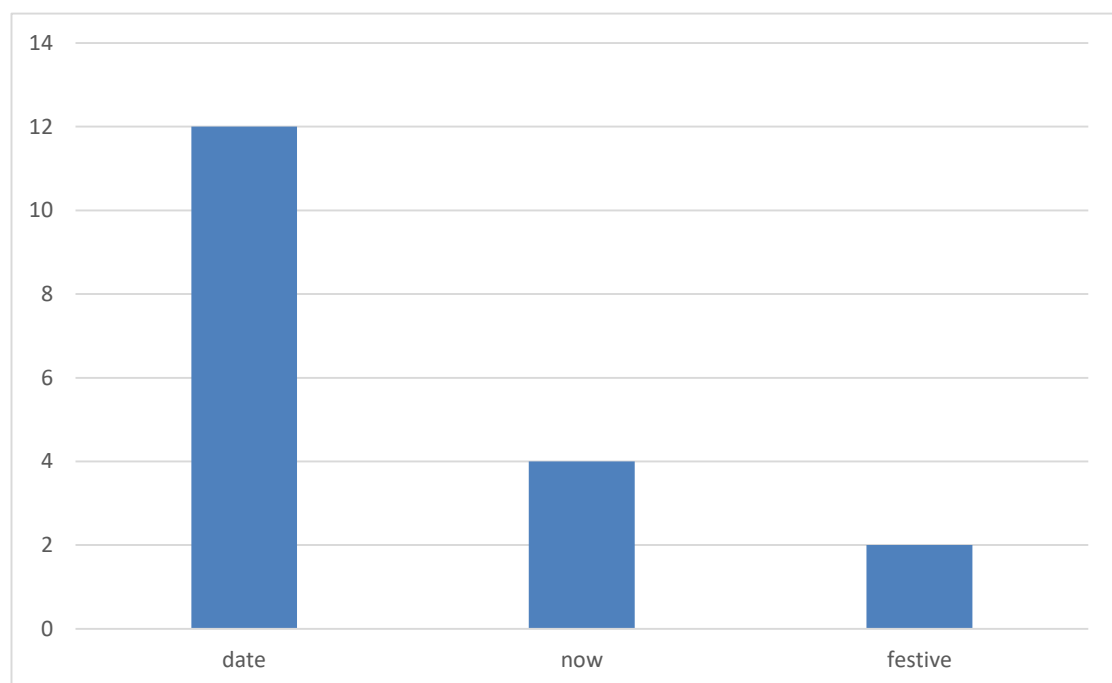
Figure 4.29 Location in time

The highest percentage is concerned with the date (66%), which focuses on the exact time when a determined content will be displayed.

Table 4.20 Examples of date

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF DATE	CO-TEXT
129	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 10.txt	(hyperlink)	at 1pm London time	
130	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 3.txt	show is coming	this Monday, 1pm London time	
131	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt	(hyperlink)	on Monday at 1pm, London time	
132	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt	(hyperlink)	on Monday at 1pm, London time	to see the looks
133	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 6.txt	hyperlink),	tomorrow at 1pm London time	
134	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 8.txt	(hyperlink)	tomorrow at 1pm London time	to see the new
135	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 10.txt	runway show live	on Monday, Jan. 19th at 12.30 pm, CET	right here on *Facebook*
136	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	show live from Milan	, today at 12.30 pm CET	right here on *Facebook*
137	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 9.txt	the show live	on Monday, Jan. 19th at 12.30 pm, CET	right here on *Facebook*
138	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt	the world.	From February 6th to the 22nd	at 1135 N Highland
139	*LV*/*LV* 4.txt		Two days to go before	the *Louis Vuitton*'s
140	*LV*/*LV* 4.txt	(hyperlink)	this Thursday at 2:30pm Paris Time.	Follow Men's Style

All examples categorized as date are reported in Table 4.20. They all refer to the time, in which the fashion show will be transmitted in live streaming. Fashion shows are strong presence in the social media and their live streaming and photo-reports represent a new way of conceiving fashion shows.

Following date, location in time is constructed through the use of the adverb 'now'

(22%), which reflects the instant nature of the social media platform, and the adjective 'festive' (12%), which is defined as third most frequent location in time characterizing the branding discourse and directly linked to the promotional feature of the corporate *Facebook* posts.

4.2.3.3 Processes

Findings demonstrate that, in order of frequency, processes occur less frequently than participants and circumstances. This is because they are instantiated through verbs, which in advertising discourse, are often replaced by punctuation or simply left to the interpretation of the audience (Cook, 1992, Patpong, 2008); however, their annotation is useful to understand in which case verbs need to be explicitly used to guide the audience and what actions participants perform within the multimodal texts and which necessitate further clarification.

The processes that frame the actions of the participants are either manifested and performing different actions, or elliptical, mainly embedding the verb 'to be'. Their distribution is summarized in Figure 4.30.
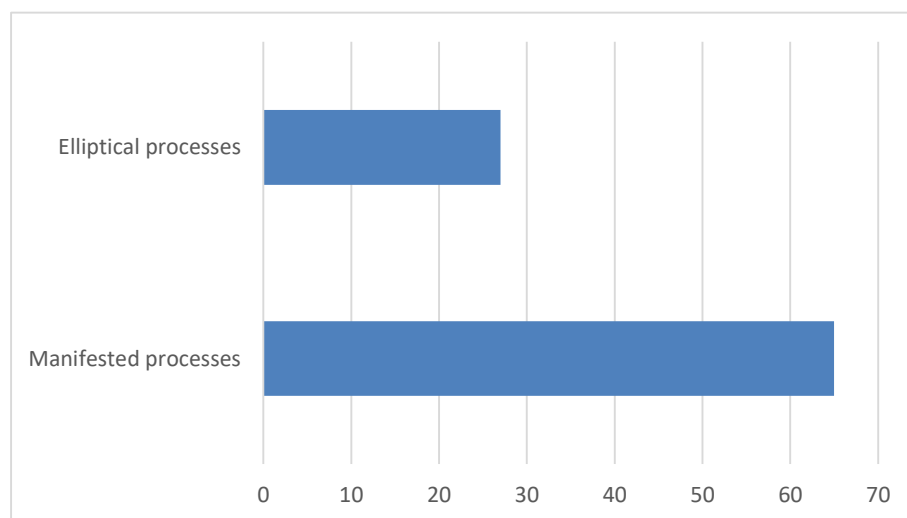
Figure 4.30 Overview of the processes

Findings, reported in Figure 4.30, shows a high percentage of manifested processes (70%). The manifested processes are further analyzed, and findings are reported in Figure 4.31.
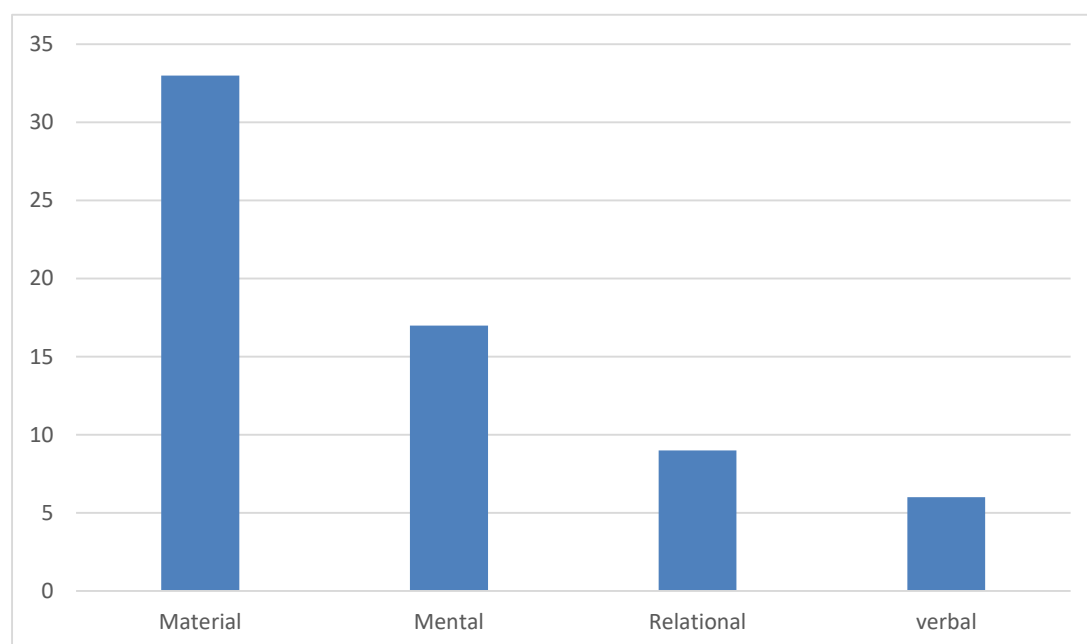
Figure 4.31 Process-types within the manifested ones

Among the manifested processes, material (N=33, 50%) and mental processes (N=17, 26%) occur in higher frequency. The high percentage of material processes confirms previous studies on transitivity and the rhetoric of persuasion, and more specifically storytelling enacted through concrete actions of the participants involved (Darani, 2014; Patpong, 2008). The higher percentage of material and mental processes was already anticipated by the previous paragraphs describing the highest percentage of participants, which co-occur in these two types of processes. Examples are provided in Table 4.21, and will be discussed in relation to the co-text to explain the actual labour of those verbs in terms of semantics but also in reference to branding functions.

Table 4.21 Instances of material processes

	EXAMPLES	CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF MATERIAL PROCESS	CO-TEXT
141	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 13.txt		Celebrating	the new year in
142	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 14.txt	*Burberry*	celebrates	Lunar New Year in
143	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 3.txt	Menswear A/W15 show	is coming	this Monday, 1pm
144	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt	Watch the collection	revealed	live on facebook.com/*Burberry*
145	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt	Menswear A/W15 collection	(you) Join	us on facebook.com/*Burberry*
146	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 8.txt	*Burberry* for A/W15	(you) Join	us on *Facebook*.com/*Burberry*
147	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 1.txt	2015 campaign,	shot	by Mert Alas and
148	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 12.txt	2015-16 collection dreamily	blurred	the masculine/feminine
149	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 15.txt	2015-16 Pinterest Boards	gives	you every fashion angle
150	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 2.txt	2015 campaign,	shot	by Mert Alas and
151	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 3.txt	2015 campaign,	shot	by Mert Alas and
152	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	*Gucci*	kicked off	the 2015 red carpet
153	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	Salma Hayek Pinault	radiated	elegance in a vibrant
154	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	number. The men,	also turned heads	Best Actor winner Eddie
155	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	winner Eddie Redmayne	wore	a striking grosgrain *Gucci*
156	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 5.txt	while Jake Gyllenhaal	went	to the Made to Order
157	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 6.txt	day off and	Let (work)	the color of the season

158	Gucci/Gucci 8.txt	Dusty colors	meet	modern tailoring in sportswear
159	Gucci/Gucci 9.txt		Coming into Focus:	a sneak peek at
160	LV/LV 10.txt	fashion show. Louis Vuitton	presents	"SERIES 2
161	LV/LV 10.txt	. Louis Vuitton	presents	"SERIES 2 -
162	LV/LV 10.txt	unconventional exhibition that	will then travel	to different cities around
163	LV/LV 13.txt	Louis Vuitton	introduces	the new V Line
164	LV/LV 13.txt	's Leather Collection	exploring	movement with MoVers Alex
165	LV/LV 15.txt	from Louis Vuitton	photographed	by Patrick Demarchelier.
166	LV/LV 3.txt	Kim Jones.	(you) Follow	him as he takes
167	LV/LV 3.txt	him as he	takes over	the official Louis Vuitton Instagram account
168	LV/LV 3.txt	Vuitton Instagram account	counting down	to the Men's
169	LV/LV 4.txt	Paris Time.	(you) Follow	Men's Style Director
170	LV/LV 4.txt	Jones as he	takes over	the official Instagram account
171	LV/LV 6.txt	hyperlink) and	catch	all the details from
172	LV/LV 9.txt	's Day, (you)	gift	a LV story with

Among the material processes, which construct branding discourse, examples 141 and 142 focus on the festive seasons that are opportunities to increase the revenues. Festivities are also ways of connecting with people's ordinary life and associate the brand with joyful moments. Example 172 focuses on St. Valentine's Day and explicitly uses the verb *to gift* but by softening the selling point by using as goal *a LV story*. The phonetic similarity between *LV* and the word 'love' further discussed in the next section in relation to intertextuality facilitates the interchangeable value of the two words. The audience is called *to gift* (used as a verb in the corpus) a story that stands

for a *LV* product which carries the (hi)story of the brand with it along with the brand values associated to heritage.

Most verbs are used metaphorically as advertising discourse has always been characterized by the use of metaphors realized through different modes (Cook, 1992; Forceville, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980;). In this case, textual resources analyzed in terms of processes performed provide instances of material processes that construct metaphorical meanings (e.g. 143, 152, 153, 159, 162, 164, 171, 172). The material processes, which construe metaphors reflect the position of Darani (2014) towards the rhetoric of persuasion that states that material processes make the message more effective because they provide concrete examples of the qualities promoted. Example 143 for instance says *Menswear A/W15 show is coming this Monday*, in reality a fashion show is not able to 'come' and the same sentence could be reconstructed into 'Menswear A/W15 show is this Monday'; however, this will populate the branding discourse of use of the verb 'to be' that is already widely used and at the same time elliptically embedded. This is the case in example 159 that uses the same verb referring to a topic to be articulated through posts *Coming into Focus*.

Additionally, the use of the expression 'is coming' is extensively used idiomatically in media and retail context in the form of 'coming soon'; therefore it is easy to follow it within the same context. Example 152 is a different type of metaphor that is *Gucci kicked off the 2015 red carpet*, again this is an idiomatic form that once coined entered in the language usage as established expression to mean 'open'. Specifically, there is one more element, which is the personification as a characteristic of luxury fashion brands. Firms assign their brand name physical entities able to perform activities. This is also boosted by the fact that on *Facebook* brands are actually materialized into avatars, that similarly to individual accounts, perform specific

actions.

Example 153 is *Salma Hayek Pinault radiated elegance* is another metaphor used to replace the use of the verb 'to be', the same meaning could be conveyed by saying 'Salma Hayek Pinault was elegant', but instead she was compared to the sun that radiates light. Examples 162 and 164 are instances of use of verbs to boost the narrative effect of the discourse by enabling objects to perform human actions such as travelling and exploring. Example 171 deploys the verb 'catch' in a colloquial form to grab the attention of the audience. The closeness of advertising to spoken language is not new, but in this study, informs about the features of promotional *genre* migrating from one medium to another, and specifically to social media (Cook, 1992; Patpong, 2008). Example 144 reports on the purpose of using social media to unveil information (Nervino, 2013), the use of the verb 'to reveal' is again an attempt to provide additional meaning to the actions performed by the brand by deploying lexical choices that recall the narrative *genres*. Examples 145, 146, 166, and 169 are material processes instantiated through the use of two verbs 'join' and 'follow' in the imperative form with the elliptical participant identified as *you*. Both verbs entered in the internet vocabulary with the advent of social media because they were identified as call for actions of specific media enacted through buttons embedding commands for the platforms. Imperative forms in advertising are aimed to engage the audience and they contain the sales message, while declarative forms are related to the entities – brands, products, services – described in the advertisements (Patpong, 2008).

Moreover, these four examples are representative of a set of verbs frequently used in internet language because of new connotations 'to friend' for instance, which in 2004 was recognized by the *OED* also as 'connecting with someone through social

networking sites'[66] and others that have been coined to name a virtual action that did not exist in the past like 'to skype' dated back to 2003[67].

Examples 147, 150, 151, and 166 are used in the passive form to highlight the importance of the object, which is the *campaign* and relate it to the production process. While using the passive form, the attention shifts to the campaign, but at the same time the actors of the processes acquire worthiness to be mentioned as they are fashion photographers used to upgrade the image of a promotional campaign to a masterpiece of artistic photography.

Example 149 explains the role of social media during a fashion show. The post tells the audience that by following Pinterest, they will be able to catch the event from all the different angles. Example 167 and 170 explicitly passes the management of the Instagram account to the creative director. The fact of saying it on *Facebook* also provides the opportunity to engage *Facebook* users into a conversation aimed to lead them to follow the brand on another platform. Lastly, examples 157 and 158 refer to the role of colours. Protagonist of seasonal collection *let the color of the season work* or in a product category *dusty colors meet modern tailoring in sportswear.* In both cases, colour is the actor of specific actions aimed to construct collection and products. The role of colour is further discussed in Section 4.2.3 as player in the construal the representational meanings.

The second type of processes, in order of frequency, is the 'mental' process, whose examples (Table 4.22) are characterized by the co-occurrence with the elliptical participant identified in the pronoun *you*, standing for the audience.

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[66] *OED*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74647?rskey=DKs3EU&result=2#eid [09/05/2017]
[67] *OED*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/406423?redirectedFrom=skype#eid [09/05/2017]

Table 4.22 Examples of mental processes

	EXAMPLES	CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF MENTAL PROCESS	CO-TEXT
173	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	show in London	Watch	the highlights: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV*
174	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	show in London	Watch	the highlights: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV*
175	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt	Menswear A/W15 collection	Watch	the collection revealed live
176	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 6.txt	Menswear A/W15 runway	See	the show live on
177	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	show in London	Watch	the highlights: http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2d*LV*
178	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 10.txt	You're invited	Watch	our Men's Fall/Winter
179	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 11.txt	runway collection.	Watch	the show live from
180	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 9.txt	runway collection.	Watch	the show live on
181	*LV*/*LV* 13.txt	Ryoichi Kurokawa.	Learn	more about the collection
182	*LV*/*LV* 14.txt	in motion.	Discover	the collection and the
183	*LV*/*LV* 5.txt		Watch	the *Louis Vuitton* Men
184	*LV*/*LV* 6.txt		Watch	the *Louis Vuitton* Men
185	*LV*/*LV* 8.txt	new collection.	Watch	the Fall 2015 Fashion
186	*LV*/*LV* 8.txt	Fashion Show and	see	all the looks now
187	*LV*/*LV* 9.txt		Fall in *LV*...	This Valentine's Day
188	*LV*/*LV* 9.txt	Mask Collection,	inspired	by the masks of

All the examples, extracted from the findings and shown in Table 4.22, present verbs

used in their imperative form. Additionally, the examples also show how from one post to another there are instances of copy-and-paste (Adami, 2012), and when the post is not exactly the same, variations are minimal and mainly concerned with the circumstance contouring the goal.

Examples 173, 174, and 177 are posts, in which the message construed through textual resources is the same. They all use the verb 'to watch' referring to *highlights* meaning the most significant moments of the show, already selected and resemiotized in a video (Iedema, 2001; 2003). Example 175 invites the audience 'to watch' a collection, examples 178, 183, 184, and 185 a full fashion show, example 179 refers to 'watch' but adds 'live', as well as example 180. The extensive use of the verb 'to watch' informs about the fact that meanings are conveyed through videos and live streaming. As explained in the previous section about hyperlinks, mode-changing and live streaming hyperlinks are used to switch from a multimodal ensemble of text and still images to another one made of text, sound, moving images (Section 4.2.1).

Examples 176 and 186 use the verb 'to see' for *show* and l*ooks*. The messages are used to stimulate the sight and directly refer to this sense. Examples 181 and 182 elaborate more on the idea of learning and discovering more about the brand through social media that has been anticipated by one of the interviewees (Chapter 1; Appendix I). Examples 186 is another example of benefiting from the phonological similarity between *LV* and *love* explained in the previous paragraphs. Example 187 presents a passive form of the verb 'inspire'. Talking about inspiration is common in branding discourse because the source of inspiration for the product is part of the USP of the product that requires an additional value over mass production. In this case the *mask collection* is narrated as the result of the influence of the passion of Gaston Vuitton for African masks. It blurs the boundaries between family and brand, private and public,

and it highlights the importance of the human component behind the brand (Okonkwo, 2007).

Concisely, the material processes contribute and refer to the meaning construed within the frame of the post with few in-between exceptions needing an interpretation at the level of contextualized semantics that instead engage the audience (e.g. 145, 146, 166, 169). Whereas, mental processes are characterized by their powerful talk of construing the interpersonal metafunction by engaging the audience with call for actions, besides one exception reported in the example that refer to inspiration (e.g. 188).

Elliptical processes (Figure 4.32) were identified as replaced by elements of punctuation, references to the visual elements, and contextual indicators of the verb 'to be' as natural completion of the constructs.
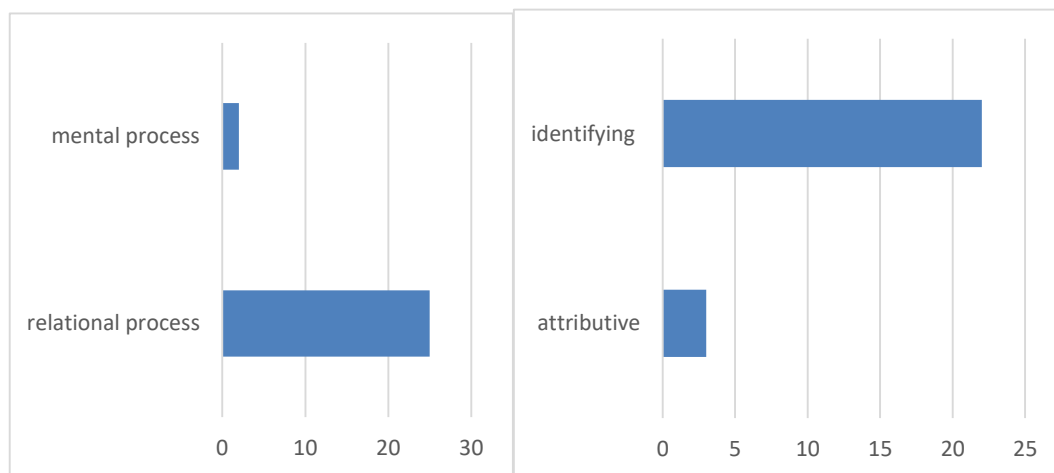
Figure 4.32 Results for elliptical processes   **Figure 4.33 Results within Relational processes**

Figure 4.32 shows the dominant role of relational processes (93%), while Figure 4.33 explores the sub-categories under relational process, namely identifying (88%) and attributive (12%). In both cases the elliptical verb is the verb 'to be'. Examples are reported in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23 Examples of identifying processes

EXAMPLES		CO-TEXT	INSTANCES OF IDENTIFYING PROCESS	CO-TEXT
189	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 11.txt	carpet to the runway	: the guests	from Monday's Menswear
190	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 11.txt	the runway	: the guests	from Monday's Menswear
191	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 12.txt	the runway	: the guest	from Monday's
192	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 2.txt	On set	Mario Testino (tag) and the stars of the Prorsum Spring/Summer 2015 campaign, Jourdan Dunn, George Le Page and George Barnett	
193	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 4.txt		A glimpse of the *Burberry* Prorsum Menswear A/W15 collection	Watch the collection revealed
194	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 5.txt	design studio	: a preview of the new *Burberry* Menswear A/W15 collection	Join us on facebook.com/*Burberry*
195	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 7.txt		All the looks	from the *Burberry* Prorsum
196	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 8.txt		Hand-placed mirror embellishment -	Menswear accessories from
197	*Burberry*/*Burberry* 9.txt	the runway	: the guests	from Monday's Menswear
198	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 12.txt	. Here	, a first look at the season	in full.
199	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 15.txt		All Access From the backstage to the front row,	our exclusive *Gucci* Men
200	*Gucci*/*Gucci* 7.txt		Spring Awakening	A fresh fabric
201	*LV*/*LV* 10.txt		A modern and unexpected reinterpretation of a fashion show.	*Louis Vuitton* presents "

202	LV/LV 11.txt		LV at first sight...	This Valentine's Day
203	LV/LV 12.txt		The opening of the Louis Vuitton SERIES 2 Exhibition	in Los Angeles.
204	LV/LV 12.txt		The opening of the Louis Vuitton SERIES 2 Exhibition	in Los Angeles.
205	LV/LV 15.txt		An odyssey through the terrains of fashion.	A journey exquisite in
206	LV/LV 15.txt	of fashion.	A journey exquisite in its elegance.	Introducing the new Spirit
207	LV/LV 2.txt		Bruce Weber & Juergen Teller	for the Louis Vuitton
208	LV/LV 3.txt		Men's Fashion Week	through the eyes of
209	LV/LV 7.txt		Guests	at the Louis Vuitton

Table 4.23 presents the examples annotated as elliptical identifying processes. The column named instances of elliptical identifying processes includes the elements that suggest the ellipsis of the process, but also the value corresponding to the token materialized into the images of the posts. Examples 189, 190, 191, and 197 show that the verb 'to be' in this case is replaced by the colon sign of punctuation. *The guests* identified through the captions are actually displayed in the images in the posts and it makes clear the function of the text of assigning an identity to the people depicted. Colon also replaces the verb 'to be' in example 194, and its actually stands for 'it is'. Examples 192, 193, and 195 work as captions to the images with long nominalizations placed in the post to not only identify entities and individuals in the images but also to claim authorship of specific artefacts, like example 192 in which Mario Testino is the photographer behind the campaign. In example 196 the verb 'to be' is replaced by a 'hyphen', whereas example 198 uses a comma. Examples 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, and 206 work as captions to the images, they do not form a clause but they imply that what the audience sees in the image is described in the text that has been

read, as well as examples 208 and 209 that include more information with circumstances and respectively embed 'it is' and 'they are'. In annotating those processes, one may opt for existential processes; however, the presence of visual elements displaying the entities described promotes the choice for an identifying process.

Overall, textual resources are deployed to guide the audience in the discovery of the interwoven multisemiotic narrative flow of corporate *Facebook* posts. The transitivity analysis offers an overview of the micro-level linguistic organization of the meanings, which contributes to the more articulated discussion forthcoming in the next sections. The textual analysis operationalized at the semantic and lexico-grammatical level demonstrate how the textual resources individually contribute to the branding discourse but necessitate the use of other elements to satisfactorily convey meanings.

4.2.3.4 Discussion

The orchestration of textual resources within the corporate *Facebook* posts reflect the features of advertising discourse (Cook, 1992; Patpong, 2008). The quantitative results confirm the characteristics of advertising discourse. Those features also overlap with the difficulties of annotating the data and are in brief: elliptical participants and processes, often related to text-image relation; tendency to nominalizations and long nominal group listing the evaluative features of the products promoted; purposely reduction of the number of words for the sake of conciseness and immediacy of the message; deictic words, typical of advertising discourse, but also further explored as contextual elements whose use is boosted by the hypertextual structure of the texts (Cook, 1992; Myers, 2010; Riboni, 2014). The elliptical information, which is instead

provided by the ATA and SATA and omitted not to create redundancy, the rich 'fashionese' style (Leitch, 2016), which characterizes the luxury fashion sector and represents its *USP*. Also the 'copy-and-paste' (Adami, 2012) discursive practices from one album-post to another, which is symptomatic of the pressure that brands have in constantly updating the audience and boost the sales to increase revenues.

More specifically, the high percentage of participants reflect the essential identification of players within the luxury goods market, which legitimate the different activities enacted by the firms. Luxury goods market and fashion have strong attachment to names around the brands and spokespersons' endorsement and benefit from the claim of craftsmanship and human agentivity in the production process. This is because of the importance of identifying the stakeholders in their uniqueness (Okonkwo, 2007; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015). At the same time, the agentivity is often shifted to the brand and products undergoing a process of personification (Okonkwo, 2007; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015).

In the corporate *Facebook* pages, the process of personification is amplified by the fact that the *Facebook* account is created to establish a relationship between the brand and the audience, and the brand is conceived as an avatar posting about its own life. In some cases, the dataset reports a shift in management from the ephemeral brand entity to the human creative director taking over the social media account. Among the participants, the elliptical ones usually construe the addresses of the branding discourse targeted by the brand and identifiable with the pronoun *you* (Cook, 1992; Patpong, 2008). It focuses on the interactivity nature of the platform that enacts engagement through discursive construction of invitation instantiated through imperative forms as the two authors discuss.

In terms of processes enacted, material processes occur frequently, confirming previous studies on the rhetoric of persuasion, which are characterized by a storytelling feature enacted through concrete actions instantiated through material processes (Darani, 2014; Patpong, 2008). Most verbs are also used metaphorically to prioritize a material process construction over a relational one. Advertising discourse has always been characterized by the use of metaphors realized through different modes (Cook, 1992; Forceville, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980;). Material processes are constructed through verbs used in the imperative forms to engage the audience and they contain the sales message, and declarative forms are related to the entities – brands, products, services – described in the advertisements (Patpong, 2008). Moreover, the dataset presents instances of verbs, which have seen a high increase in their deployment given their use in the internet language because of new connotations like 'to friend' for instance. Additionally, verbs like 'watch' enhance the process of resemiotization across modes (Iedema, 2001; 2003), which is instantiated through the transformation of text and still images into videos and live streaming.

Findings also show that social media platforms are used to report on events. This is perhaps the most innovative usage that does not dilutes the luxury aura but reinforces the relationship between brand and user, because it allows the audience to consume part of the brand dream (Halliday, 2015; Mohr, 2013). This before the "'See Now Buy Now' Fashion Show" (Cochrane, 5 February 2016) practice initiated by *Burberry*. This latter activity transforms an event purely devoted to the construction of brand identity to a mere promotional tool to boost the sales. Fashion shows are the events that position the brand in the global pantheon (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016), and they are no longer inaccessible events, but broadcasted globally and with looks available on sales (Halliday, 2015; Mohr, 2013). The reference to fashion show

as provenance aims to boost the desire for the products displayed and it is also related to the fact that in the digital era, the fashion show is accessible to the audience. In the same way, are the products, which were previously produced with the only scope of dressing celebrities and being used for advertising, while nowadays they have become available for the masses. This has turned luxury in the primary achievement of the goods, in being the first, instead of being the only one.

Among other circumstances, location in place represents an instance of deictic words typical of advertisements (Cook, 1992; Patpong, 2008), hypertextuality (Myers, 2010; Riboni, 2014), intertextuality, and categorization of the editorial content. It is used to contextualize the text and it is context-dependent (Myers, 2010; Riboni, 2014).

Differently from previous studies (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2013; Crawford Camiciottoli *et al.*, 2014; Faraoni *et al.*, 2015) conducted on the texts disseminated in the cyberspace to construct branding discourse, this study focuses on the semiotic and branding function of the textual resources; however, there are some semantic findings confirmed in this study, which pertain to the specialized discourse of the dataset. Findings map out the main players in the manufacture of discourse that are products, designers, events, and also the self-reference to the brand that in those studies has been ignored because of the utilize of big data tools to retrieve information. Big data tools, which while converting the data, recognize as rumors the ATA and SATA as rumors and excluded from the analysis.

In contrast to those studies, the present one does not present high percentage in terms of CoO and reference to the metabrand 'made in', and it lies in the fact that the audience is not willing to learn about established knowledge about the brand, but instead news and novelty about brand activities. The studies mentioned specifically

questioned the dataset about the construction of Italian brand identity and alignment between brand identity and image the findings are reported in reference to the research inquiry.

The present study includes brands from the different CoO and is more concerned with similarities and differences in terms of branding strategies across brands. These studies (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2013; Crawford Camiciottoli et *al.*, 2014; Faraoni *et al.*, 2015) have identified an aspect of new media communication that is the semantic reference to 'modernity' that was already a pattern emerged in the corpus analysis of the dataset for the M.A. thesis (Nervino, 2013). In the present study, the semantic field of modernity is construed through lexical choices such as 'new', 'now', but it has shifted towards a more instant solution of temporary taste destined to last for less than before, and it is subject to the social media ideology of 'being the first one'.

Moreover, the posts analysed, similarly to individual status updates (Page, 2010), create their own narrative and they are linked to each other; however, textual resources do not present any linking device among each other if not the copy-and-paste feature that suggests that they are related to the same topic. This is different from the narrative flow of status updates of individual users that have been found and described as episodes and blocks of the same chain of a narrative (Page, 2010).

Even if within textual resources, the sense of storytelling is not clear in its textual metafunction, Figure 4.34 summarizes how the different transitivity elements analyzed construe their own narrative flow.
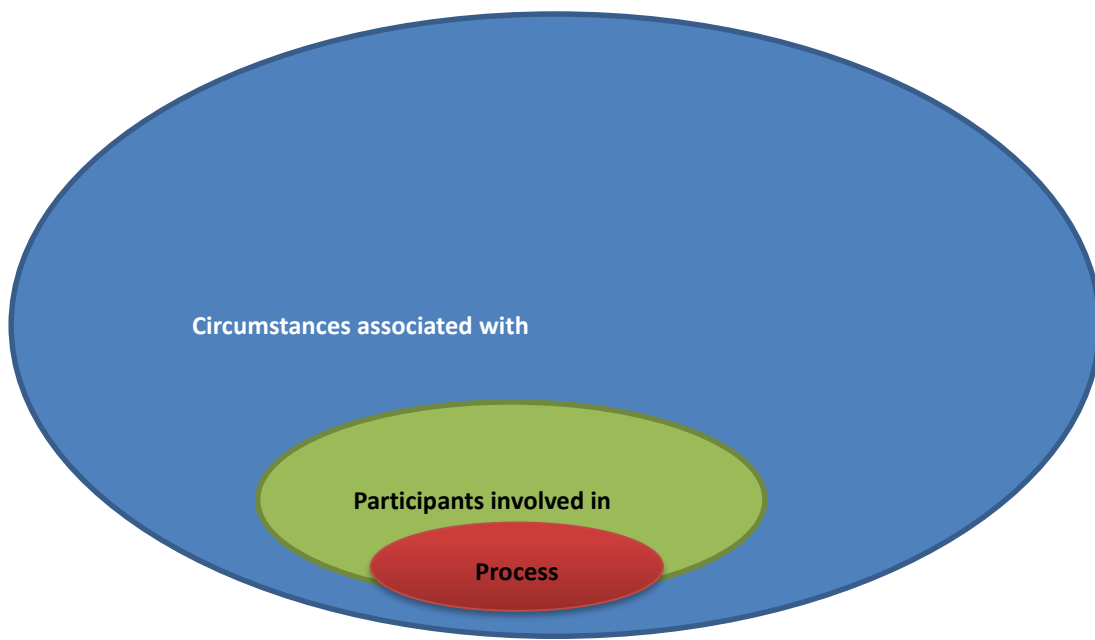
Figure 4.34 Transitivity structure (adapted from Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)

The structure of the (hi)story of the brand, if not explicitly suggested by textual resources as a chain of textual information disseminated through posts suggests how textual resources collaborate with other resources to create stories, anedoctes, to talk about celebrities and customers, describing the dream world and create aspiration towards it (Sassoon, 2012). The transitivity system construes the ideational metafunction of language and represents the human experience of the real world unpacked into processes, participants, attendants, and circumstances that in this context serve the communication purpose of a "rhetorical (persuasive) style" (Darani, 2014, p. 180).

With reference to Figure 2.7 in Chapter 2 and the definition of the elements construing branding storytelling, the branding narrative constructed through the textual resources can be summarized in Figure 4.35.
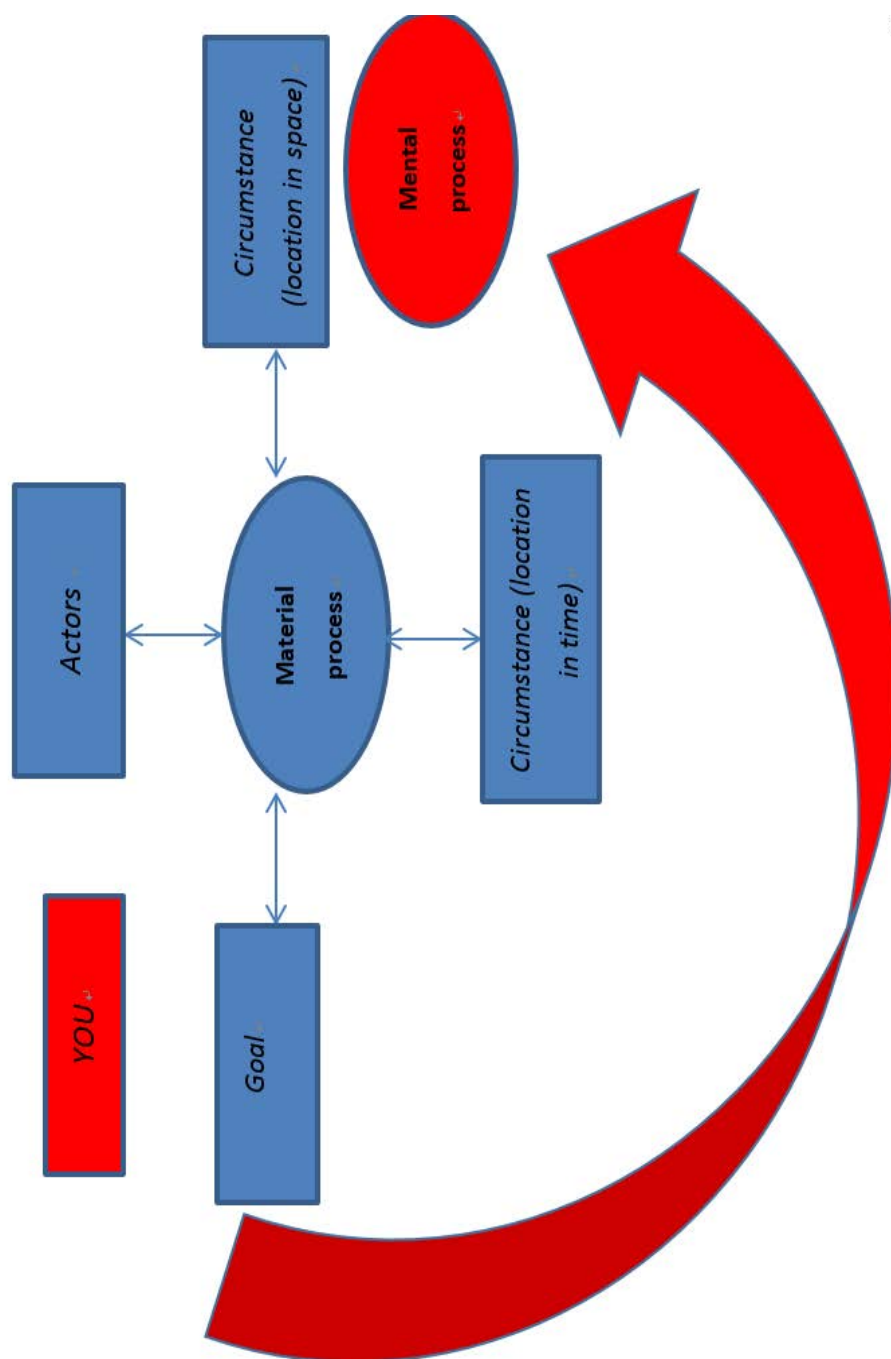
Figure 4.35 The concept of 'heritage' translated into transitivity (adapted from the results and based on the concept of heritage of on Corbellini and Saviolo, 2009, p. 168)

Figure 4.35 summarizes the transitivity elements occur with highest frequency in the dataset analyzed. The figure re-elaborates Corbellini & Saviolo's (2009) concept of heritage in which actors and goal replace people around the brand and products, the circumstances reflect time and space, and the additional red elements symbolize the advent of social media that is included in the construction of the storytelling about the brand heritage. 'You' that stands for the audience as senser in mental processes aimed to the discovery of and contribution to the branding discourse.

Concisely, textual resources used as fashion captions to create interpersonal relation between the brand and the reader enhance the engagement features of the medium, but abandon the 'fashionese' style of printed media in which the verbal construction of a product functions to compensate the multisensorial experience given by an offline encounter (Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2016). The length of text constrained by the medium, not only in terms of the actual number of characters allowed, but for the nature of the text that it is meant to be consumed in few seconds.

4.2.4 The transformation of fashion photography

Findings obtained from the analysis of the visual resources demonstrate that the hosting platform, in this case *Facebook*, has an impact on fashion photography. More precisely, the medium enables and constrains the orchestration of the semiotic modes involved in the meaning-making process of branding discourse.

The findings are two-fold into representational (Section 4.2.4.1) and interactional meanings (Section 4.2.4.3). Within each layer results are also presented across brands (Section 4.2.4.2 and Section 4.2.4.4), and in their intersection, which creates couplings (Section 4.2.4.5).

4.2.4.1 Representational meanings

The findings of representational meanings explore the narrativity structure of the branding discourse, as situated discourse framed by medium and the context. The narrativity structure is constructed through different elements namely participants, processes, circumstances, and colours, which reflect the transitivity system of the language. This section describes these elements in terms of events given by actions performed by participants in specific circumstances.

Findings for the participants are summarized in Figure 4.36.
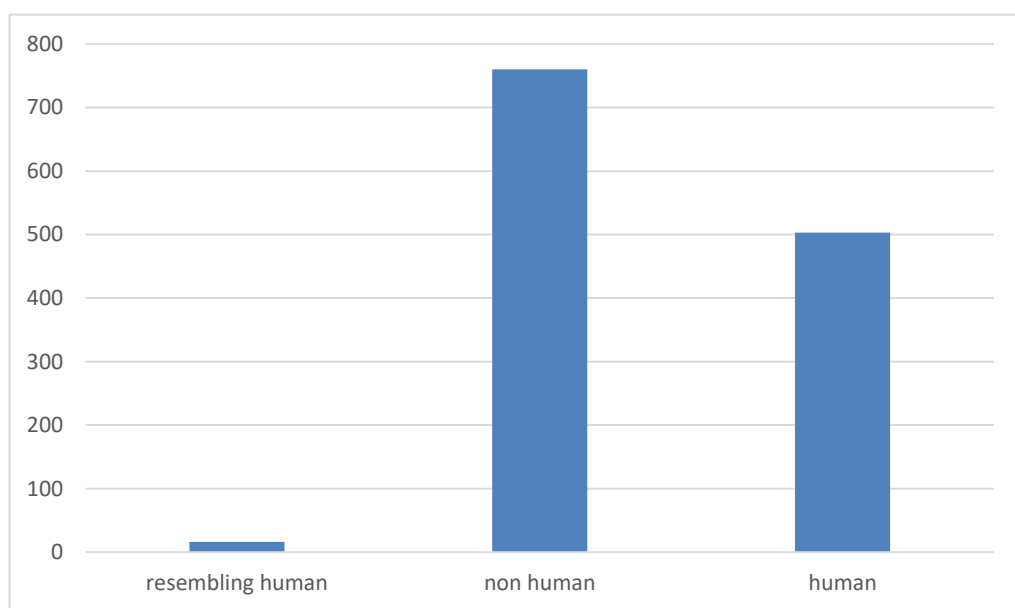
Figure 4.36 Results for Participants

Participants occur in three different types. 'Human type' (N=503, 40%), 'non-human type' (N=760, 59%), and the data-driven category identified as 'resembling human' (N=16, 1%), which matches with the process of personification. The high percentage of non-human type demonstrates that branding discourse is populated of product introductions and descriptions aimed to construct a call for purchase to the audience (Rambourg, 2014). Non-human type participants are essentially the products; however,

a further degree of delicacy showed that non-human participants also refer to brand name, connotative elements such as brand resignifications and its core values materialized into photos, and other elements like the artworks displayed by *Gucci* for instance. Their distribution is displayed in Figure 4.37.
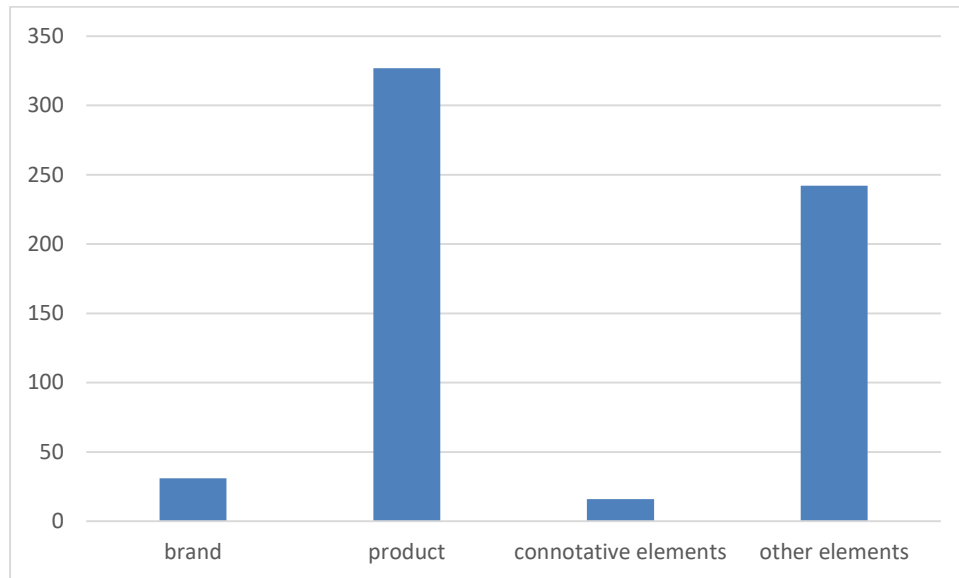
Figure 4.37 Results for non-human participants

Given the high frequency of the category of product (N=327, 43%), its instances have been divided into different categories to match the type of product with the brand activity and summarized in Figure 4.38.
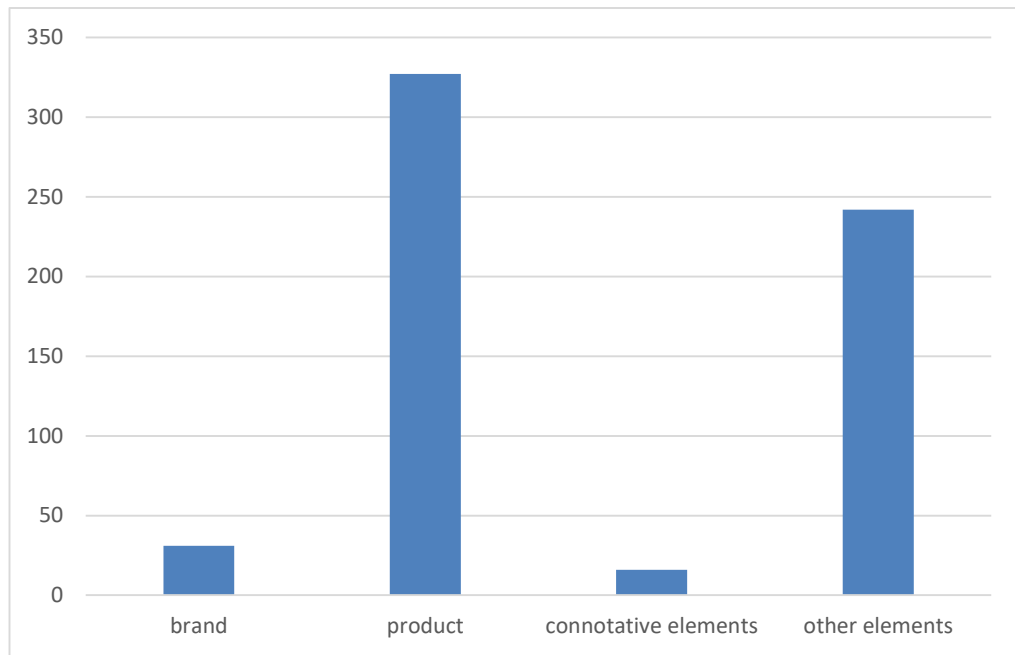
Figure 4.38 Results for the categories of product participants

Product-category presents four different types of products, which reflect the portfolio of creations of the brands: iconic (N=12), seasonal (N=273, 83%), brand stretching (N=39), and exclusive items (N=3). The findings reveal that *Facebook* is particularly used to introduce seasonal items. This suggests that *Facebook* resembles a shopping window used to display the merchandise available for each season and performs a function of linking digital and physical space because it potentially leads the user to an encounter with the brand, which is either a physical shopping experience or the online purchase of a product.

Findings for human-type participants show the different categories elaborated to adjust to the specificity of the situated discourse. Participants are categorized in terms of form, but this present study adds more layers of identification based on the different players involved in the fashion system. Figure 4.39 first divides the human participants into group and individual.
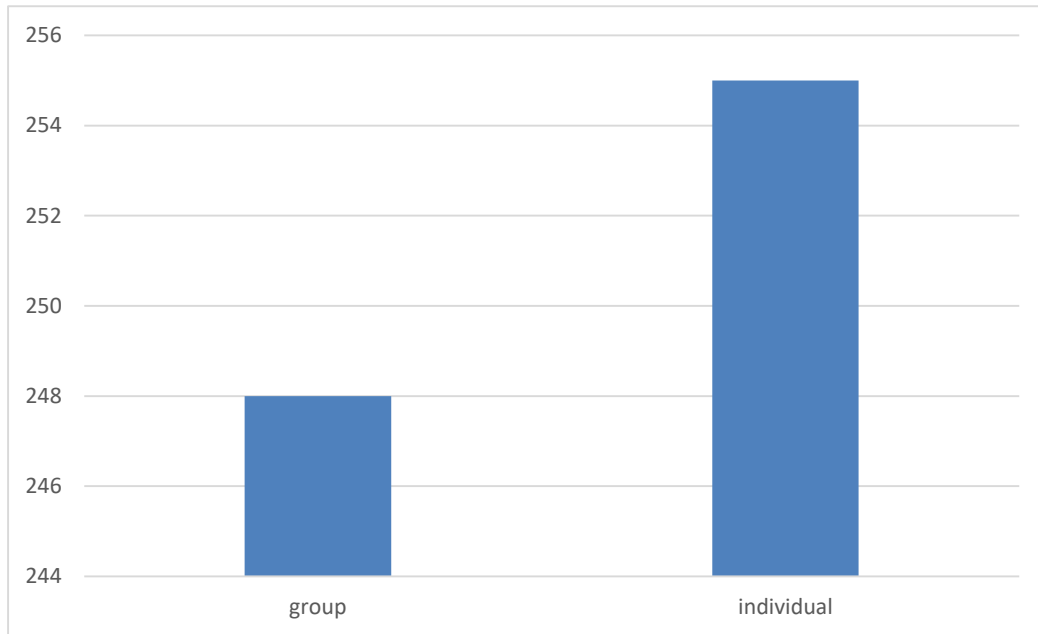
Figure 4.39 Results for group and individual participants

Individual participants occur N=255 (51%), and group of participants occur N=248 (49%). Individual participants occur in a slightly higher percentage because according to the findings presented for marketing strategies, ethos is built by both brand heritage and external sources and these sources include human participants. The distribution within individual participants are summarized in Figure 4.40
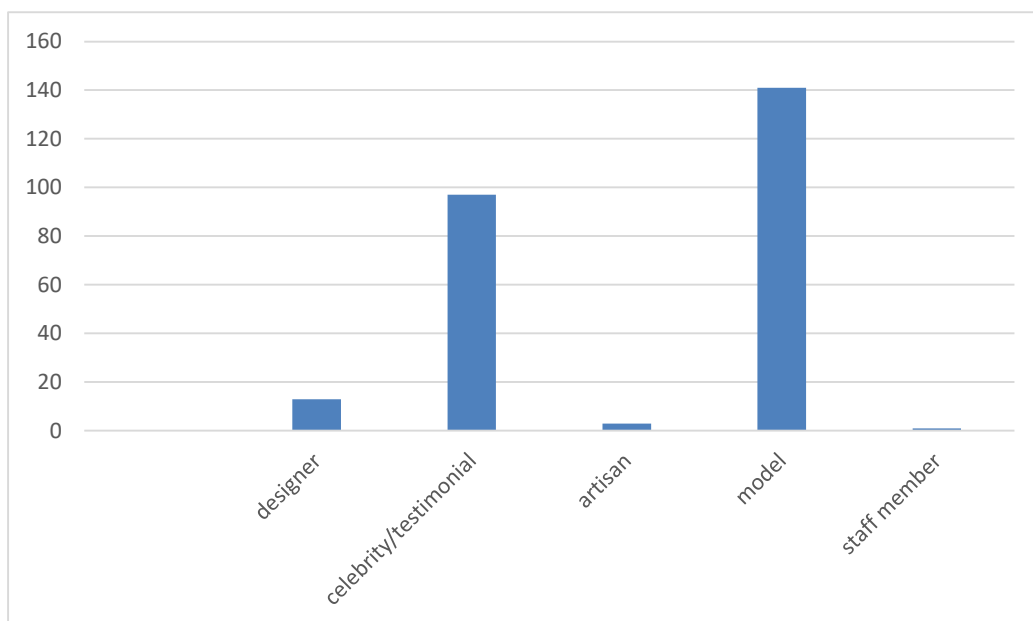
Figure 4.40 Results for individual participants

A high percentage of human-type including models (N=141, 56%) and celebrities (N=97, 38%) is motivated by the fact that individual human participants are used to construct ethos and are typically named models, celebrities, or major actors in the fashion system used to endorse the brand.

Following the percentage of individual participants, participants are also gathered in a group. Participants grouped are either placed in the photo to represent a category, or inamed individuals gathered for a specific purpose. The quantitative results are show in Figure 4.41 and divided into generic and specific participants.
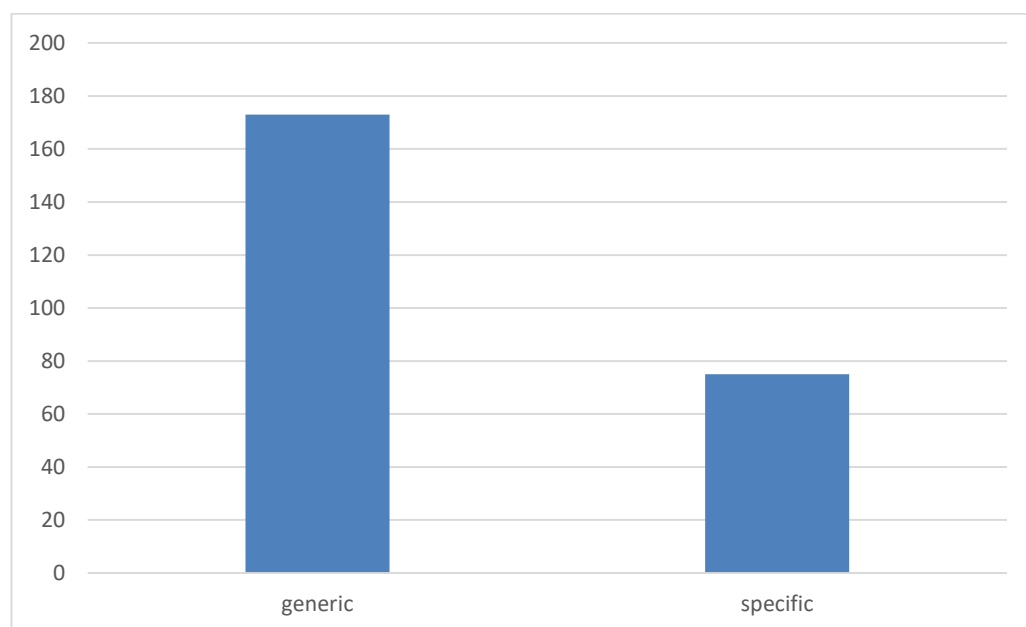
Figure 4.41 Results for generic and specific participants

Groups are categorized as generic entities (N=173, 70%). Within this category, a further division is shows in Figure 4.42.
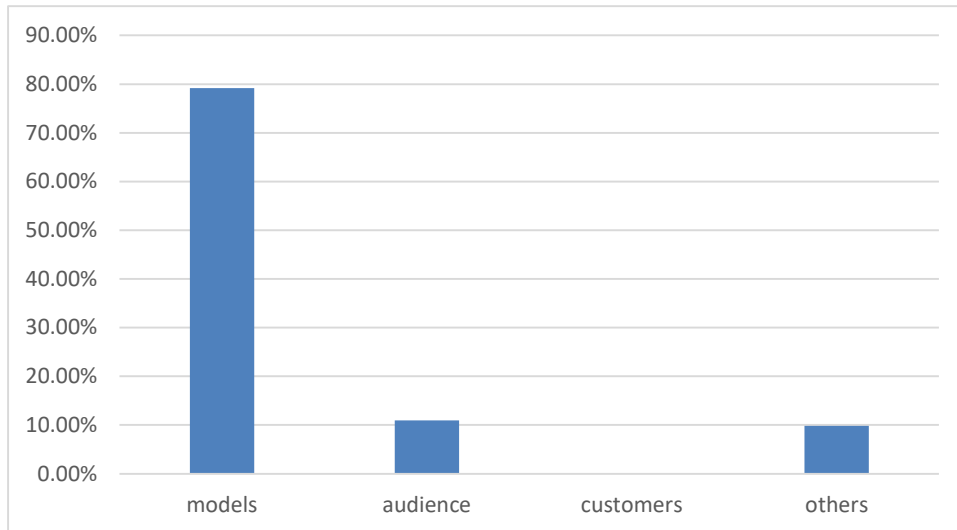
Figure 4.42 Results of generic group participants

Findings for generic group of participants show the presence of models, which are typically the protagonists of the branding discourse shared in the *Facebook* platform. This is a consequence of the high number of posts, which share photos of the advertising campaigns, which portray models displaying the products. When individuals are placed within generic groups, they are not used for endorsement, but mainly to display the products.

Following the percentage of individuals placed in groups, there is the percentage of named individuals within groups which highlight the presence of specific participants (Figure 4.43).
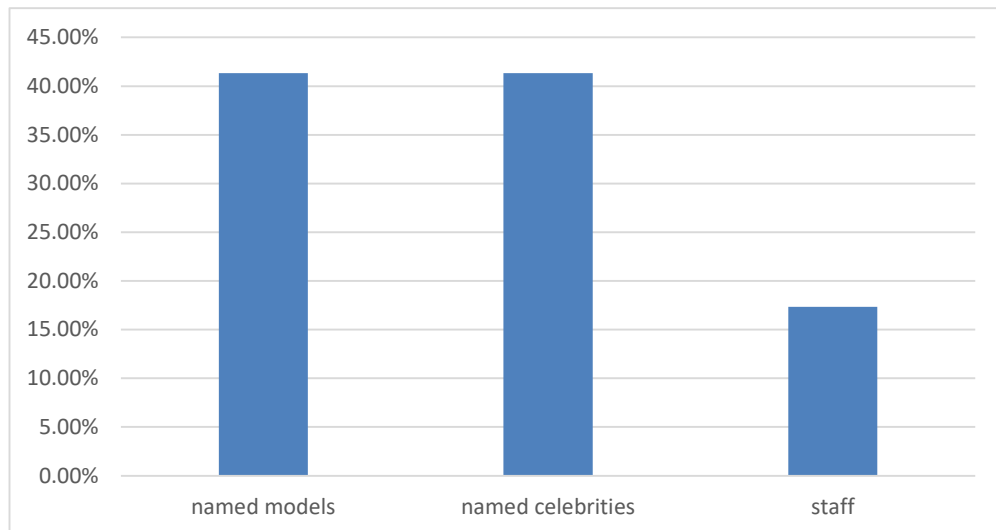
Figure 4.43 Results of specific group participants

As the findings show, specific participants within groups are characterized by the presence of models and celebrities used for endorsement (c.f. Kapferer, 2015). Both named models and celebrities present N=31 accounting for 41% each. This discursive practice reflects the relay on fashion system and celebrity endorsement.

The findings provide some examples such as *Burberry* festive film starring Romeo Beckham, *LV* and Michelle Williams, *Gucci* and Lykke Li, and many more. These three are interpreted not only in terms of mutual branding, but also as targeting strategies aimed to extend the market to younger generations. The three names refer to a specific demographic. Teenagers in the case of Romeo Beckham, seen as instance of brand extension to kidswear and willingness to target new generations as part of the rejuvenating process of the trench coat. Millennials are the target market identified with Michelle Williams and Lykke Li. This latter also provides additional value because of her identity as composer of music, which symbolizes the parallelism between a fashion creation and a song in finding inspiration in the nature (see Section 4.3.1 on intertextuality). The use of models and celebrities is also used to create aspiration, which is at the ultimate goal of marketing strategies (Kapferer & Bastien,

2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015). Participants represent the population of branding discourse, and provide insights into the target market, which the brand aims to reach through the messages. Those participants enact a set of actions, which are categorized as processes.

Branding discourse is characterized by both conceptual and narrative processes, whose distribution is displayed in Figure 4.44.
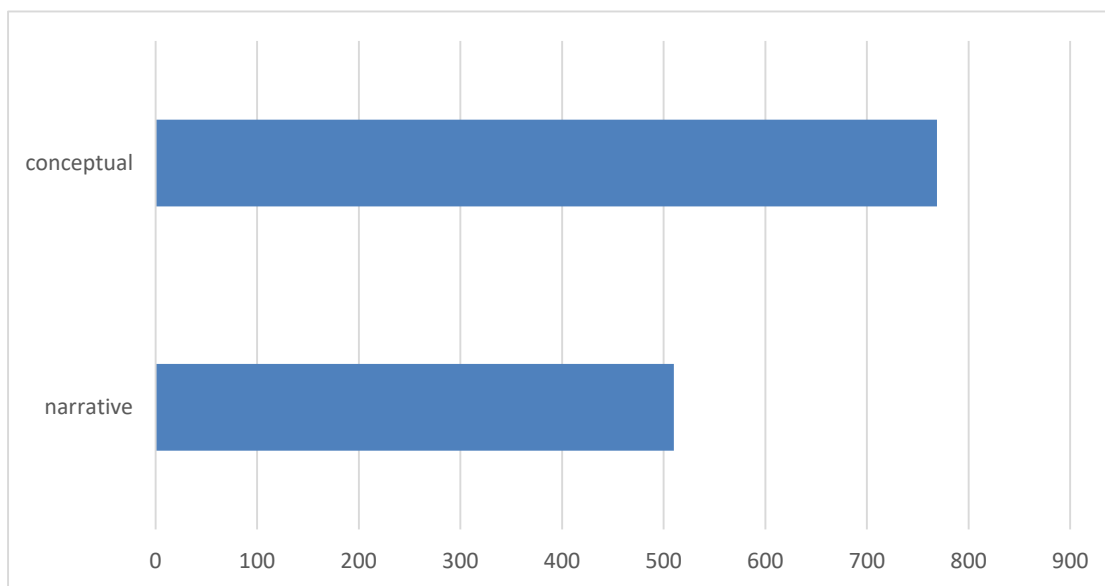
Figure 4.44 Results for process-types

Conceptual processes occur in higher percentage (N=769, 60%) in comparison to narrative processes (N=503, 40%). This discursive practices matches with the high percentage of non-human type participants presented earlier and confirm the promotional nature of *Facebook* used as a tool to increase the sales. The conceptual processes construct those posts, which aim at creating connection with the expounding socio-semiotic processes (see Section 4.4), which relate to product identity communication in the way that relations are established among items and seasons, collections, and groups of products developed in the same timeframe and with the same *leit-motif*.

Conceptual processes construct three different sub-categories, whose distribution is broken down in Figure 4.45.
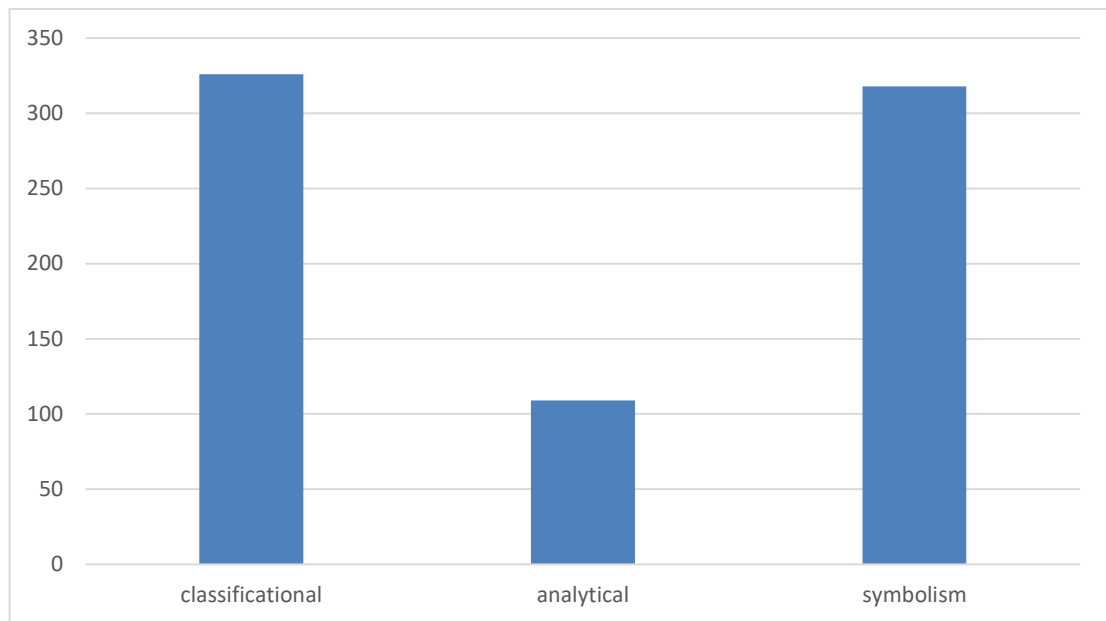
Figure 4.45 Results for conceptual processes

Classificational processes (N=326, 43%) and symbolism (N=318, 43%) occur in higher percentages and represent the major processes performed by the participants in the branding discourse. The following examples (Image 4.37, 4.38, 4.39) show instances of conceptual processes in their different sub-categories.

Image 4.37 Conceptual   **Image 4.38 Symbolism**   **Image 4.39 Analytical**
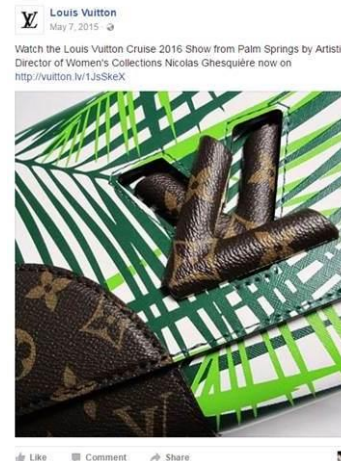
The example in Image 4.37 describes the classificational process. The photo allocates the accessories within the established category of '*Burberry*' Gifts available for Mother's Day. The example in Image 4.38 portrays a python, which is one *Gucci*'s iconic symbol given that its bags are made of python skin. The pattern reported is the *leit-motif* of the S/S 2016 and it is labeled as example of 'symbolism'. The example in Image 4.39 is an instance of 'analytical' process. It shows the detail of an accessory from the Cruise 2016 to indicate the full show, which we expect to be characterized by the Monogram and an exotic touch to fit into the location, Palm Springs, L.A.

In addition to conceptual processes, findings also present narrative processes, which are instances of storytelling, re-conceptualized as (hi)storytelling in this study. Narrative processes are divided into sub-categories, which are summarized in Figure 4.46.
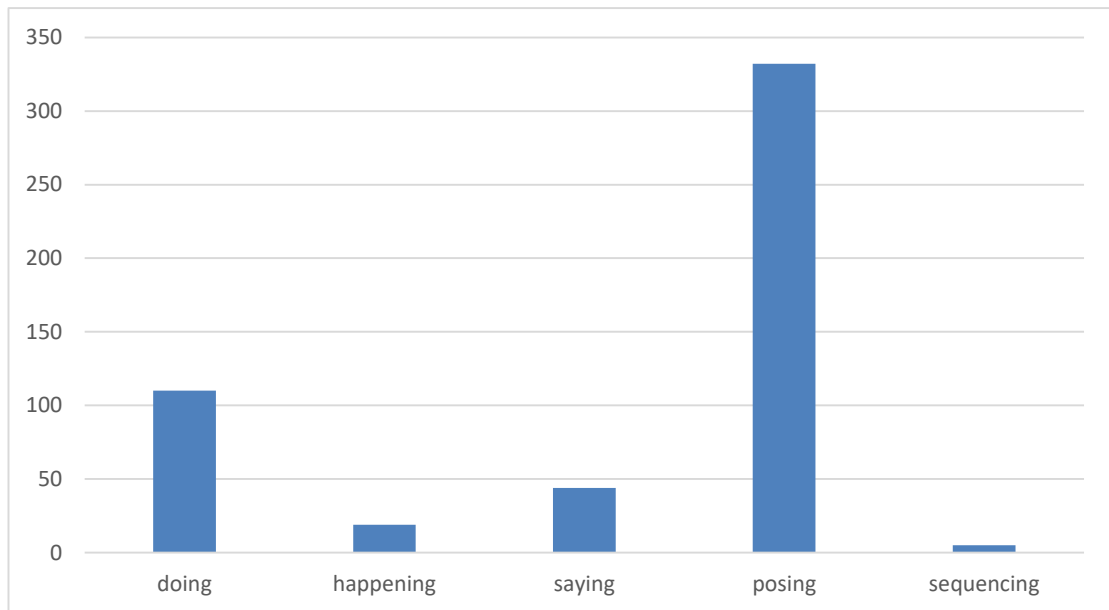
Figure 4.46 Narrative processes

The predominant process is 'posing' (N=332, 65%) is a data-driven category, identified as specific action performed by the participants, in which there is no vector highlighting the direction of the process. The subject enacting this process is both recognized as actor posing, and goal photographed. In this simultaneous shift from actor to goal of action, the function of the participants is static and does not add any development to the image, 'posing' (Image 4.40) is one of the features of fashion photography, which leads to the process of dehumanization of the human participants in favour of the items, which are the core of communication.

Image 4.40 Example of 'posing'

The example shows how the human participants in the image do not convey any particular meaning, but they function as mannequins for the product display.

In order of frequency, following posing, there is 'doing' (N=110, 22%) and the human participants in action are either models on a runway (Image 4.41) or artisans working on the details of a product.

Image 4.41 Example of 'doing'

The process of 'posing' and 'doing' are presented to show in which way they have been distinguished for the annotation. In Image 4.40 and 4.41, participants are explicitly posing; however, they are static in the first case, and walking in the second one. In this way, the attention focuses on the fact that in a posing process the moment captured is studied and carefully staged to be shot, whereas while participants are performing a doing process

the camera catches a specific moment, which is not planned in advance.

Following posing and doing, participants in branding discourse also perform the process of 'saying', which in the findings accounts for 9% with 44 instances. This process typically coincides with the digitization of printed editorial content (Nervino, 2013; Okonkwo, 2010), which is the reason why despite the low percentage, it is worth discussion. Conventionally, these instances are paper invitations shared by the brands to inform the audience about fashion shows (Image 4.42).

Image 4.42 Example of 'saying'

The example in Image 4.42 is the product of the first landing of brands on new media. It symbolizes a way of remaining relevant because of the powerful and aspirational image of the runway as the iconic manifestation of the brand as belonging to the fashion system. It is the interplay between old and new media and remediation process.

Findings also present circumstances as element involved in the construction of branding discourse. Figure 4.47 summarizes the results of the circumstances and shows the elements, which they refer to.
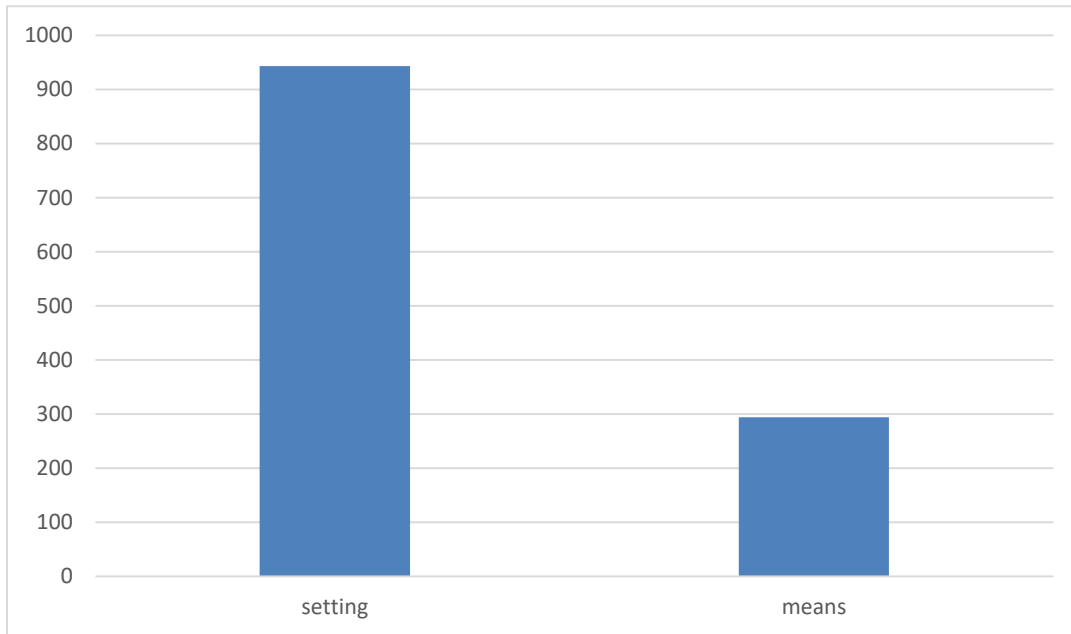
Figure 4.47 Results for the circumstances

The circumstantial elements displayed in the photos shared in the *Facebook* platform represent the element that frame the ambience of brand activities.

Circumstances are mainly settings (N=943, 76%), which host discursive events constructed by participants and processes. Figure 4.48 shows the type of settings manifested in the dataset.
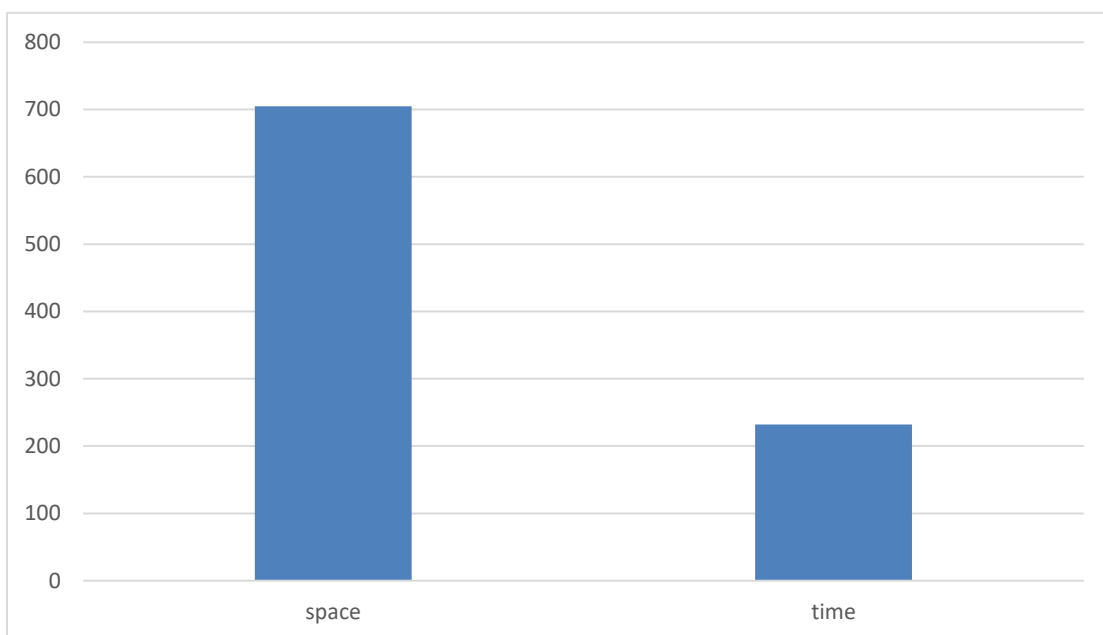
Figure 4.48 Results for circumstances of location

In order of frequency, location in space (N=705, 75%) and time (N=232, 25%) appear because of their immediate translation into spatial dimensions such as CoO and target markets, and temporal elements that situate events in a specific time. Those categories are further annotated into additional categories listed in Figure 4.49.
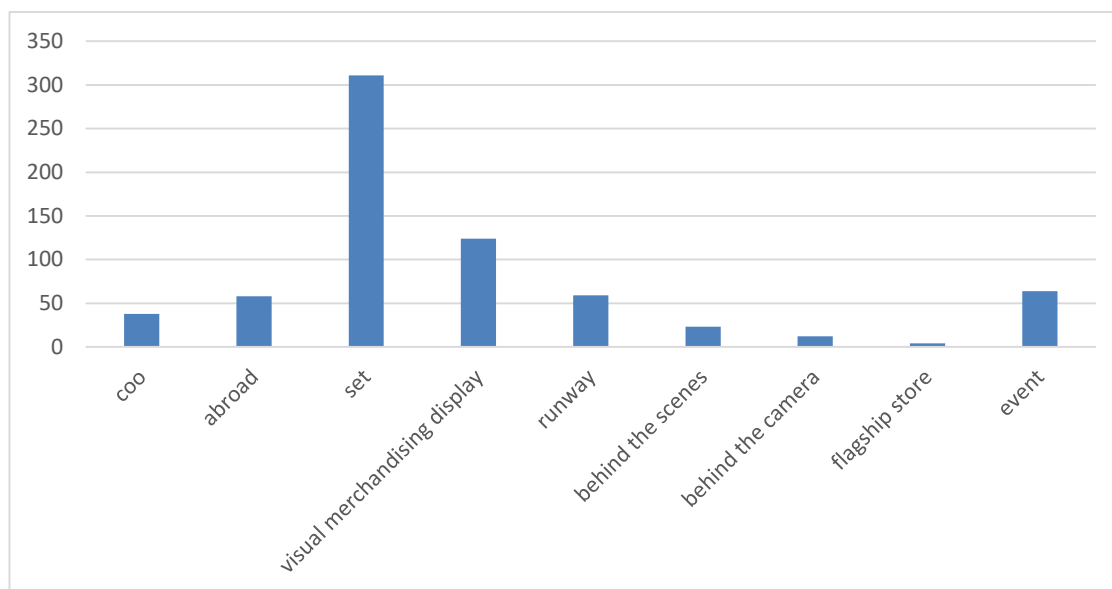
Figure 4.49 Results for circumstances of location in space

Location in space is mainly constructed through the representation of sets with N=311 accounting for 44% and visual merchandising displays with N=124 accounting for 18%. Both locations are controlled settings that the brands construct to monitor its discursive representations. The willingness to control motivated the initial reluctant attitude towards the internet for its impossibility to control the buzz (Okonkwo, 2010).

Different from locations in space constructed through textual resources, the circumstances constructed through visual resources instantiate physical spaces. The photos shared reproduce a portion of reality, which is semiotized through metonymic representation of the real space (Feng, forthcoming). Additionally, those spaces are identified as controlled settings namely campaign and catalogue shootings as show in the examples below (Image 4.43, 4.44, and 4.45).

Image 4.43 Controlled setting   Image 4.44 Controlled setting   Image 4.45 Controlled setting

The controlled situations in the examples represent the ways, in which brands feel comfortable in placing the items and they constellate the branding discourse. The locations are typically indoor, outdoor sets are also found in campaign shooting, in which the brand is controlling the composition of the photos. In those controlled settings, when human participants are involved, they are posing even if the expression might look spontaneous. Other controlled settings, which instead do not present any human participants, are visual merchandising, which are exemplified in Images 4.46, 4.47, 4.48.

Image 4.46 Visual merchandising

Image 4.47 Visual merchandising

Image 4.48 Visual merchandising

Facebook become visual merchandising displays; however, they focus on the artistic component. The first example displays items place for photo shooting and ready-to-sell (Image 4.46), the second example displays the interior design of a store, in which the shopping windows resemiotize the collections (Image 4.47), the third example is a visual merchandising display itself arranged for festive collections (Image 4.48). All the three examples contain an artistic component, which construes *Facebook* posts as shopping windows arranged as art galleries displaying artefacts (Atwal, 2014). As artworks, that arrangements also present features, which signal location in time.

Location in time is constructed in branding discourse and results are summarized in Figure 4.50.
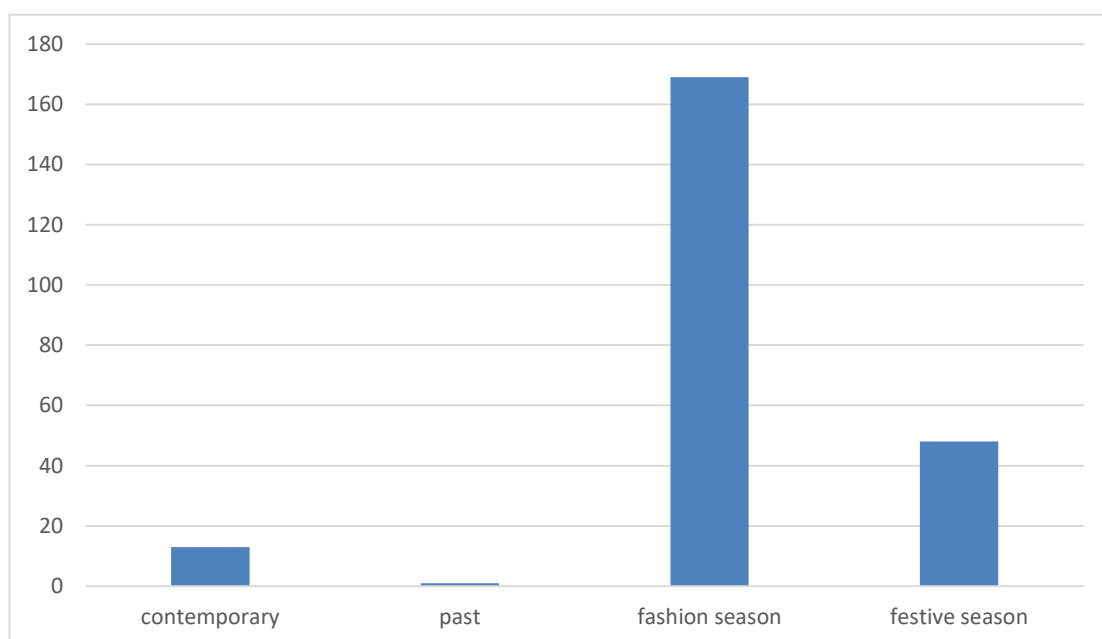
Figure 4.50 Results for circumstances of location in time

Findings regarding location in time show a high percentage of fashion season (N=169, 73%), followed by festive season (N=48, 21%). Fashion season materializes the fashion calendar and the urgency of coping with the dynamicity of the *Facebook* platform. On *Facebook*, branding discourse constructs timeframes, within which the brand operates and guides the audience in terms of cohesion and interpretation of

intertextual references. Examples are presented below.

Image 4.49 Fashion season   Image 4.50 Fashion season   Image 4.51 Fashion season
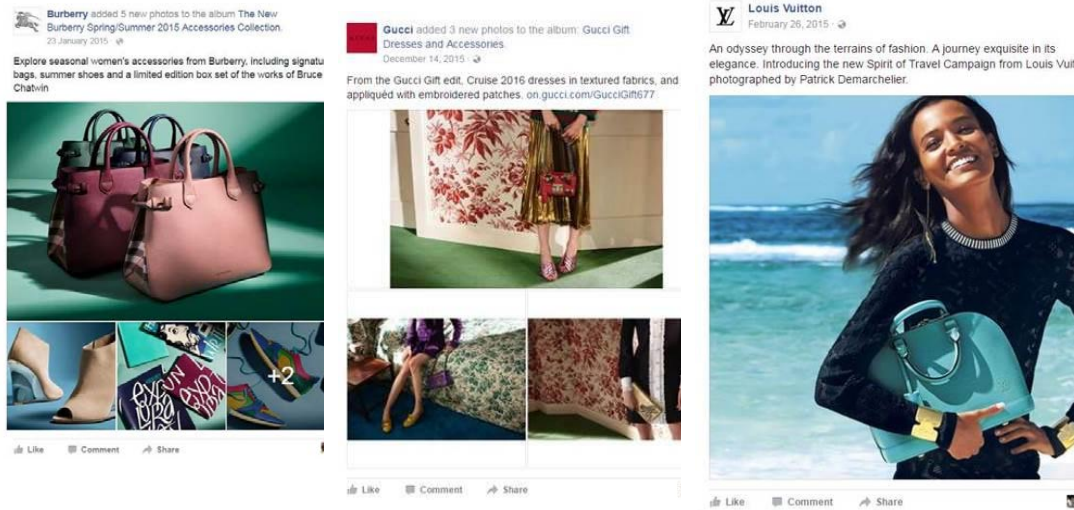
The three examples (Image 4.49, 4.50, and 4.51) are representative of how fashion firms construe location in time and manufacture the element of cohesion through visual elements. For example, fashion season is constructed through chromatic nuances, which link up different posts. The colour is used in the background, as the merchandising display like in Image 4.49, in the campaign set (Image 4.50), or borrowed from natural landscape (Image 4.51). Ideally, the colours of the setting are reflected in the items to frame cohesion within the same collection and season.

Similarly, festive seasons are also constructed through colour. Colour, which is extradiegetic to the image, used to locate posts within festive atmosphere is instantiated in Image 4.52.

Image 4.52 Festive season

Festive seasons become part of the fashion calendar because it is a statement of target market, which pays attention to the traditions and customs of potential customers. Customers, which are seen as occasions to increase the sales; however, luxury carrying a statement of being timeless was not expected to present such instances, which are driven by the specific sector chosen, which is fashion, and linked to temporary. Additionally, the branding discourse is shared on *Facebook*, which being a social media is driven by time.

Other circumstances emerged from the findings are 'means', identifying meta-representations used to reinforce the value of the information and its source. The examples below present significant instances, which provide an understanding of the annotation behind.

Image 4.53 Means   **Image 4.54 Means**   **Image 4.55 Means**

The examples extracted from the findings include other meta-representations of other media (Image 4.53), meta-representations of paper invitations (Image 4.54), and meta-representations of photos (Image 4.55).

The first example includes Snapchat logo in the photo to suggest that the brand has an account on Snapchat. It represents the integration across media platforms and also the use of an external source to boost the image of the brand as up-to-date and following digital marketing trends. The second example displays a paper invitation to the fashion show to complement the invitation realized through textual features. The use of a printed media to construe new media content is related to the experience of the event and the tradition of sending paper invitations. The third example also uses an editorial content, which we do not know whether has been created for *Facebook*, but it portrays a collage of pictures to promote *Series 2*. The explanation given as *a modern representation of a fashion show* suggests that those pictures are pictures used to prepare the fashion shows, part of the process of production of the event, which is resemiotized in a media event. Before, the digital era, the audience would not have access to the type of material displayed in Image 4.55 and 4.56, because it is part of the fashion system, which the audience does not belong to. Audience was not supposed to receive the invitation to a fashion show, and not supposed to see material concerned the process of production of fashion shows or collections.

Findings also provide insights into the use of colours. Colours in fashion play a major role as part of the design and signifier of particular seasons and trends. Colours are seen as essential elements of brands and *Pantone* built its whole business in releasing colours, which brands commission and buy to as signs of distinctiveness and identity like *Tiffany & Co.*, which owns its colour. In this case, the use of Tiffany' colour has spread in the language in use to identify the particular chromatic

construction.

Findings for the use of colours are summarized in Figure 4.51.
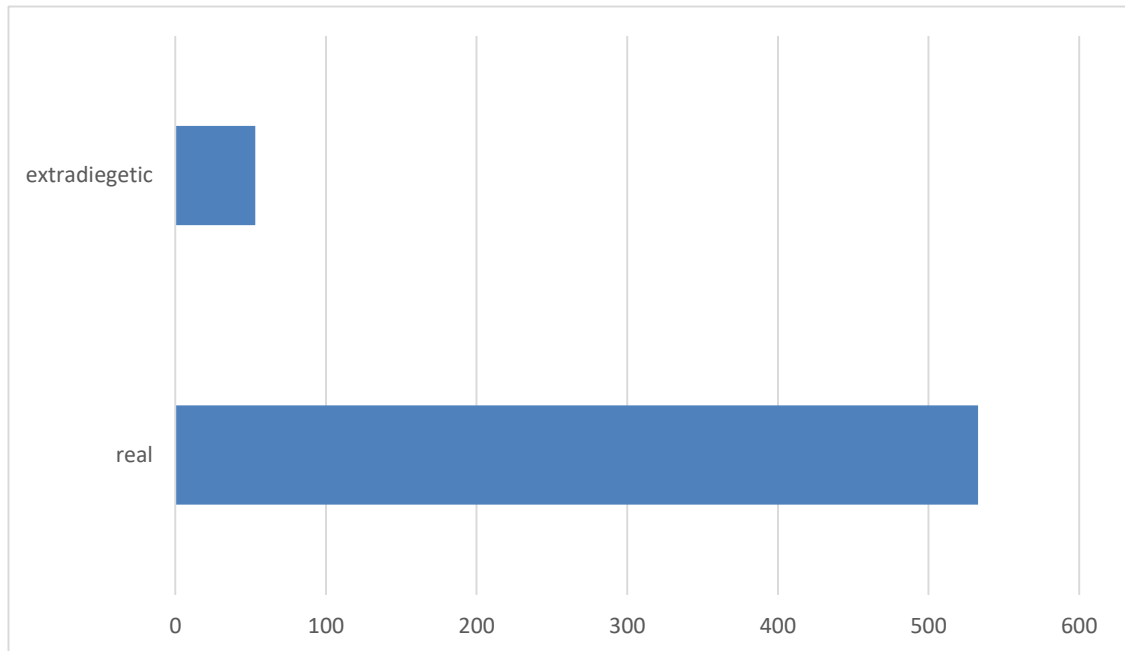
Figure 4.51 Results for colour function

Colours are either real (N=533, 91%) or extradiegetic (N=53, 91%). Real colours (Figure 4.51) are those colours, which are the representation of reality. Extradiegetic colours (Figure 4.52) are colours added to the photos to perform a specific function. Branding discourse uses real colours more than extradiegetic.
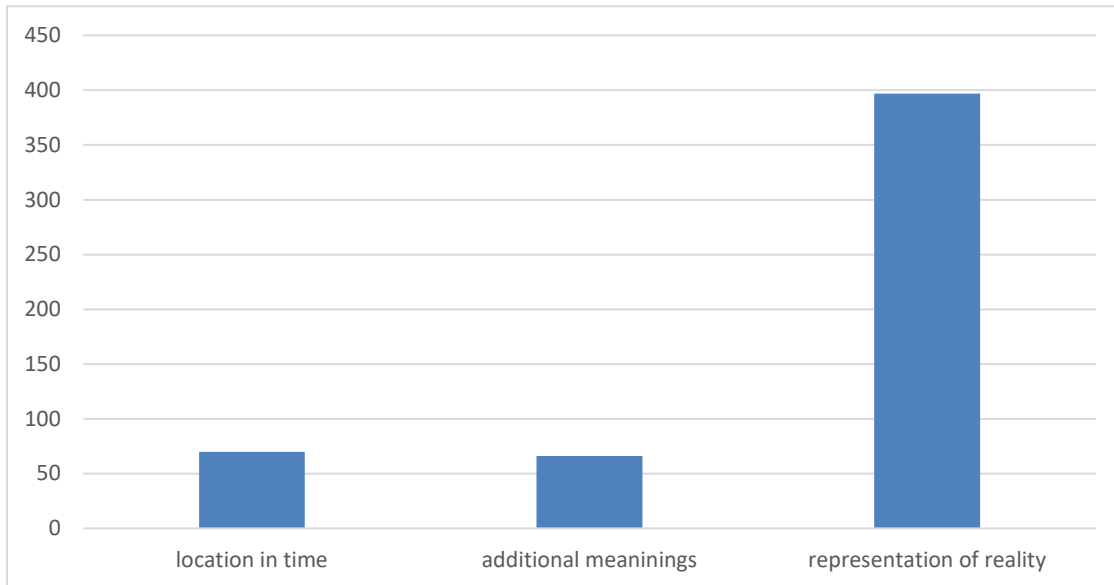
Figure 4.52 Results for function of real colour

Real colours mainly construe the representation of reality (N=397, 75%), location in time (N=70, 13%) (Figure 4.52), and additional meanings (N=66, 12%), which are more relevant to the construction meanings.

Among the findings, location in time is more related to the construction of branding because it reflects the need of situating discourse within a specific timeframe. Colours construct fashion and festive season (Figure 4.52).
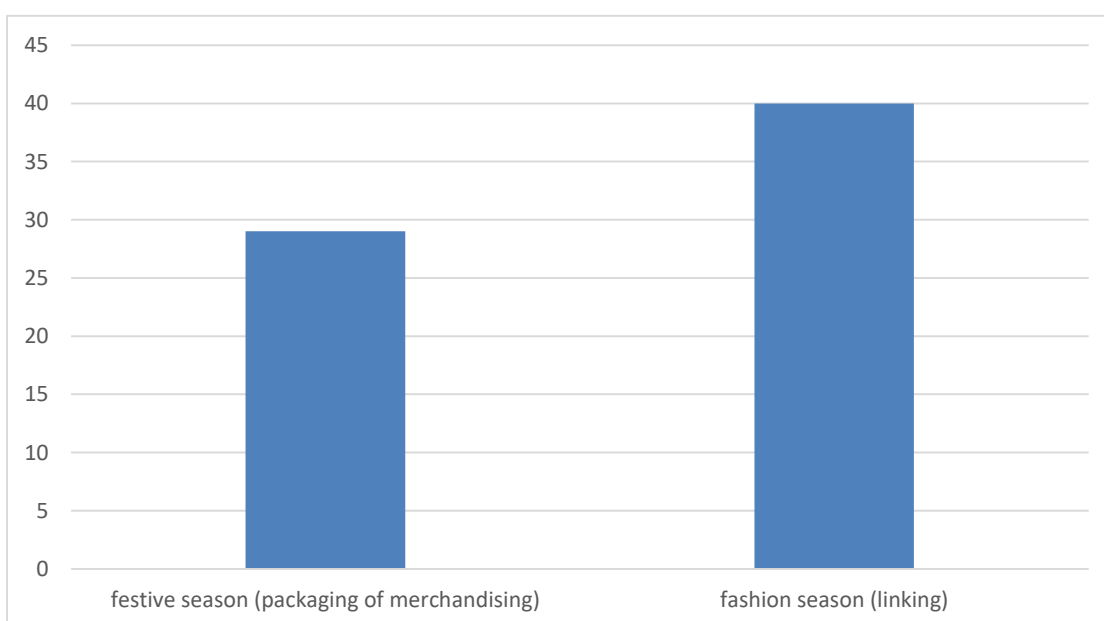

Figure 4.52 Results for categories of location in time

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Branding discourse uses colours to construct fashion season (N=29, 42%) and festive season (N=40, 56%), has previously been exemplified within the examples of circumstances.

Findings for extradiegetic colours perform specific functions, which are displayed in Figure 4.53.
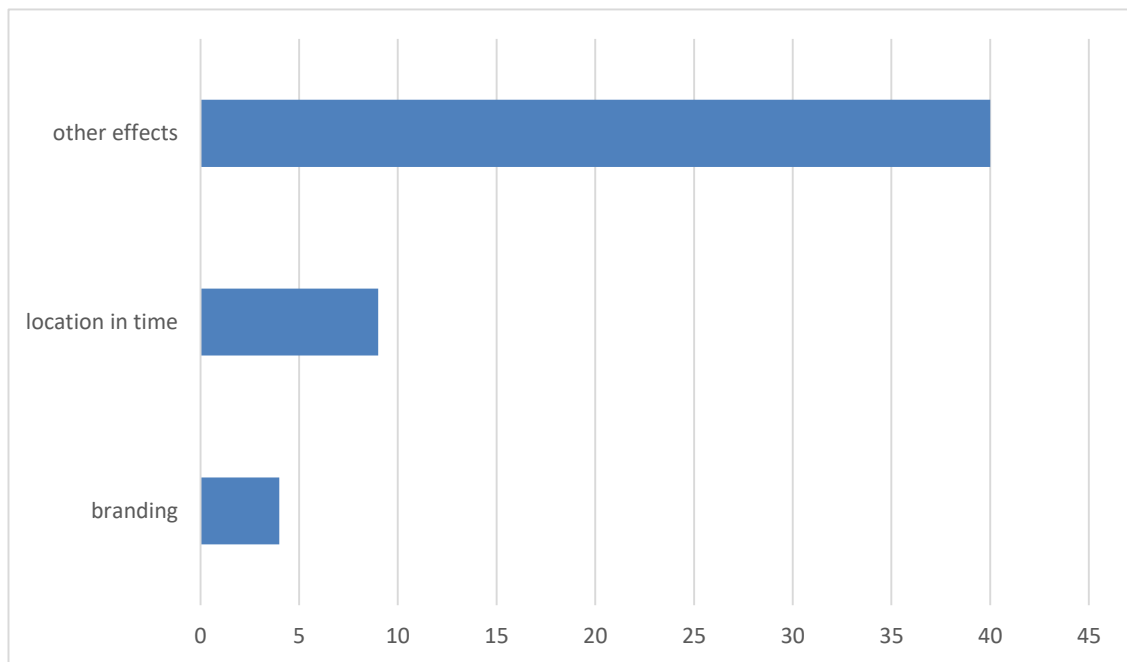
Figure 4.53 Function of extradiegetic colour

Extradiegetic colours semiotize: other effects (N=40, 77%), location in time (N=9, 16%), and brand iconicity (N=4, 7%). Examples of those semiotizations of other effects are the following (Image 4.56, 4.57, 4.58).

Image 4.56 Other effects   **Image 4.57 Other effects**   **Image 4.58 Other effects**

These examples show how extradiegetic color is used to construe the effect of minimalism and elegance.

The following examples semiotize the location in time that is in this case festive season (Image 4.59, 4.60, 4.61).

Image 4.59 Festive season   **Image 4.60 Festive season**   **Image 4.61 Festive season**

Lastly, colour performs a branding function as displayed in Image 4.62 and Image 4.63.

Image 4.62   Branding extradiegetic colour   Image 4.63 Branding extradiegetic colour

Both examples above are instances of the use of a colour that does not belong to the photo but it is digitally added and enhanced to convey the belonging to the iconic collection in Image 4.62; and highlight the perfumes resembling gems and diamonds in Image 4.63. Both brand the objects depicted through colour.

4.2.4.2 Representational meanings across brands

The analysis of the representational meanings has provided insights within the semiotic construction. In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the branding discourse the following figure (Figure 4.54) shows the differences across brands.
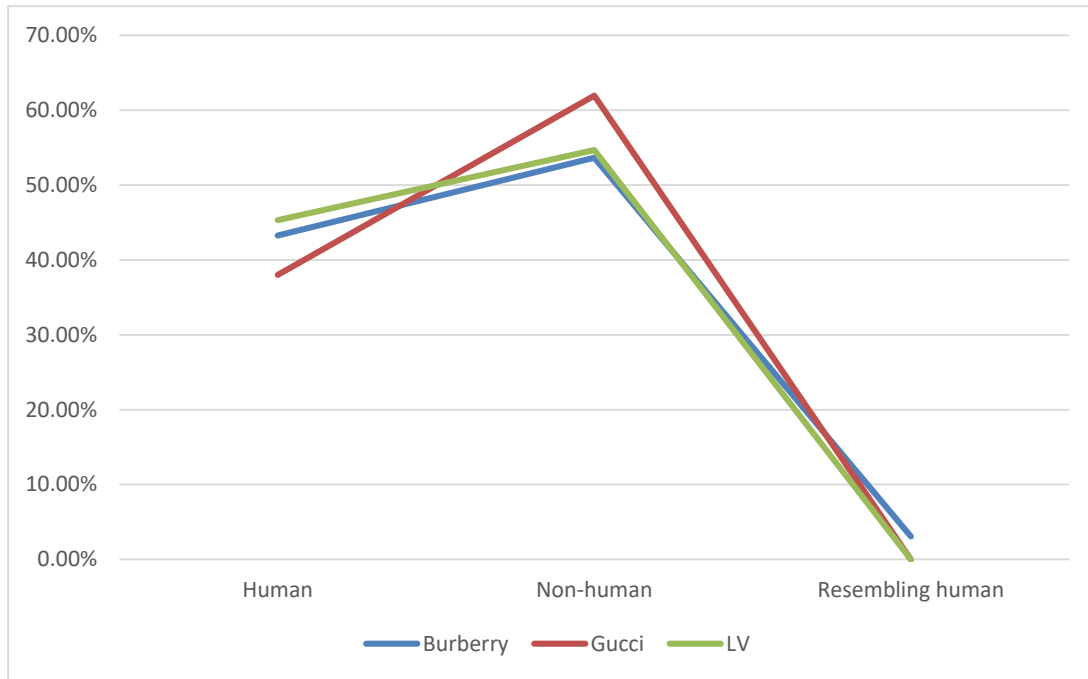
Figure 4.54 Participants across brands

All the three brands have their peak percentage in the construction of the non-human participants. The results obtained for the participants does not present any significant differences.

Figure 4.55 focuses instead on the construction of processes.
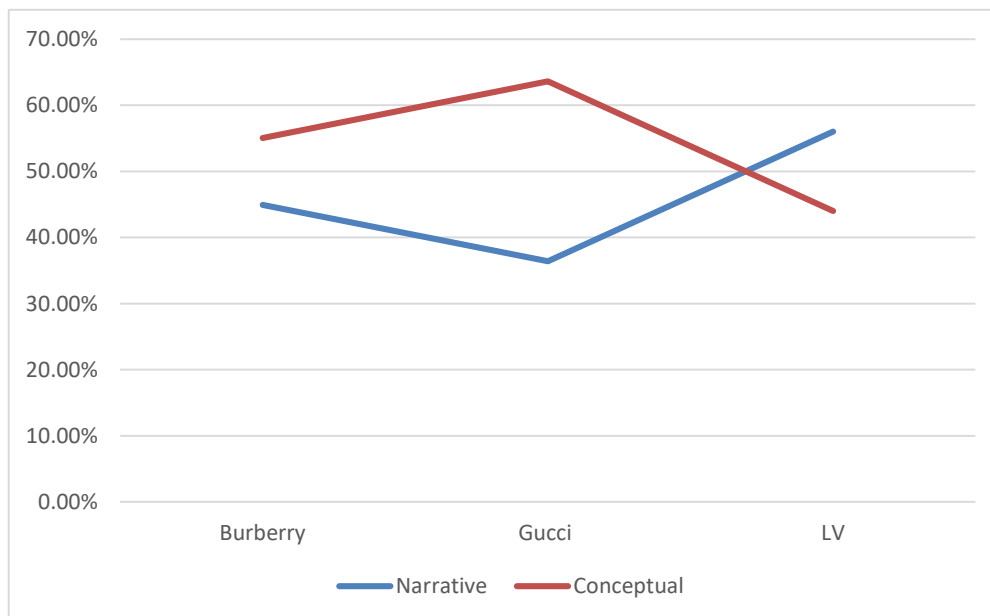
Figure 4.55 Processes across brands

The narrative processes are conspicuously used by *LV*, whereas conceptual processes occur in higher percentages for *Gucci*, and are used less by *LV*. *Burberry* presents a balanced spread of narrative and conceptual processes.

The results of the circumstances for each brand do not signal any particular differences; however, differences are worthy to be observed within location of time (Figure 4.56), and space (Figure 4.57).
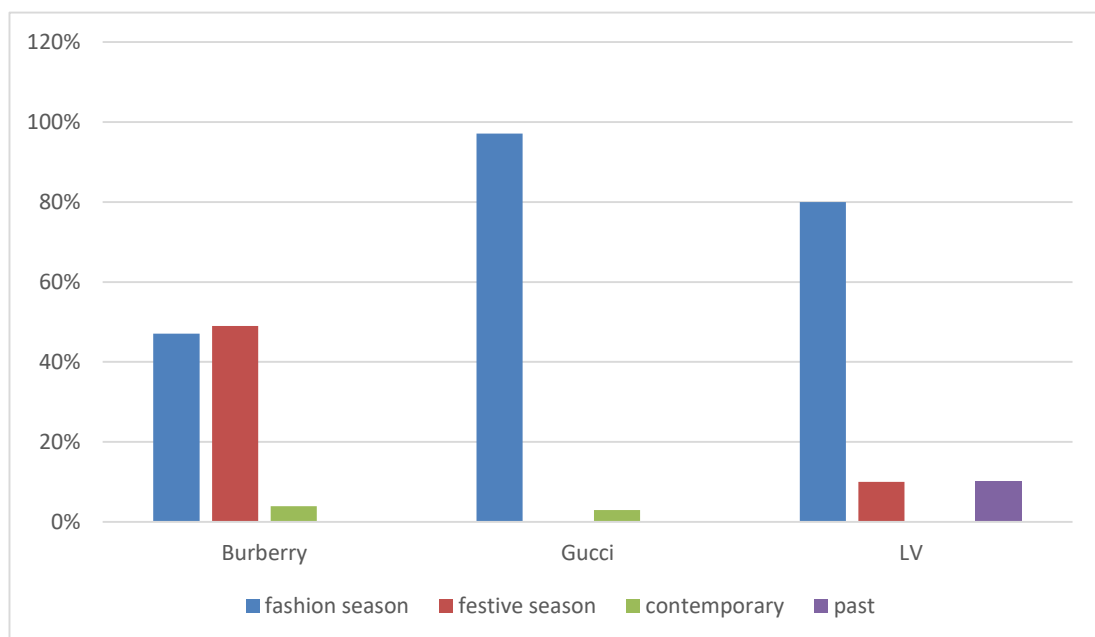

Figure 4.56 Location of time across brands

Interestingly festive season is not constructed in *Gucci* branding discourse. *Gucci* does not share any post related to holiday marketing strategies. Festive season is a strategy mainly constructed by *Burberry*. Instead, fashion season occurs in higher percentage for all the brands, and *Gucci* and *LV* specifically. This confirms how *Burberry* is the brand that dares to distant itself from the conventional concept of luxury (Chevalier *et al*., 2012).

Location of space is instead spread out along a line of different variables as shown

in Figure 4.57.
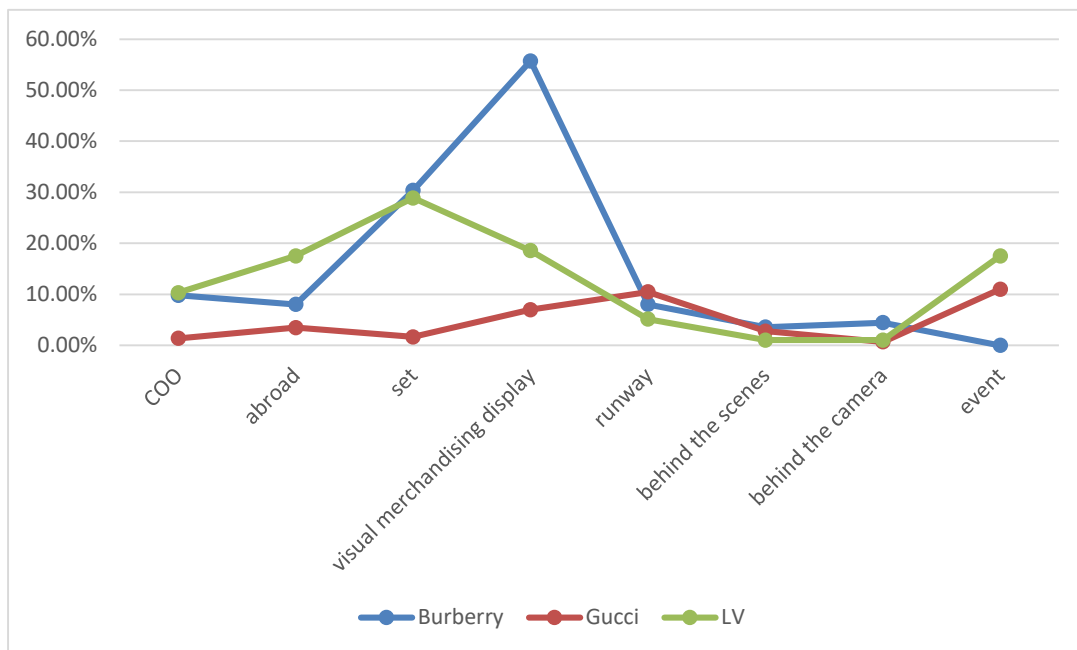
**Figure 4.57 Location of space across brands**

Gucci does homogenously constructs the different types of circumstances of location in space. *LV* follows *Gucci*'s example, but it has a peak in the instantiation of set. This is motivated by the fact that *LV* is the brand that mostly replicates the conventional strategies of luxury. *Burberry* instead explores the different locations in space, and the highest percentage is the visual merchandising display. The peak percentages represent the differences among brands, similarities instead are evident in the circumstance that do not occur.

Once the representational meanings are explored, the following section adds on that with the analysis of the interactional meanings.

4.2.4.3 Interactional meanings

The visual interactional meanings correspond to the textual interpersonal metafunction.

Interactional meanings explore how texts engage the viewer, and the different layers of analysis involved are: contact-type, social distance, and power, which in this study bridge semiotic form and function with the branding function.

The findings for the parameter of contact-type are summarized in Figure 4.58.
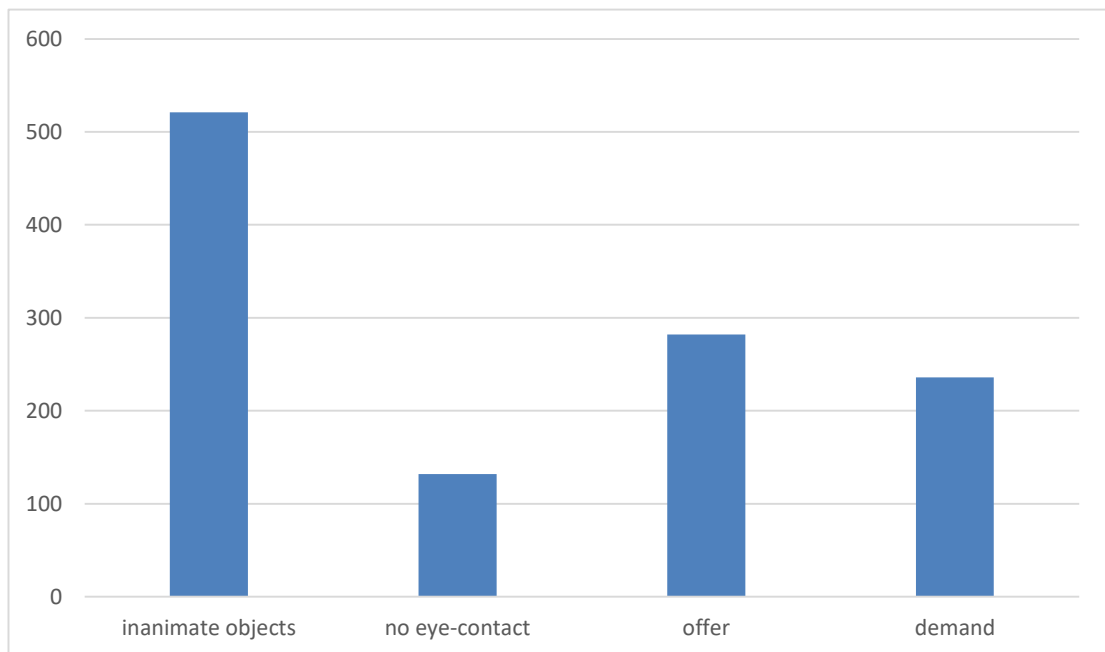
Figure 4.58 Results for contact-type

The findings for contact-type are related to the findings of participants. The findings reflect the high percentage of inanimate objects as protagonists of the branding discourse, which account for N=521 (45%); however, summing the percentages of the contact-type performed by the human participants, they account for 55%. The percentage of contact-type confirms the findings from other studies on high-end products, which state that the most conspicuous use of gaze is the 'offer' (N=282, 24%). The frequency of 'demand' (N=236) accounts for the 20% of eye-contact. The category of 'no-eyes' (N=132, 11%) is instead used to indicate when the eyes of the participants are not visible because the show their back or they are cropped from the photo due to the restriction of the layout.

Findings for the construction of social distance are displayed in Figure 4.59. Social distance annotation required an adaptation to be applied to photos depicting non-human participants. The adaptation was made based on film studies (see Chapter 3), which theorized the size of shots onto photos in which the human body cannot be used as reference point. Further adjustments have also been made to the construction of intimate/personal and impersonal relationship, whose specific function have been linked to the marketing strategies elaborated to motivate the semiotic choices (see Chapter 3).
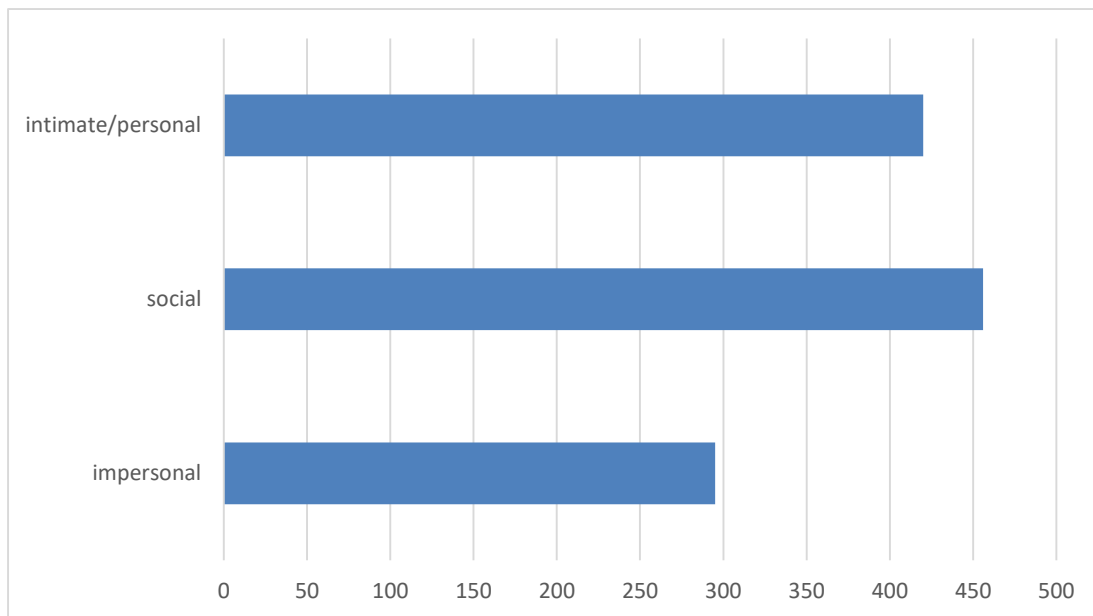

Figure 4.59 Results for social distance

The findings for the social distance present a three-folded construction. Social occurs in high frequency (N=456, 39%) followed by intimate/personal (N=420, 36%), and impersonal distance (N=295, 25%). Precisely, impersonal distance spatially construes the product as hard to reach and it is supposed to characterize the dataset; however, the findings present higher occurrence of social and intimate.

Social distance equalizes the relationship between brand and viewer. The use of the medium shot is mainly deployed to enhance the engagement of the viewer (Image

4.64), and it is also used to provide views on visual material unavailable before the new media age (Image 4.65, Image 4.66

Image 4.64Medium shot **Image 4.65Medium shot** **Image 4.66Medium shot**
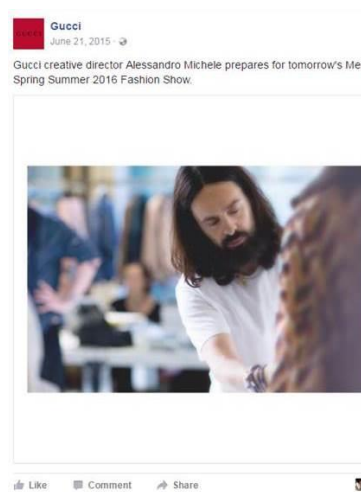
Image 4.64 shows *Burberry* products in a visual merchandising display, a shop perhaps, where the merchandise has been placed for this photograph. Image 4.65 instead is a shot behind the scenes of a fashion show. It is a type of visual material that would not be consumed by the audience if not in a video report of the fashion show on a Fashion channel, or a magazine dedicated to the fashion week. Also, conventionally information would not be consumed instantly, but hours later. With social media platforms, instead, the audience take part in the show live. Image 4.66 is a shot from the campaign that *LV* shared on the *Facebook* timeline to give its audience a taste of the new campaign.

Following the use of the medium shot is close shot used to create the intimate/personal relationship between text producer and text consumer. Figure 4.60 summarizes the use of the close shot, which in this present study performs a two-fold function. One is the function suggested by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), which is the intimate and personal relationship, the other one is a function added, which

construes the display of details of products.
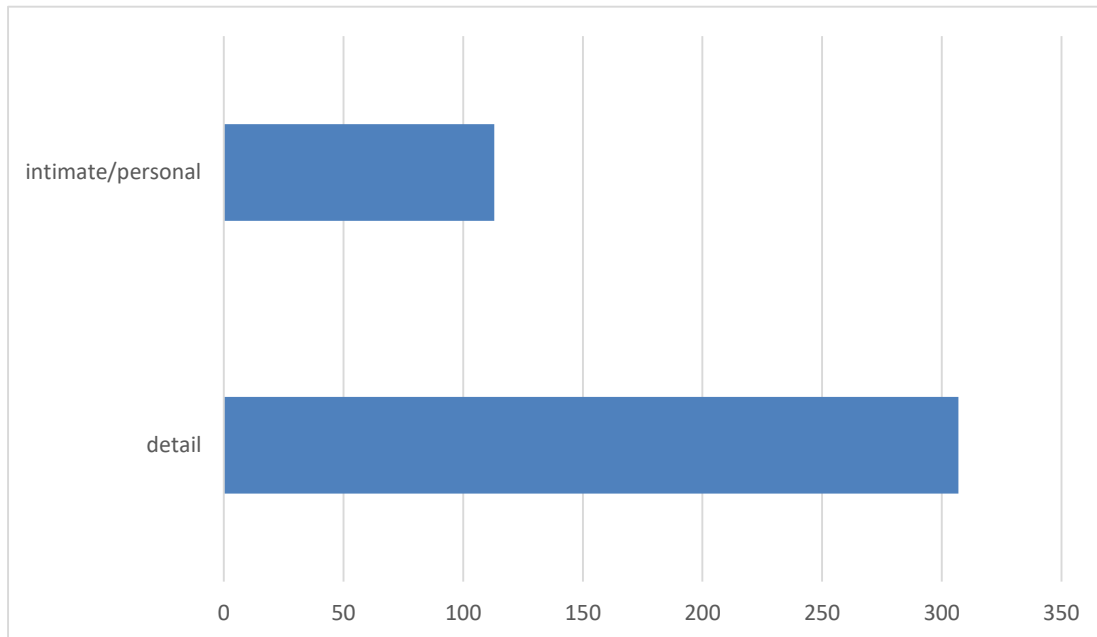
Figure 4.60 Results for intimate/personal

Figure 4.59 illustrates the high percentage of close shots used to construe the details of the products (N=307, 74%), while the small percentage related to the presence of human participants represent the intimate relationship between the participants and the viewers (N=113, 26%). The value of percentages is also influenced by the results of types of participants and it occurs proportionally in the meanings instantiated. Image 4.67, 4.68, 4.69 instantiate the close shots to specific items.

Image 4.67 Close shot   **Image 4.68 Close shot**   **Image 4.69 Close shot**


Image 4.67 at a first glimpse may seem an instance of intimate relationship because of the human-participant; however, in this photo the textual resources guide the reader towards the effect given by the use of the contour pen around the eyes, so again the model is dehumanized and used as a show-case for a product.

Image 4.68 and 4.69 are more clear instantiations of display of details because as they clearly show small details of products. Details are important elements of high-end outfits because in the era of industrialization 4.0 and automatization of the process of production, details, are among the few parts that are still claimed to be manufactured and applied manually (Allen, 2017).

The last category, in order of frequency, is the impersonal. The findings for this category manufacture a brand/product identity, which gives up on features, which frame it as unreachable to embrace a more personal liaison and interaction. For the category of impersonal relationships, a further degree of delicacy has been added to elaborate different categories derived from branding function (Figure 4.61).
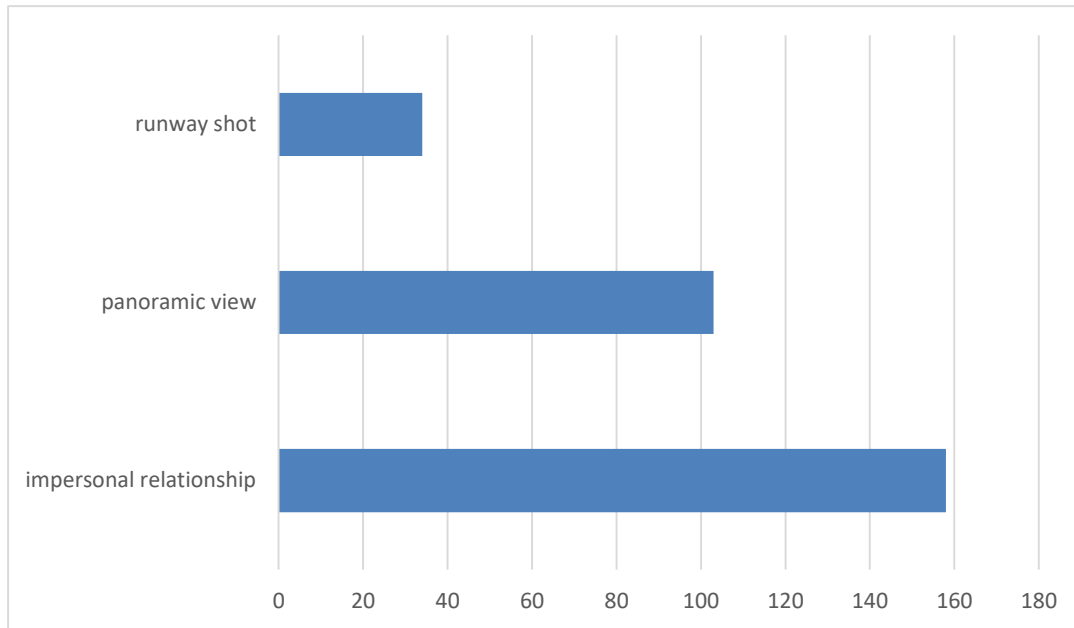
Figure 4.61 Results for impersonal

The category of impersonal has been divided as follows: actual impersonal relationship (N=158, 53%), panoramic view (N=103, 35%), and runway shot (N=34, 12%). The following examples (Image 4.70, 4.7`1, 4.72) are representative of the construction of impersonal relationship, which is divided into three different sub-categories described as follows.

Image 4.70 Impersonal   **Image 4.71 Panoramic view**   **Image 4.72 Runway shot**
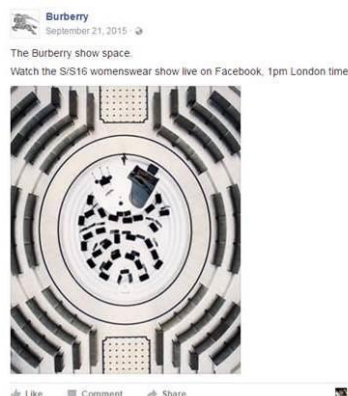

Image 4.70 remains faithful to the annotation scheme provided by the visual grammar and semiotically construes impersonal relationship between the participant in the

photo and the viewer. It is also of easy annotation because there is a full body human participant. Image 4.71 illustrates the location of the fashion show which is given a *vision d'ensemble* categorized as panoramic view, differently from Image 4.72 that is a panoramic view of the location of a fashion show.

Once contact-type and social distance are explored, power-relation is identified. It is realized through camera angle and indicates the power relation between the object of the photo and the viewer. Figure 4.62 displays the results for power relation.
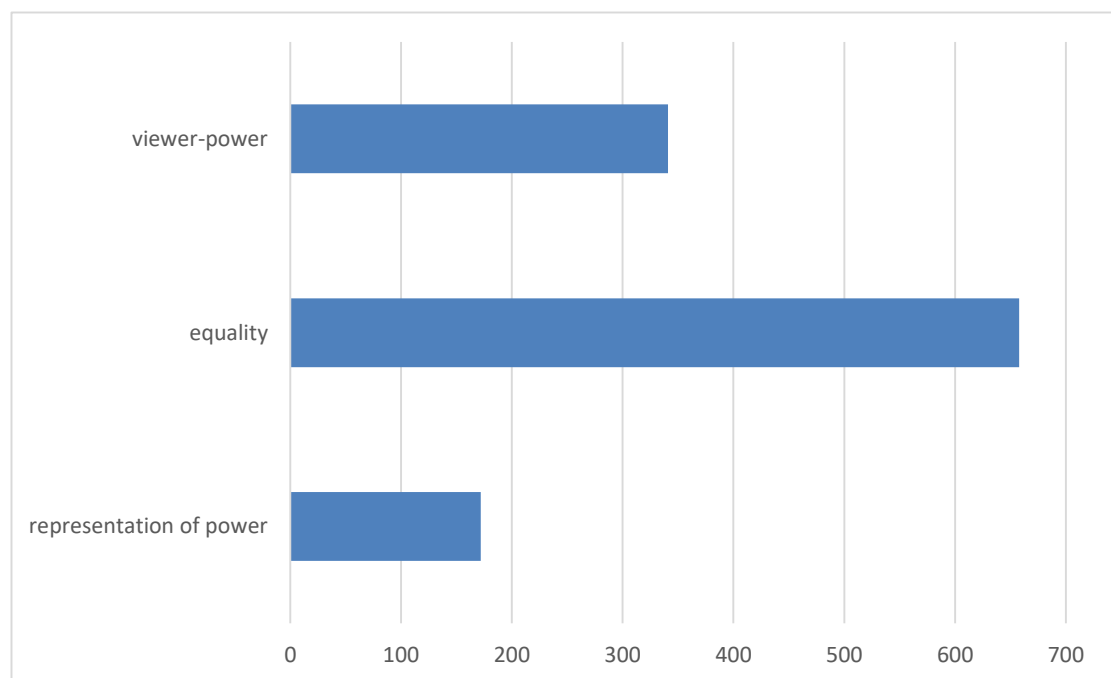

Figure 4.62 Results for power relation

In terms of power relations, the three brands examined present the following trends: equality (N=658, 56%), and viewer-power (N=341, 30%), representation of power (N=172, 14%).

The representation of equality between the image and the viewer is exemplified in Image 4.73, 4.74, and 4.75.

Image 4.73 Equality   **Image 4.74 Equality**   **Image 4.75 Equality**

The three examples show the construction of equality in different ways. Image 4.74 is a tutorial post, which visually explains the use of the item through the sequence of steps to be performed to obtain the perfect style. Constructing equality relationship between the human participant and the viewer reinforces the sense of opportunity for the viewer to replicate the steps and get the same result. It satisfies the aspiration, which audience feels towards those models and those ones who can afford the products (Suen, 2013). The purpose of using social media is to connect the brand to the user.

The second example in Image 4.74 shows how products construing products with an equal camera angle depicts products as achievable. This construction decreases social distance and enables the user to observe details without physically visiting the store.

The third example in Image 4.75 announces the creative director, who taking over the Instagram account, wants to connect with the users. The equal angle performs the function of engaging the users and also suggests that through social media the audience gets closer to the artistic minds behind the brand and have access to their own life.

The findings also present instances of viewer-power relations. Examples are Image 4.76, 4.77, and 4.78, which construct the products form a higher angle which

empowers the viewer.

Image 4.76 Viewer-power   **Image 4.77 Viewer-power**   **Image 4.78 Viewer-power**
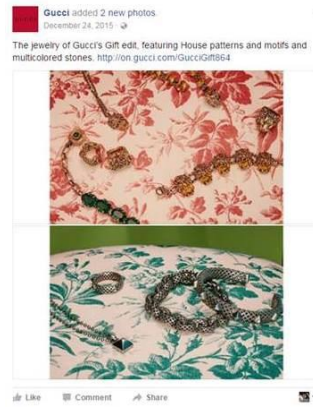
The examples clarify the different construction of viewer power and its interpretation. For example, the use of high angle enables the discovery of details (Image 4.76). Moreover, it increases the perceived affordability of the products such as in Image 4.77 and 4.78, in which the co-occurrence with a merchandising display frames the products as gift ideas, and provides information about the store location, plays a role in justifying the association of the form with the annotated function.

Within the viewer-power category, findings demonstrated two main different functions (Figure 4.63).
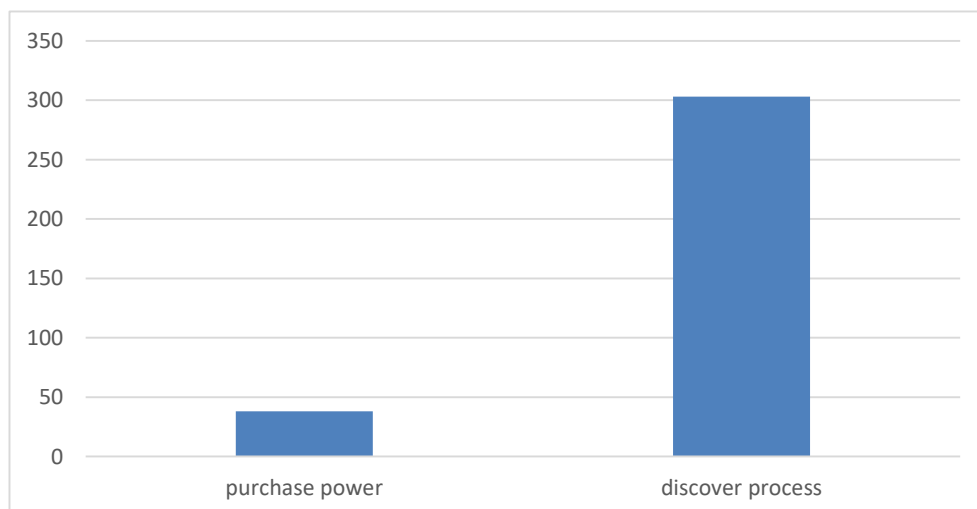

Figure 4.63 Results for the viewer-power

When viewer power is constructed, instances point to the discovery process (N=303, 89%), which represents the USP of high-end products in terms of handmade detailed (Image 4.76). Image 4.77 and 4.78 exemplify the construction of purchase power, based on the setting, in which the products are displayed, which suggests the readiness to be sold.

Similar to previous studies on the construction of luxury (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2006; 2009; 2010; 2012), this study presents instances of representation of power. The type of posts in which they occur also represents the instantiations of preservation of the luxury aura (see Chapter 2). Image 4.80, 4.81, 4.81 represent three examples of those posts.

Image 4.79 Representation of power

Image 4.80 Representation of power

Image 4.81 Representation of power

The example is Image 4.79 positions the products as majestic presences and construes desirability by depicting them as unreachable. This is achieved through the use of the iconic product to enhance iconicity and the extradiegetic light that produces a golden aura around the items rendering them precious gems to celebrate Mother's Day.

The example in Image 4.80 feeds the imaginary of catwalk outfits as aspirational

reality. It uses a lower angle to capture the fashion show and also connects our perception to the fact that via social media, we are watching the runway from a computer-mediated front row (Halliday, 2015; Mohr, 2013).

The example in Image 4.81 shows the empowerment of the model in the campaign, but the products remains at the centre of attention. This point out the process of dehumanization, which is often operationalized in the fashion industry, unless the human participants play a role in the positive image of the brand through celebrity endorsement.

The two dimensions of social distance and viewer-power relations have also been observed in their co-occurrence to understand how they are co-deployed to attain specific objectives. For instance, when an intimate and personal relationship between brand and user is construed, the viewer is either empowered or positioned equally to the brand to turn the products into treasures to be discovered. This especially occurs in the sub-corpus of *Gucci*.

Interestingly impersonal relationship mainly occurs with human-participants and tends to soften the impersonal relationship by equalizing the social distance.

Viewer-power mainly depicts inanimate objects and intersects with a construal of intimate/personal distance. This highlights the sub-category of viewer-power instantiation of the discovery process (with the sub-category of detail information. Concisely, viewer-power is construed to initiate a discovery process to unveil product details.

4.2.4.4 Interactional meanings across brands

Once the results for each layer of analysis of the interactional meanings for the full corpus have been explored, this section summarizes the differences among the three brands.

The results of the contact-type (Figure 4.64) show the semiotic choice made by each brand.
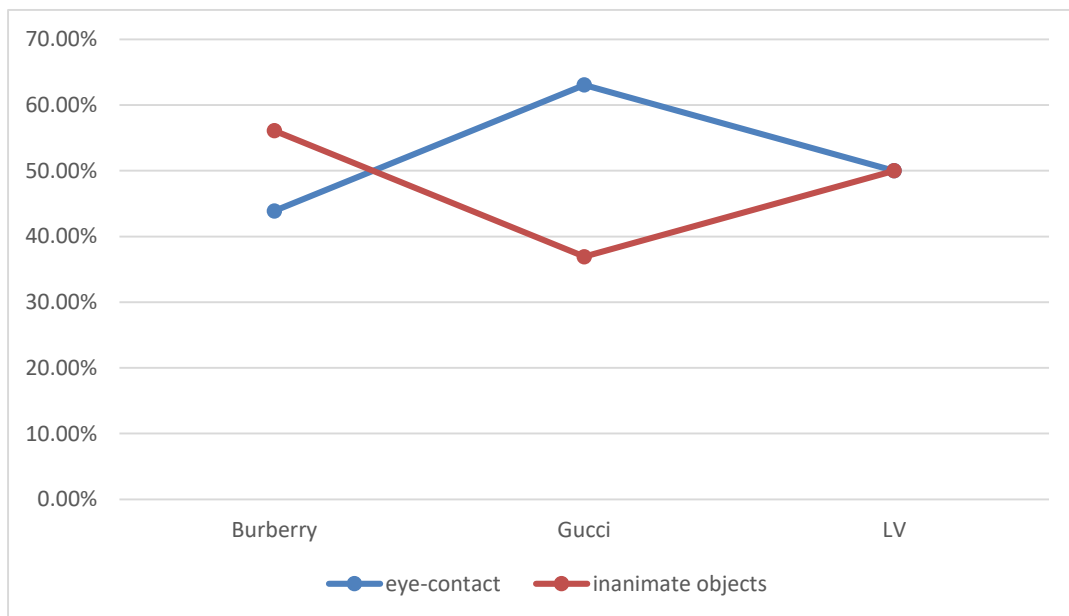
Figure 4.64 Contact-type across brands

Burberry tends to focus on inanimate objects, while *LV*'s division of the posts is almost even between inanimate objects and human participants. *Gucci* instead counts more human participants.

Additionally, finings for contact-type have been compared to show the distribution of no-eye contact, offer, and demand across the three brands. The distribution is summarized in Figure 4.65 and refers to gaze enacted by the human participants identified across brands.
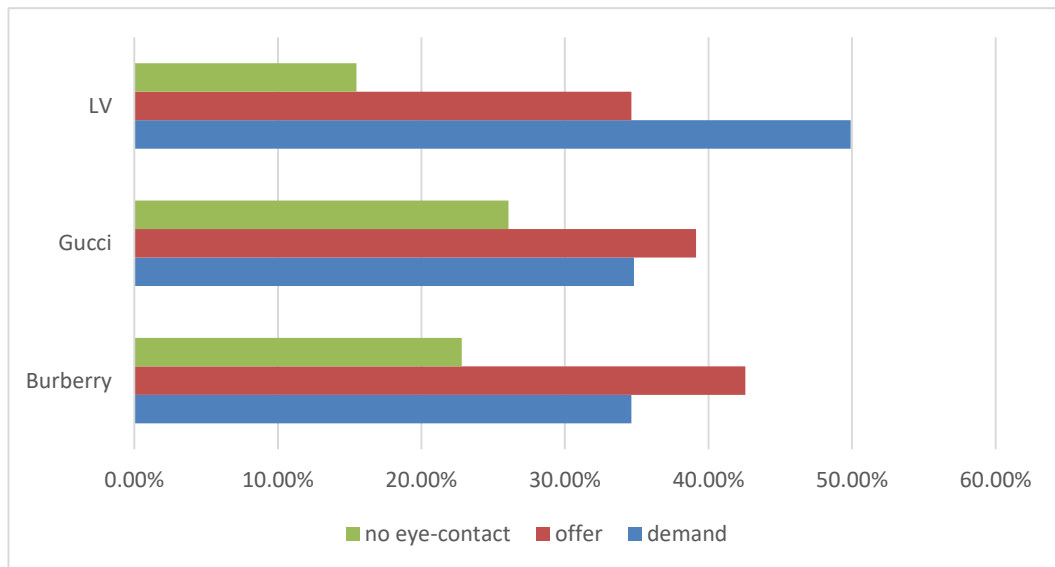
Figure 4.65 Contact-type across brands

Burberry and *Gucci* construe offer over demand, while *LV* surprisingly privileges demand. This highlights how *Burberry* and *Gucci* in using 'offer' and 'no eyes' in the posts use the human participants to create aspirational characters through the display of the items worn and displayed, while semiotically the construal of 'demand' indicates an intention of engaging the viewer via an invitation. This latter was expected to be found in *Burberry* discourse instead of *LV*. This expectation derives from the data analysis that showed *Burberry* as being more purposely oriented to engage the audience to increase direct sales and short-term interaction, in contrast with *Gucci* and *LV* which appeared to focus more on activities establishing a brand identity more than increasing revenues explicitly.

Moreover, differences across brands in terms of social distance are found and summarized in Figure 4.66.
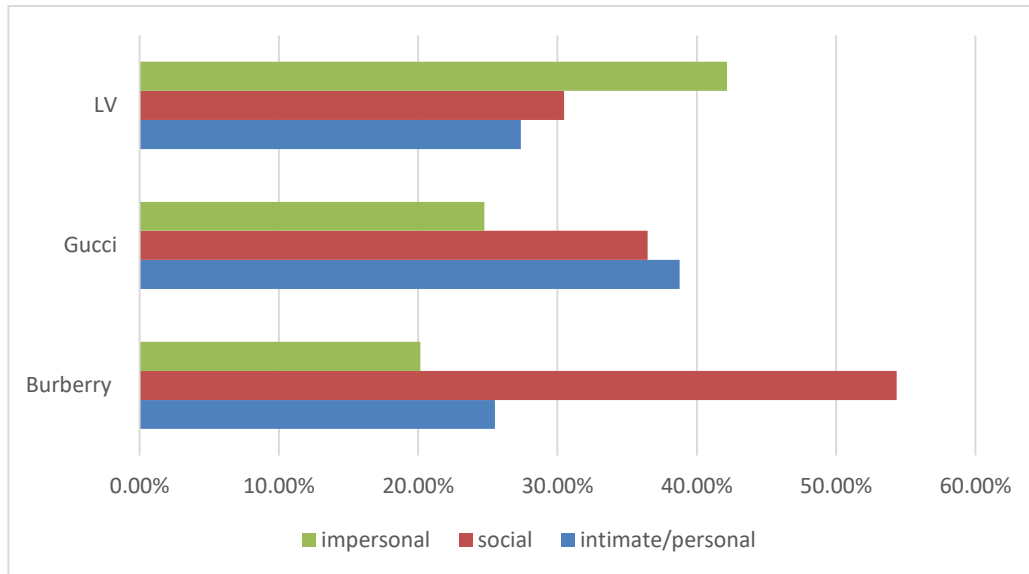
Figure 4.66 Social distance across brands

The results of the comparison show that *Burberry* mainly construes a social distance, while *Gucci* plays around the different categories, but scores high in personal relationships, *LV* instead is faithful to its luxurious identity, and it does not allow the audience to get so close by privileging the impersonal relationship.

A more contextual analysis of the data generates a more systematic brand positioning, which confirms *LV* as closer to the conventional definition of luxury, *Gucci* more attentive to show the details of its products, and *Burberry* being the one interested in promoting the new egalitarian attitude of the brands (see Section 4.5).

Within intimate/personal relationships for all brands, the display of details scores higher than the actual construction of intimate relationships. In the same way, also the distribution among the sub-categories developed from the impersonal relationship do not present any particular difference among the three brands.

Findings for power relation (Figure 4.67) highlight the high concentration of construction of an equal power relation across brands.
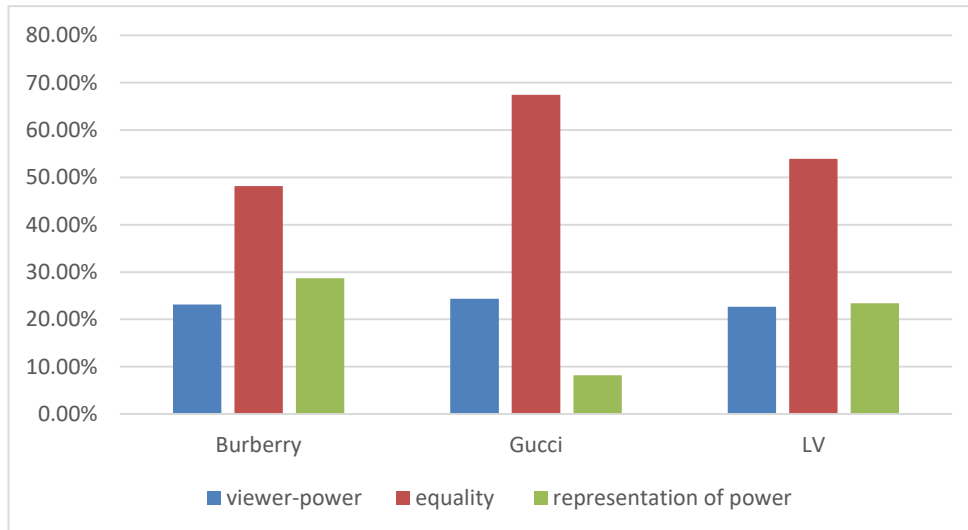
Figure 4.67 Power relation across brands

Findings contribute to the theorized interpretation that the construction of equality is a medium-specific feature generated by the social function of social media platforms to reduce the distance among users (Suen, 2013). It is proved that this occurs in other types of photos, if shared on social media platforms (Veloso, 2016). This feeds the discussion on how the medium influences the meaning-making process (see Section 4.5). Hence, the meanings analyzed are the product of the mediation process that brings luxury fashion brands on a social media platform that generates the construction of a closer relationship with their audience.

4.2.4.5 Couplings: representational and interactional meanings at work
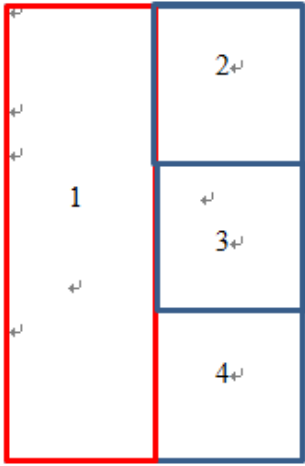
Additional findings have emerged from the analysis and suggest a role for the interactive semantics in the instantiations of meanings, which are not explored in the interactional meanings annotation, but worthy to include to provide a more comprehensive picture of the data and the intersection among the three metafunctions across modes.
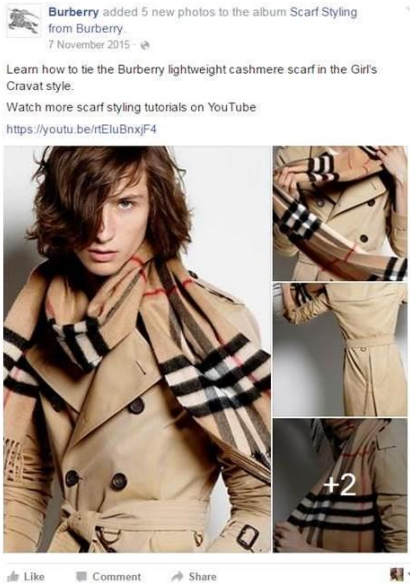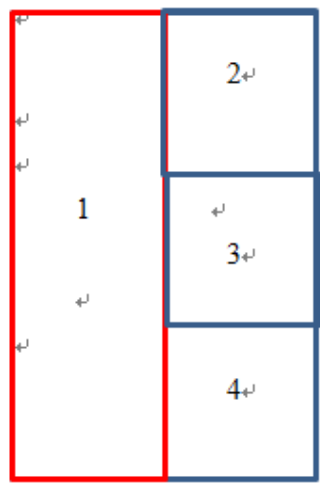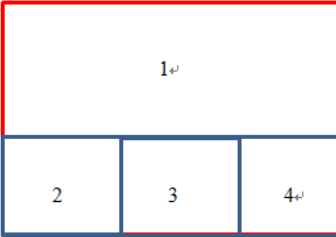
The interactional meanings, while constructing social distance, also play a role in
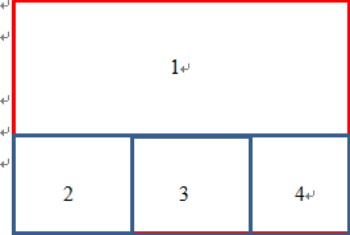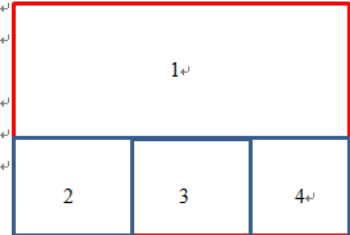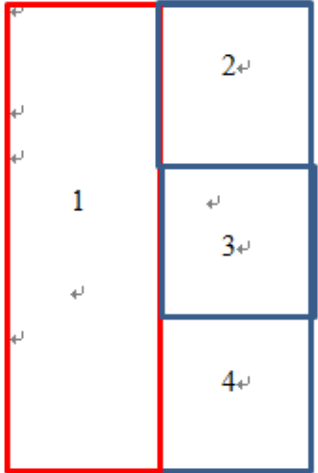
the composition of the posts, which present patterns in the dataset. Those compositional patterns are partially automatically generated by the platform display and create the reading path within the *Facebook* post frame.

The findings demonstrate that there are eight different compositional patterns, which characterize multi-image posts, and are summarized in Table 4.24.
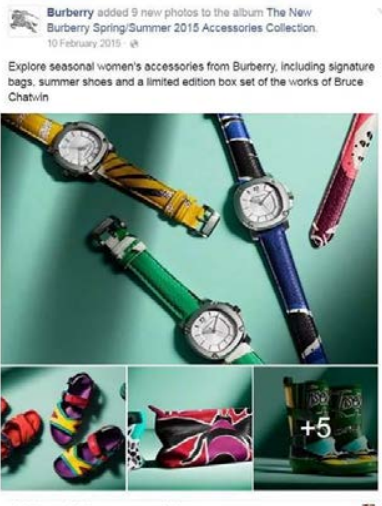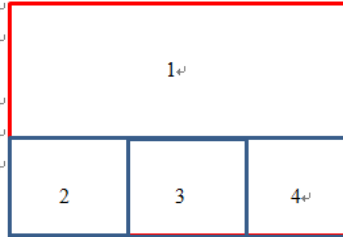
Table 4.24 Types of album posts

| Post	Abstraction of the post	Type and elements
		Product unfolding (1) product (iconic) (2) detail (production) (3) detail (fabric) (4) feature (raincoat)
Post 1 - The post presents the iconic trench as the object of interest that can be explored in details in the close ups displaying fabric and features of high quality production as well as the impermeability of the raincoat that is found to be an embedded characteristics that also recall the stereotypical image of the CoO.		
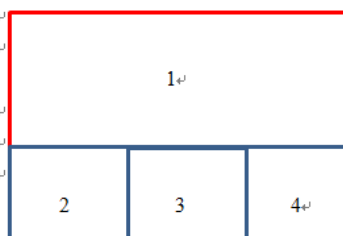
		Advertorial sequencing (1) final result (2) stage 1 (3) stage 2 (4) stage 3
Post 2 – The post shows the tutorial steps of the scarf style proposed. Picture 1 shows the final result of the sequence displayed in picture 2-3-4.		
		Event unfolding (1) contextualization (event) (2) runway (event) (3) product detail (4) models/make-up (detail)
Post 3 – The post provides an overview of an event, picture 1 contextualizes the additional pictures in a runway by showing the location and the whole setting of catwalk and audience, picture 2 shows a moment of the runway, picture 3 shifts the attention to an accessory from the collection presented, and picture 4 focuses on another aspect of the runway that is the make-up to promote the cosmetics.		

		Prism view
	1	(1) contextualization (event)
	2 · 3 · 4	(2) event
		(3) event
		(4) event

Post 4 - The post provides an overview of an event, picture 1 contextualizes the additional pictures in a particular setting and location and the whole setting of the campaign and participants. Picture 2-3-4 add information about the same event by displaying different scenes.


		Result unpacked
	1	(1) final result (look)
	2 · 3 · 4	(2) product (component)
		(3) product (component)
		(4) product (component)

Post 5 – The post shows the make-up look and the different products need (2-3-4) to create the final result (1). This requires a cognitive effort from the reader to make sense of the relation.

		Catalogue type
	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	(1) final result (look)
		(2) product (component)
		(3) product (component)
		(4) product (component)

Post 6 – The post shows an outfit (1) and the different products need to achieve it (2-3-4) .		
		Shopping window (1) product (option) (2) product (option) (3) product (option) (4) product (option)
Post 7 – The post is an example of the use of the post frame as a shopping window displaying different items.		
		Production process (1) product (final result) (2) detail (3) assembly process (handmade and precision) (4) components ready to be assembled
Post 8 - The post presents the process of production of the *Burberry* watch. Picture 1 shows the final product, picture 2 focuses on a detail of the product that is the inner case, picture 3 shows part of the process of assembly to highlight the handmade work and the attention and precision needed to create the masterpiece, picture 4 shows other components ready to be assembled.		

The eight categories identified represent a generalization of corporate *Facebook* posts, which can be used to annotate other instances of branding discourse despite the sector and brand positioning.

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1 – *product unfolding*: it shows a product in its different features;

2 – *advertorial sequencing*: it provides the instruction to use a product;

3 – *event unfolding*: it illustrates different moments of the same event;

4 – *prism view*: it gives the audience an overview of an event from different angles by creating a multi-faceted view effect;

5 – *result unpacked*: it guides the audience towards the achievement of a result by showing the products needed. It requires a mental cohesion because differently from the advertorial sequencing the post does not give instruction but similarly to a recipe provides a list of ingredients;

6 – *catalogue type*: it displays the products as they were in a catalogue. There are models showing outfits and highlighting the products composing them;

7 – *shopping window*: the post shows different items bundled together;

8 – *production process*: it is a sequence of events and details that shows the production process of a product.

The distribution of the eight types of album posts (Figure 4.68), in order of frequency, presents a predominance of event unfolding and shopping window types.
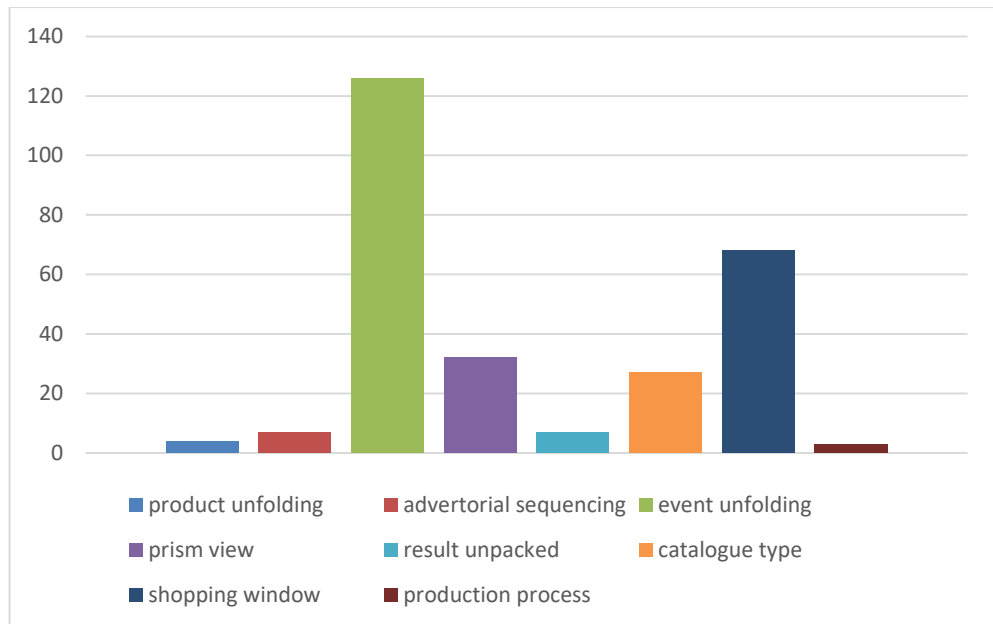
Figure 4.69 Results for types of album posts

The high percentage of event-unfolding (N=126, 47%) and shopping-window album posts (N=68, 25%). The dominant types match with the socio-semiotic processes identified in the dataset (see Section 4.4). The event unfolding matches with 'reporting', and shopping-window enacts 'recommending' and 'expounding' socio-semiotic process. Those types have a different distribution across brands. *Burberry* and *Gucci* experiments them all, *Louis Vuitton* constructs a majority of single-image posts, its multi-image posts do not present much variety. Figure 4.69 shows the diversity of album-posts across brands.
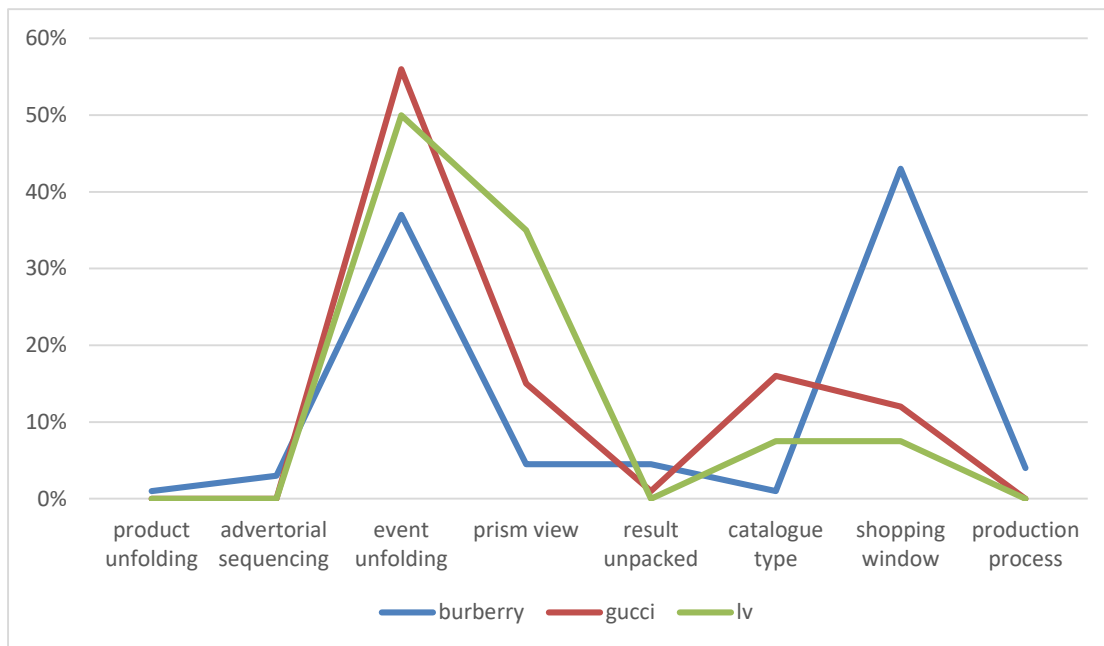
Figure 4.69 Results for types of album posts across brands

All the three brands present a high percentage of event-unfolding, and other patterns identifiable are shopping-window with a peak in *Burberry* sub-corpus, which reinforces its promotional and sales-oriented discursive representation.

4.2.4.6 Discussion

Findings for the visual resources confirm that, being luxury fashion described as a dream in the literature review (Kapferer, 2015), images convey a conspicuous amount of meanings. Furthermore, being the texts analysis, digital multimodal artefacts, the use of visual elements is enhanced by the fact that they travel faster and easily become viral, which is the reason why videos are colonizing the mediascape, and are destined to monopolize it in the coming years (Bo & Guevel, 2014).

In this study, photography is analyzed as a semiotically loaded social practice, which carries its story in its realizations. Arguably, while analyzing the visual resources used to construct the meanings, the transformation of photography is

observed in its migration from printed media and an institutionalized approach to communication. The viewer expects and treats photography as indisputable art; however, in the digital era, it becomes a more ordinary tool made of snapshots uploaded from a smartphone seeking for likes, comments and shares. Digital photography with the embedded feature of 'competitiveness' and thrive for beautification of the content shared (Manovich & Schroeder, 2013; Tinfentale & Manovich, 2016), even for individual users photographs to be shared are not taken for their own memory but to seek confirmation in others. Moreover, the attention paid to the enablers and constraints of the platform in terms of production and distribution of meanings produces the argument that photographs realize representational, interactional, and compositional visual metafunctions based on their phygital configuration.

Moreover, in fashion, photography is a pillar of communication, advertising is a multimodal *genre*, images play the role of attention grabber and embed meanings, that if constructed through other modes would dilute the luxury essence explicitly. For those reasons, among others, visual resources were analyzed in depth.

Photography, as artistic form has gone through transformation throughout time moving from cameras to digital cameras, until smartphone, which today represents the most used instrument to capture moments of our life. This has favoured the mutation of photography from a tool to privately preserve extraordinary moments of life, to an agent for identity construction shared daily with a wider audience (van Dijk, 2005). This originated a number of visual discursive practices which can be identified as components of the emerging 'photo-culture' that seems to be bringing human society back to the primordial visual communication ((Redi *et al.*, 2016; Veloso, 2016).

The transformation within photo-culture is also discussed by insiders from fashion photography like Mario Testino, fashion photographer, mentioned in the corpus as ambassador for *Burberry*. He describes social media a fascinating tool forging the role of photography in the 21st century. In an interview, he empowers photographers by saying that through their work they can provide the viewer a different perspective of reality, and social media allows them to disseminate their work on a larger scale. Social media, Instagram in particular, due to its role in providing a platform to share visual content, helps photographer to feed people with new ideas and at the same time showing them the process behind the final product; therefore, voyeurism becomes a way of educating and passing onto future generations the practices of our times. Mario Testino's thought contributes to the claimed parallelism between social media and magazines and uses them in the same way[68]. On the one hand, the boundaries between printed media and new media seem blurred at the level of *genre*, users do not perceive in a professional context a constituent difference. On the other hand, Mario Testino is aware of the fact that when a second party is involved and interaction is created, the text undergoes a process of encoding and decoding (Hall, 2006) in which the audience ultimately defines the text. Mario Testino, in the interview, he states that the way fashion photography is defined lies in the choice of the consumer in terms of perception. A successful advertising campaign is the one that captures the brand soul and even removing recognizable signs of the brand such as its logo and patterns, it still preserves the collective imaginary about the brand.

The findings would have presented different features if the photographs had been designed to be placed on a billboard or a magazine (Kress, 2010; Bateman *et al*., 2016).

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[68] Bazilian, E. (Sept 12, 2016). Mario Testino: the legendary photographer talks social media, fashion ads and his big Clio win. (:+ A) (Interview). *ADWEEK*, Vol. 57(29), p. 14(1). [Audio file accessed from the library database]

The findings showed the attachment to printed media, but at the same time the discussion clarified how the medium plays a central role in the re-definition of the canons of photography in face of a digital production and distribution. In the following sections, visual resources will be discussed in their interplay with other semiotic resources and in their contribution to construct authenticity, which is intrinsically associated with printed media. The use of a white frame recalling polaroid photographs, black and white filters applied to reinforce minimalism and nostalgia for instance, all situate digital photography into a context of short-termism by nature but aspirational towards a timeless perception.

The stigma of social media giving voice to everybody indistinctively and boosting the dissemination of fake news (FCC, 2016), hot topic in the recent years, went through a process of mystification when supported by luminaries of our times like Umberto Eco (Papi, 2015), who defined it as the new 'piazza', which differently from the limited audience that someone could get in speaking from a corner, social media amplifies the resonances of idiocies. I would argue that the attachment to printed media is symptomatic of the willingness of legitimizing the digital practice by anchoring it to the institutionalized world through the resemblances of instant films, cover magazines, photographs from look books about the process of creations of collections, and documents 'behind the scenes' work and other semiotic constructions discussed in the following sections while discussing the proliferation of new *genres* to whom the transformation of photography contributed to.

Photographs present an artistic component, which construes the *Facebook* posts as shopping windows that are art galleries displaying artefacts (Atwal, 2014). In the offline era, the audience would have access to the advertising campaign on magazines and billboards, and would only see the shots chosen to be produced. In the digital era,

instead the audience is exposed to more shots due to the cost-efficient feature of social media (Okonkwo, 2010). Photographs do not need to be printed and produced in larger scale, but just uploaded to the social media platforms to perform the same promotional activity.

The visual analysis unveiled the construction of representational and interactional meanings. Representational meanings unfolded in the annotation of processes, participants, circumstances, and colour-type, deconstruct the branding discourse at the ideational level. The annotation schemes based on the combination of Kress & van Leeuwen's framework (1996, 2006), a corpus-driven approach to actual realizations of the categories, application of marketing strategies and desired effect, colour use for cohesion in the narrative, presented the construction of brand life as documented through corporate posts.

In terms of processes, *Burberry* and *Gucci* perform a higher percentage of classification processes aimed to categories their products under specific collections, while *LV* performs more narrative processes because of its interest in telling the story of the brand more than selling products.

The high percentage of conceptual processes for *Burberry* and *Gucci* is also given by the fact that they have more non-human participants in the photographs that are classified as products; however, across brands when human participants are encountered the shift processes shifts to a new category 'posing' that identifies the controlled situation of display of products. This lead the conclusion that human participants if not named and then annotated as 'specific' play the role of mannequins used to display products and then dehumanized.

Circumstances contour the work of processes and participants by marking the

fashion seasons helped from colours that along with ATA and SATA construct the narrative flow by linking up different posts. Moreover, the role of colours as contributors to ideational meanings is given by the fact that colours are used in their connotative meanings and creating special effects like the canonic combination of black and white for instance.

Notably, the use of colours assumed different connotations in marketing studies and its intersection with psychology while dealing with consumer behavior; however, in this study its annotation aimed to categorize colours in their function of orientation of the editorial content into a spatio-temporal dimension likewise O' Halloran and Lim Fei's (2009) study (c.f. Eco, 1973; Kourdis, 2014; Plümacher & Holz, 2007); however, the choice of colours is not an independent choice but it is driven by the system constraints of fashion (e.g. Pantone). In addition to that, printed media materializing luxury would use thicker and glossy paper to enhance the perception of a high-quality material used to print it out, the same strategy is applied in packaging for instance, and this would justify the high price of lifestyle magazines for instance, in the digital world instead the glamour is constructed through colours and modality.

Interactional meanings explored in its contact-type, social distance and power relation constructions challenged the positioning of the brands in the luxury goods market. Contact, social distance and power relations in the photographs are the result of the process of reduction of distance between brand and user and instances of a consumer oriented approach to customize the product offer. I claim that the reduction of the social distance is given by the use of social media and by the changes in approaching customers driven by the advent of the instant generation as potential market, as confirmed by the examples of printed ads of luxury items, the reduction social distance is a product of the digital transformation (Chapter 4). The results of the

contact-type drew attention on the fact that a high percentage of texts could not be annotated because they displayed inanimate objects, products. This contributes to the category of identity constructed that reported a higher percentage of product over brand identity.

In terms of social distance, intimate/personal and social constitute the majority of the instances, and match with the mission of social media to connect the users and virtually delete the physical distance (c.f. Jaworski & Thurlow, 2006; 2009; 2010; 2012). Proximity dilutes the image of luxury as unreachable and constructs luxury products as closer to reality, associated with a desire easy and fast to satisfy, maybe instant, and far from being a dream that instead requires time to come true. If the message conveyed transforms luxury from being a dream to a desire, automatically the process of production is changed to meet the demand of the instant generation (Kapferer, 2015). In addition to the reduction of distance between brand and potential consumer, this layer of annotation identifies the rational claim strategy because the camera focuses on the details of the product by logically constructing the product as valuable because of the accuracy of the details.

This *USP* is characteristic of premium goods and the photographs shared on *Facebook* blur the boundaries between luxury and premium goods. Impersonal distance is only instantiated through a panoramic view of events. Events that the audience did not have access to, and could be only consumed through media reports. With the advent of social media, the audience is brought behind the scenes and gets the front row at those events. This represents a successful engagement construction because the fashion shows are still limited access experience in which the users can participate only virtually; however it has become common practice to have lucky draw to attend the runway in exchange of UGC. Furthermore, using a lower angle to capture

the fashion show also connects our perception to the fact that via social network we are watching the runway from a computer-mediated front row (Halliday, 2015; Mohr, 2013).

Power relations were investigated and the findings showed that equal and viewer-power relations between brand and user occur more than representations of power (c.f. Jaworski & Thurlow, 2006; 2009; 2010; 2012). This means that photographs as visual representations of luxury empower potential consumer over brands, and intensify the consumer-oriented approach which aims to increase the sales and promote accessibility to the items and making them looking affordable (Suen, 2013); however, the viewer-power constructions are used to depict the discovery of details as part of the rational claim strategies.

The analysis of the interactional meanings not only informs the engagement between brand and user but also focuses on how the materiality of the platform hosting the photographs requires a different multimodal construction based on the fact that social networks call for a more intimate relation between users. Suen's (2013) diachronic work on luxury hotel websites in Hong Kong gave similar results about the interactional meanings investigated in the home pages. Suen (2013) found out that from a socio-critical perspective, new websites in comparison with old websites of luxury hotel in Hong Kong visually reduce the distance between the object of desire and the viewer. In addition, photographs in this particular study also use human participant to physically place the viewer in the experience and let him/her imagining the consumption (Suen, 2013). The fact that results between Suen's (2013) PhD thesis and the present study share similarities reinforces the replicability of the methodology for applications in different sectors. At the same time, the coincidences of the findings also enhance the representativeness of the corpus that even if containing three luxury

brands from the fashion industry only still provides foundations for the extension of the project to a larger dataset including different sectors form luxury goods market. Suen (2013) investigated web 1.0 constructions of branding and her findings are instances of evolutions of *genres* that in the exploration of web 2.0, approaching web 3.0, in this study also reveal that although the web is a dynamic environment that instantly pulverizes information and shapes text-making activities, being human beings designing communication strategies, concepts like luxury are conveyed at the pace of their conceiving aspect of social constructions.

Overall, the reason for this is the materiality of the medium hosting the meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Bateman *et al.*, 2016; Kress, 2016). Instead of billboards and magazines, the present study examines advertising discourse placed in *Facebook* posts that could be explored through a screen of a desktop computer or laptop right in front of the viewer, or on the screen of a handy smartphone held by the viewer on a position that construes a high-angle view (Suen, 2013). Similar findings have been found in the analysis of electoral photographs shared on social media (Veloso, 2016), but in this case in addition to the medium shaping the need for a closer shot, the construction of smaller distance between the image and the viewer semiotizes the strong relationship that the candidate wants to establish with the audience to get the votes. In the case of luxury brands instead, the conventional concept of luxury would suggest the creation of an impersonal relationship to incentivize the aspiration of the potential consumer moved from the desire to achieve and then willing to spend more (Kapferer & Tabatoni, 2010).

Furthermore, visual resources were analyzed as contributors to the intertextual net that characterize the dataset and it is woven by both textual and visual resources in cooperation with the platform layout which enables and constrains the perception of

the readers/viewers of certain features because of the default selection of texts displayed. The findings considered intertextual references built via text or images only, but the highest percentage is the result of the interplay of both textual and visual resources.

4.2.5 Summary

Corporate *Facebook* posts are interwoven discursive constructions of different semiotic resources synergistically orchestrated to construct the brand identity of the luxury fashion firms. The multimodal corpus analysis revealed that each *Facebook* post contributes to the weaving process of the branding discourse net that connects not only texts that circulate in the cyberspace but links the different semiotizations of luxury brands across media. The different resources occur in diverse forms and perform specific functions that have been analyzed distinctively to understand the division of the semiotic labour and are here discussed in their contribution to the concept of luxury in the 21st century.

The different semiotic resources involved in the construction in the corporate *Facebook* posts are layout units, medium-specific features, textual, and visual resources. The layout units are ATA, SATA, and CTA and are described in reference to the production of single- and multi-image posts. The three different elements construe *Facebook* posts as hypertextual advertisements. ATA, SATA, and CTA play the role of navigation tools for the branding narrative because of their cohesive function. Cohesion is realized through consistent elements such as the account name, the profile picture, the date (ATA), and instances of granularity such as tags leading to specific albums indicated by the title and information about activities performed by the brands (SATA). Those structural features contribute to the construction of the

meanings placed in the CTA in its textual and visual resources. The layout units build the infrastructure of *Facebook* posts, which provides a framing canvas, which enable and constrain the design of the editorial content. This represents one of the first issues in producing new media content; however, the present study confirmed a strong attachment to the printed world characterized by the practice of reproducing magazine covers, printed invitations to fashion shows and events, sharing of material reporting on the crafting process of the products.

Medium-specific features, namely hyperlinks, structural links, tags, and hashtags, create a branding discourse net, in which each node constitutes a semiotic pull, which exists and functions on its own as a text. The medium-specific features transform corporate *Facebook* posts in hypertextual advertisements, which ease the navigation of the branding discourse within the platform, across different digital platforms, and enhance transmedia storytelling.

Facebook posts simultaneously link to other nodes such as other *Facebook* pages, YouTube channels, branded live streaming channels, or the official website of the brand. But if *Facebook* is a multi-functional platform able to host different semiotic resources, why do brands use hyperlinks to other platforms within *Facebook* posts? *Facebook* allows the distribution of multimodal texts composed by text, image, and videos for example, but the reason why *Facebook* directs users to other platforms lies in the necessity of ubiquitous presence on the internet (Kapferer, 2015). Even if luxury is meant to be affordable for the happy few (Dubois & Laurent, 1998), its aura should be acknowledged globally including by the many who cannot experience it; therefore, the more channels are colonized the more established is the brand in the luxury pantheon; however, based on the concept of distribution, the access to luxury

should be limited to few so should be the information about it (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012; Kapferer, 2015).

Textual resources in the corporate *Facebook* posts play the role of caption to images and accomplish the function of guiding the reader towards physical and virtual call for actions. These two functions relate to field and tenor. Field, for which the textual resources introduce, categorize, and describe the products displayed to enhance their recognition as either iconic or seasonal items. Tenor because textual resources construct an interpersonal dialogue between brand and user. Luxury fashion brands use textual resources to engage the reader through the use of verbs in the imperative forms, aiming to stimulate an invitation. Textual resources call for audience's attention and guide it throughout the multimodal ensemble and beyond the boundaries of the posts and the page to facilitate both the offline and online encounter between the brand and the user. Offline, when the brand calls the user to visit a physical store, or read a printed media. Online, when the brand invites the user to consume more content in the same, or in a different, digital platform.

Barthes (1983) who was the first to analyze fashion discourse, stated that fashion captions on magazines accompany images and work as metalanguage establishing relation between signifiers (product) and signifieds (attributive and evaluative language). Multimodal artefacts on *Facebook* seem to display a relation that allocates the signifiers in the visual construction, and the signifieds in the text. Fashion captions have been described as instances of language as lifestyle in which the messages perform two types of function (van Leeuwen, 2005): conveying connotative meanings mediated by the ruling class behind the magazine (Marx & Engels, 2006); and negotiating between the audience and the social context in which those meanings are encoded and decoded (Hall, 2006). Corporate *Facebook* posts inherit those functions,

and additionally given that brands in the luxury goods market play an active role in establishing their authoritative voices and positioning themselves in the luxury pantheon through branding discourse activities, the wider audience they reach the more ubiquity they gain (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016).

Photographs play a key role in the definition of brand identity and values. Visual resources semiotically work at the level of representational and interactional meanings. In terms of representational meanings, visual resources classify the products within specific seasons and collections relying on the use of colours. In terms of interactional meanings, visual resources construct luxury brands and products as affordable and empower the viewer, who is actually the focus of the customer-oriented approach, which luxury fashion brands have shifted to. The empowerment of the viewer and the shift from brand-centred to customer-centered approach is given by the increasing purchasing power of the users targeted with the editorial content. Additionally, the distance between the brand and the users is reduced because of the deployment of *Facebook*.

The semiotic labour of the visual resources and their combination with other modes generate a contradictory value to the brand attachment to printed media. It is interpreted as signaling the lack of a consistent communication strategy for new media and symptomatic of a channel conflict not overcome yet; however, the findings provide with a diverse interpretation of this pattern as a desired construction of virtual rarity based on a manufactured exclusive relationship with the user.

All the semiotic resources inventoried work together to produce the branding discourse, which frames brand identity and values. The analysis demonstrates that brand identity blends into product identity, which is mainly instantiated through

references to seasonal items accentuating the short-termism enhanced by the use of social media and the affiliation to fashion sector. Brand values are constructed through ethos based on external sources namely the star system, fashion system, and intertextual references, which make them the new selling proposition of luxury fashion in the social media ecosystem, in contrast with the conventional luxury brand values, which are typically constructed based on internal resources of the brands such as founder and CoO. This Phenomenon read through the lens of marketing subverts the anti-laws transforming the branding discourse into a sales-oriented narrative.

4.3 Towards medium-specific combinations

This section is concerned with the second research question: How do the different semiotic resources interact with each other in the production of branding discourse on the *Facebook* platform? This section is organized into different sub-sections: Section 4.3.1 discusses the findings obtained from the analysis of the text-images relations. Section 4.3.2 focuses on the intertextual references constructed through textual and visual elements. Section 4.3.3 presents the site-specific discursive practices created through the deployment of text and images in the *Facebook* platform. Section 4.3.4 discusses the research findings addressing the research question, and Section 4.3.5 summarizes the whole Section 4.3.

4.3.1 Intersemiotic relations and beyond

This sub-section is concerned with the text-image relations, Section 4.3.1.1 describes the findings for the identification of text-image relations in the full dataset, Section 4.3.1.2 presents the findings across brands, and Section 4.3.1.3 discusses the findings

in relation to the layout units and medium-specific enablers and constraints. Section 4.3.1.4 discusses all the findings in relation to previous studies.

4.3.1.1 Text-image relations

The research findings for text-image relations present patterns, which are summarized in Figure 4.70.
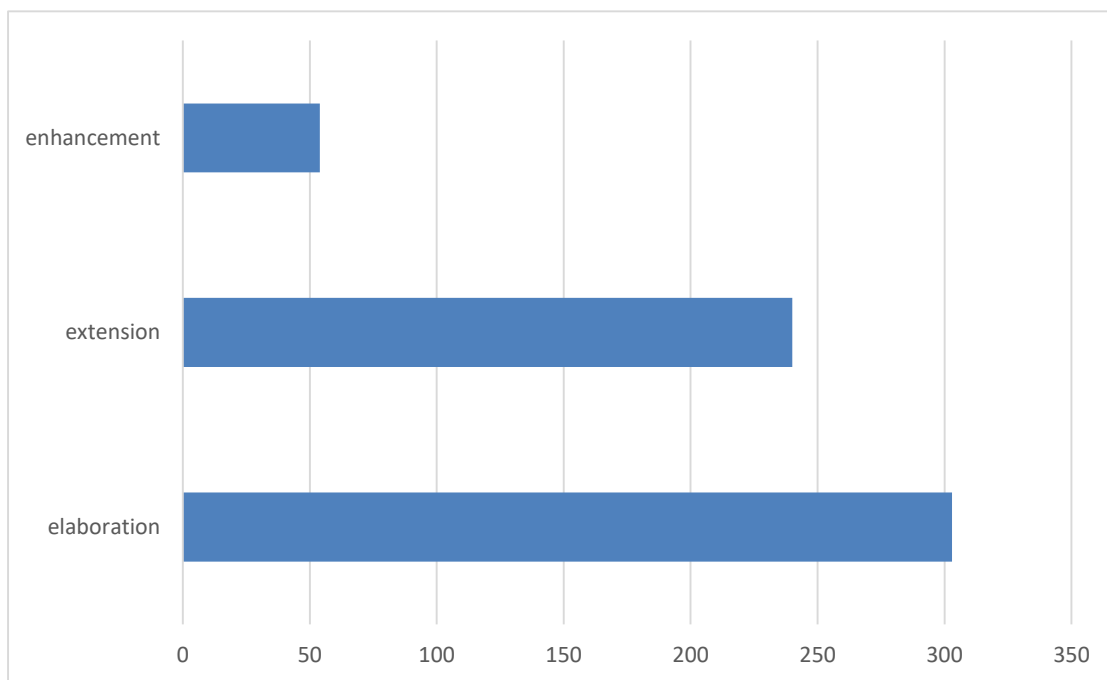
Figure 4.70 Results of intersemiotic relations

Intersemiotic relations present a high percentage of text-image elaboration (N=303, 51%) followed by extension (N=240, 40%), and enhancement (N=54, 9%). Within elaboration, text and image cooperate with each to create exposition and exemplification (Figure 4.71).
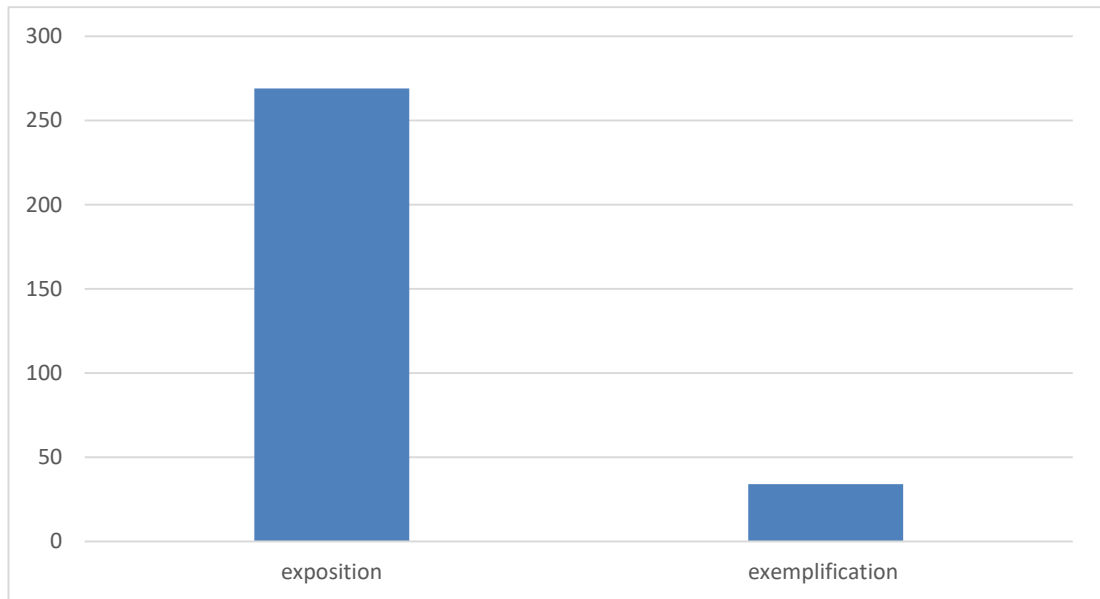
Figure 4.71 Results for text-image elaboration types

The LOG-SEM relation of elaboration occurs in a high percentage in the exposition (N=269, 89%), in which text and images have the same degree of generality. It means that information is resemiotized across modes (Iedema, 2001; 2003). Whereas exemplification only scores 11% with 34 instances. Image 4.83 and 4.84 provide examples for exposition type.

Image 4.82 Exposition   **Image 4.83 Exposition**

Images 4.82 and 4.83 show how the same information is conveyed through textual and visual resources at the same degree of generality. This means that there is no mode prevailing over another.

Branding discourse also presents instances of exemplification, like Image 4.84.

Image 4.84 Exemplification

This example shows how text can be used in a generic way to describe a colour and the image freezes the option of elaboration offered by the textual resources by providing the examples, which are actually meant for that collection (Barthes, 1978).

Meanings are constructed through the interplay between text and image, while they are related through the LOG-SEM

relation of 'extension'. This relation describes text and images in terms of quantity of information semiotized by each mode. The findings confirm that textual resources operationalizes more information than images because they play the role of facilitators and guide the viewer into the brand world (Image 4.85, 4.86, 4.87).

Image 4.85 Extension	Image 4.86 Extension	Image 4.87 Extension
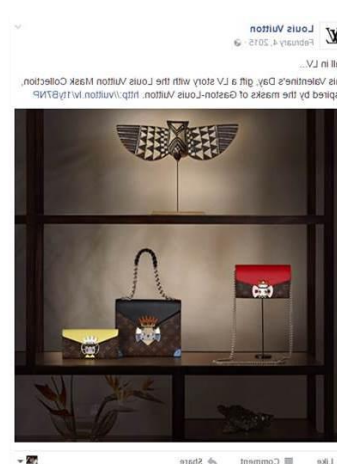
The examples above offer a pictorial topic, which without the support of the text would not be intelligible to the audience. Image 4.85 for instance does not even display the product, similar to ads of perfumes, which in the literature are described as built based on their intangible features and scent, without showing the product (Faiers, 2017; Featherstone, 2007; Flueckiger, 2009).

Image 4.86 shows a media event, but the text enriches the understanding of the creation process.

Image 4.87 provides information about the inspiration source for the items promoted and enhances our interest in knowing more about a brand, which connects the items to the personal life of people directly related to the brand (see interviews; Chapter 1).

The discrepancy between the percentage of posts semiotizing more information

through textual resources and those ones construing them through images provides argument to discuss how the nature of the medium impacts the meaning-making process in terms of choices of systems to allocate meanings. *Facebook*, for instance, was projected to host diverse affordances and textual resources were the first discursive features adopted by *Facebook*ers when it was first launched; therefore, it has remained relevant in the construal of meanings and users are more confident in using it over others. This discussion leads the whole project towards the conclusion that the medium hosting the meanings contributes and shapes them in the process of creation.

4.3.1.2 Text-image relations across brands

In terms of differences among brands, the percentages show discursive practice in relation to the intersemiosis presenting similarities and differences across brands (Figure 4.72).
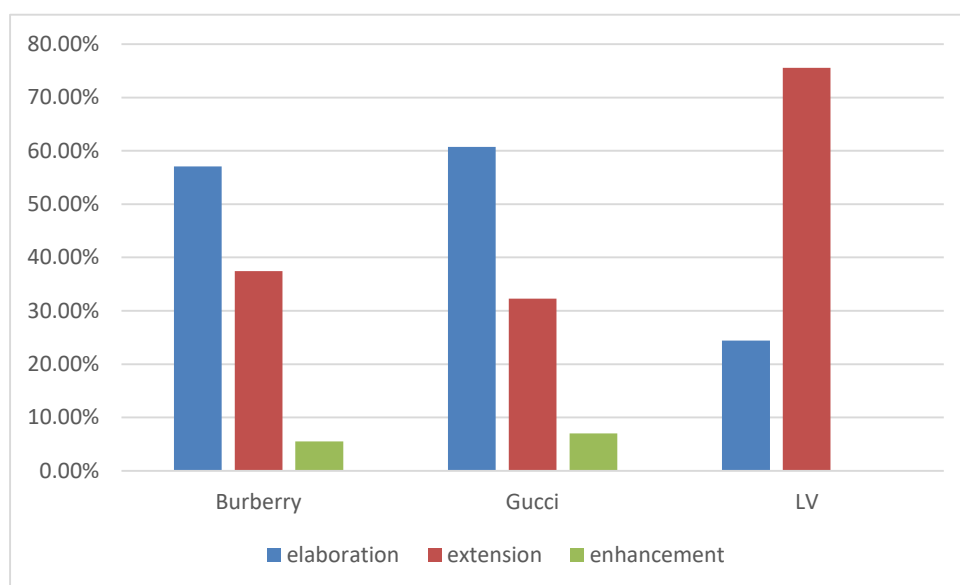

Figure 4.72 Intersemiotic relations across brands

Burberry and *Gucci* construe meanings by relying on the multimodal affordances

available on the platform in terms of elaboration and extension and playing with these two types of intersemiotic constructions. *LV*, instead construes a high percentage of extension text-image relation. These differences are read in a higher multimodal literacy of *Burberry* and *Gucci* in using album-posts, which enable them to convey meanings visually by bundling together different photographs. Whereas, *LV* with a dominance of single-image post does not provide a variety of text-image relations because textual resources with one photograph only tend to construe extension in which textual resources review the visual meanings.

Overall, results of intersemiotic relations offers similarities in the distribution of the labour; however, it remarks the differences among the brands which mainly put *Burberry* and *Gucci* in a more comparable semiotic practice and distant *LV* by building on some assumptions disclosed in chapter 3.

In summary, the results of the intersemiotic relations confirm the textual features as playing an important role even in the construal of meanings belonging to the fashion industry, which is visual-oriented by definition. The findings in this section position textual resources as fundamental players in the meaning-making process.

The description of the instances of 'elaboration' locates the textual resources as functioning as caption to the images, which complement the information conveyed through language. The instances of 'extension' instead show which mode is more exploited in comparison to the other. Brands tend to covey more information through textual resources, even though they deploy many photographs.

4.3.1.3 Facebook posts: single units feeding the overarching branding narrative

The findings regarding the text-image relations provided the opportunity to identify site-specific mode-combinations, which drew the attention on the narrative feature of

branding discourse in the social media platforms. *Facebook*, being a domain of the cyberspace, is characterized by hypertextuality that projects the net of semiotic charged nodes into the new media infrastructure which offers the reader/viewer the opportunity to recall a bigger picture. *Facebook* posts are the ultimate units of branding discourse crafted to be consumed as a single unit; however, the data suggest that the different posts are connected with each other at different levels by a range of semiotic cohesive devices (e.g. automated and semi-automated text actions, colours) which enact the contribution to an overarching narrative. *Facebook* posts have been analyzed as single units acknowledging their belonging and contribution to an overarching in-site and transmedia narrative (Jenkins, 2006; Page, 2010).

Additionally, moving from one virtual place to another, the findings suggest the integration of different media and generate the intersections of content within a transmedia experience, which span from online to offline settings. This generates the convergence of meanings in the minds of potential consumers that, while decoding different messages across media, are able to link them together and construe the brand image to contribute to the brand equity. Given that social media texts are the ultimate instances of corporate communication materialized in small chunks of text and equipped with a powerful range of affordances, branding discourse is recognized as fitting into the overarching narrative and contribute to it to exploit the full potential of the medium.

The power of collective persuasion, which social media platforms have gained, makes them a tool for propaganda and marketing. This raised the interest of luxury brands in exploiting those tools for advertising purpose and at the same time the need to adapt their strategies and content to the virtual world hosting them. The findings provided a map of the hierarchy of the content (Figure 4.73), which by default needs

to be consistent to establish specific patterns immediately recognizable in users' minds (Kapferer, 2008; Okonkwo, 2007).
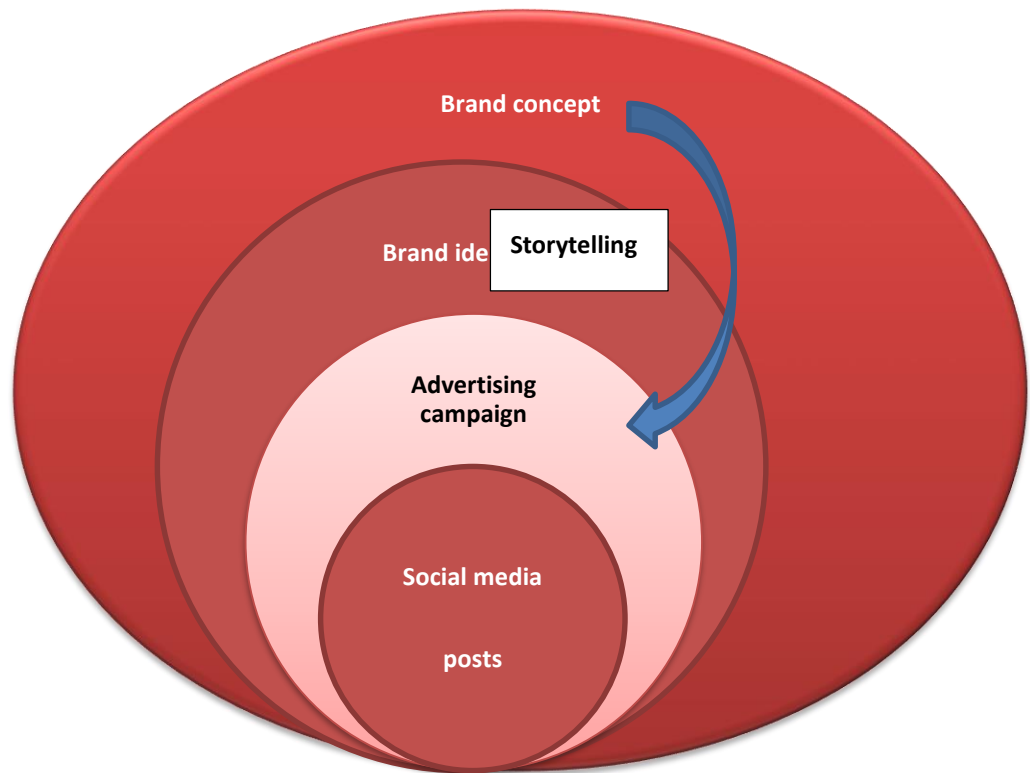
Figure 4.73 Storytelling process from brand concept to corporate social media posts. Adapted from Kapferer (2008), Okonkwo (2007; 2010)

Figure 4.73 locates the dataset examined in this study into the smallest circle, which actually suggests the idea that what users access on social media is actually shaped according to the advertising campaign, which is still created to be spread through traditional media (e.g. fashion magazines, billboards). The design of the advertising is based on brand identity, which is framed from brand concept, which is above (Kapferer, 2008).

Furthermore, the smallest circle which stands for social media implicitly suggests the idea that luxury brands are still at their infancy stage in using those new media (Okonkwo, 2010). This is due to the still suspicious attitude raised by the dichotomy between the exclusiveness advocated by luxury *versus* the mass accessibility promoted

by the internet (Okonkwo, 2010).

Moreover, the production of the content for the social media is also subject to further divisions in terms of storytelling activities and digital practices suggested by the medium. It is possible to look at social media as platforms, which turn the "personal diary" (Roeschenthaler Wolfe, 2014, p. 1) into a public one, drawing on the concept of blogging and adding a turn-taking in terms of authorship because the main characteristics of social media is the UGC that co-create meanings. Whereas initially, social media simply replicated the content used on other media and realized meanings without paying attention to the specificity of the medium (Shepherd & Watters, 1998; Myers, 2010).

The present study showed how social media are actually blurring the borders between reality and virtual world, and the branded content shared provide the audience with an experience, which leads them to the offline branded spaces. The foundation of the brand, which initiates the whole story, introduces another almost interchangeable relationship between the founder of the brand and the brand. Once the founder creates the brand, the brand itself goes through a process of personification during which it acquires the potentiality of initiating actions.

Moreover, the campaigns are the end of a cyclic timeframe, which corresponds to seasons. These are represented as the finale of the flow of events in a specified timeframe. The true finale is the UGC in which the audience co-creates the meanings and elaborates the happy or not happy ending according to the nature of the feedback to the branded content. The morale of the story is that the audience should be educated about the essence of luxury in the overarching narrative, which aims to provide information about how to discover the core values of the brand in the theme-related

campaigns.

The findings showed the key role played by layout units and medium-specific features is to construe navigability, granularity, and usability of the platform and facilitate the cognitive relations among units of meanings disseminated throughout the dataset. The layout units ATA and SATA represent the first elements, which provide the basic information of the narrative, such as the page the reader/viewer is navigating, which brand is sharing the content, or more detailed what is the action performed, where the images shared belong to in the case of album posts. This latter example also allows the reader/viewer to mentally group all the posts belonging to a specific album or decide to response to the call for action in the post such as clicking on the tile of the album or on the number of picture available for the post to consume the full story (Table 4.25).

Table 4.25 Call to explore the album

Post	Description
Louis Vuitton added 18 new photos to the album: Fall 2015 Fashion Show Leather Goods. March 13, 2015 · A closer look at the leather goods from the Louis Vuitton Fall 2015 Fashion Show from Artistic Director of Women's Collections, Nicolas Ghesquière. Watch the show now on http://www.louisvuitton.com +15 Like Comment Share	This post informs the reader/viewer that it is an album post entitled 'Fall 2015 Fashion Show Leather Goods'. We are expecting to find all the leather goods which have been designed for the Fall 2015 collection.

The example shows the way brands enable *Facebook* users to immediately recognize the call for action available and the way they have been trained in years in surfing the internet, in which a different colour signals a hyperlink leading to an additional content.

Facebook users are also trained on the fact that '+15' stands for '15 more pictures available for this album'. Once clicked on either the title of the album or the number, the full album will appear with pictures and captions.

The medium-specific features, also hypertextual elements namely links, hyperlinks, tags, and hashtags participate to the branding narrative by adding information, expanding existing content, re-semiotizing meanings by transferring them to other media. Hashtags, specifically, have the role of categorizing the post to make it searchable and aggregate the content, which is labeled under the same searchable talk identifier.

Additionally, findings provide instances of posts, which use textual resources to create cohesion and frame the narrative throughout different posts. Some posts use the same text in order to link up the different constructions under one communicative purpose; an example is the group of 20 posts shared by *Burberry* for Mother's Day, which uses the same text to present different items in the images shared (Image 4.88).

Image 4.88 Textual cohesion

The same text shown in the example constitutes the link for all the posts shared for the same festivity, the visual construction changes each time, but the message remains the same. This example also contains one more linking element, which is the title of the album in the SATA. The recycling of editorial content might suggest awareness of the cohesion

perceived by the user, or pressure of posting and then recycling means optimizing time and resources.

The example in Image 4.93 also points out to the colour. The colour of the background or extradiegetic chromatic elements are used to establish relation among posts and create the narrative flow. Colour as part of the annotation scheme of the representational meanings is used to identify the form and function of those semiotically loaded choices. Colours perform a cohesive function and enhance the textual relations between the different posts by relying on the viewer's knowledge of the chain of posts, or on the recognition of the colour as distinctive features of a season or campaign (O' Halloran, 2008). Colours represent the brand and embed particular functions, which benefit from the connotative meanings colours have in the society.

Furthermore, the findings suggest the establishment of a so-called narrative agreement between the brand and the audience, which frames the possibility for luxury brands to preserve their core values based on their exclusiveness if the communication activities aim at building up trust in the mind of the audience. The narrative is here defined as digital (hi)storytelling, which, as proved by the findings, does not work independently, but relies on the transmedia activities of the brand.

The three brands examined for instance operate in both old and new media as luxury brands still need to share their campaign on printed fashion magazines in order to be classified as luxury. Magazines like *Vogue* are bought by fashionistas, and having a cover, a page, an editorial on those magazines means firstly that the brand has enough capital to invest in those media; and secondly that the brand is accepted in the most authoritative magazine of the sector, the bible of fashion. This is another example of how distribution carries meanings as being a semiotic resource itself in the contemporary society.

The present study shows that (hi)storytelling across media has become a must and, not only luxury firms had to adapt to that, but at the same time, they were offered no other choices. This is due to the fact that magazines like *Vogue* included in their media kit[69] the creation of online campaign to create a 360° degree experience for the consumers of information. Nowadays, communication strategies are designed to be spread across media (Jenkins, 2013). Information refer to each other via hyperlinks, tags, hashtags, and are built through different affordances according to the hosting platform.

Interestingly, the data analysis deconstructs branding discourse as an instance of inter-media franchise in Lemke's terms (2004), which aims to build a global market culture around the object of the discourse. Fei and O'Halloran (2009) in their multimodal discourse analysis of the love collection by Cartier made the point that in this particular case, the internet alone would not have worked in terms of media coverage for the campaign because Cartier needed to vehicle the traffic to the website and advertisements on newspapers carrying the URL would have worked as hyperlinks for instance.

Drawing upon Fei and O'Halloran (2009), in relation to the brand positioning of Cartier inhabiting the luxury pantheon and targeting a specific market with that collection ten years ago would have not been able to achieve the desired visibility. Printed media instead are used to offer a more sophisticated image of the brand that would appeal to customers with high purchase power at that time. This leads back to the McLuhan's statement about how the medium is actually part of the message because it embeds the tenor and decides *a priori* its interlocutors.

The findings provide opportunity to refer to transmedia in several occasions. From the use of photography and its ongoing transformation in landing to digital device; from production to distribution; from the scanned copies of printed multimodal artefacts to be shared online such as magazine covers and paper invitations to mention few; to the integration of different media facilitated by the use of medium-specific tools aimed to connect different pages and domains; and intertextual references linking places far in distance and time.

Additionally, findings confirm that the proliferation of new media increased the number of franchising worlds to connect. Arguably, the feature of transmediality is nowadays embedded in the digital multimodal texts because of the ideology of copy-and-paste, which drives the production of information across media and decreases the semiotic diversity in corporate communication. If creative industries are a fertile terrain for transmedia, corporate communication does not exploit all its potential because of the need for short-term solutions.

Short-termism characterizes the production of corporate communication texts and generates the proliferation of duplicates of texts observed in the cross-check of campaigns re-semiotized across media, which actually do not exploit the semiotic potential of the medium, but merely share the same editorial content across them. This practice also favours the use of existing texts as new information for the use of instant films, clearly showing the process of production of collections, and campaigns now publicly shared for optimizing resources involved in the communication activities, and at the same time, to reinforce authenticity of the texts that are claimed to be shared by the creative director. This request for instant sharing does not only affect communication, but it has been widely discussed and criticized in the actual production of collections that due to the emergence of fast fashion brands has pushed

luxury fashion firms to realize more than two collection per year, stretching the number from 2 to 8 and turning the creative process into a production process, in which the role of the in-house designer disappears to leave space for the creative directors, who feature the campaigns and build their own personal brand more than the corporate identity. For example, Marc Jacobs at *LV*, especially because the latter owns his own brand, the brand and the designer were perceived as two different entities.

Since the digital landscape has produced digital celebrities that brands invite on their front-rows, it would not be surprising to see fashion industry becoming driven by personal brand more than corporate brands. Arguably, it was the feature of luxury being the brands constructed on the myth of their founder, but notably the figure of the founder of the brand in comparison with personal brands such as designers or bloggers like Chiara Ferragni, who launch their own brands are different in terms of identity construction and its semiotic unfolding. Luxury brands have founders anchored to the heritage of the country of origins, whereas the new influencers rely on trends and digital consensus, which is by definition ephemeral and volatile.

Coincisely, the previous sections can be synthetized in the term 'digital (hi)storytelling'. It indicates the strategy of telling the stories related to luxury fashion brands that acquire historical value because of their long tradition that bring them to a further level compared to other industries assigning them a heritage that is even displayed in museums. These stories are the product of an overarching content plan given by the brand concept that is conveyed through the brand identity that is the leit-motif of the different advertising campaign related to each fashion season that frame the time slots in the brand timeline of social media. The seasonal advertising campaign includes short-term campaigns, which are more theme-related. Social media posts as being part of an overarching story need to be contextualized to be completely

understood in terms of meanings influence of the medium and structure.

4.3.1.4 Discussion

The findings for intersemiotic relations show how the polyphonic nature of social media texts (Herrings, 1999) is deconstructed through the social semiotic analysis of the different semiotic voices involved in the meaning-making process. Section 4.3.1 maps the division of the labour across the different modes and according to their potentiality framed by enablers and constraints specific of the medium hosting the communication and shaping the text-image relations.

The interplay of semiotic resources was specifically examined in the LOG-SEM analysis of the relation between text and images originally, and later extended to the embedded relation with the layout units, and medium-specific features, which contribute to the understanding of how the narrative flows within *Facebook* platform.

In the orchestration of different semiotic resources and their placement within a hypermodal platform and along the timeline of *Facebook* diary, layout units, medium-specific features, and semiotic resources like colours enact the role of cohesive devices for the formation of the narrative flow. The layout units namely ATA, SATA, and more specifically hyperlinks, links, tags, hashtags along with colours contribute to the branding narrative in different ways. ATA and SATA work on the cohesion among the semiotic resources within the same post to enhance the navigability of the content, the medium-specific features classified as hyperlinks, links, tags, hashtags function as linking devices between the corporate posts and different domains within *Facebook* platforms and the cyberspace, colours instead group different posts under the same semantically constructed category.

The framework adapted from Martinec and Salway (2005) left out the first system aimed to identify equal and unequal status between semiotic resources based on RST and concentrated on the LOG-SEM relations, to neutrally assess the role of each semiotic resource. Even though, literature suggested that luxury fashion is dominated by visual elements, the analysis did not intentionally establish a priori the nuclear activity of photographs in comparison with its captions.

Textual resources, along with the layout units and medium-specific elements, function as caption to the photograph and limit the polysemic nature of images (Barthes, 1983). Roland Barthes (1983, p. 13), in his study on fashion advertising on printed media, stated that if "the image freezes an endless number of possibilities", meaning that among the ones available in both social and semiotic world, "words determine a single certainty". In face to that, captions to photographs in the dataset fully perform the function of exactly locating the images within a determined spatio-temporal dimension to guide the audience to the understanding of the visual resources. This mainly occurs in the construction of posts aimed to generate short-term sales.

Van Leeuwen (2005) also analyzed fashion captions and focused on the way they enact a process of marketization of discourse (Fairclough, 1995) in the same way advertising and lifestyle magazines do. Corporate *Facebook* posts share the same purpose of communication and represent a further instance of commodification of the discourse that shifts from diversity to standardization in favour of the establishment of a ruling discourse (Petroni, 2011; Marx & Engels, 2006). Commodification makes information look like goods and for this reason must be visible, usable interactive, and attractive, like the goods described. If the content is not appealing users abandon it to consume something else, the editorial content needs to be marketable (Petroni, 2011).

Facebook platform is the medium hosting the branding discourse, but also enabling and constraining its reduction and distribution by defining its design generated the re-definition of intersemiotic relations. *Facebook* projected to host different semiotic resources without privileging any of them over the others differently from Instagram for instance. This creates a fertile terrain for intersemiotic relations to be forged by the actual usage in authentic texts like those ones the dataset consists of. In the creation of status updates on *Facebook*, the user is free to make meaning through different semiotic resources, the call for action is semiotized through textual resources that might encourage the user to use text as nucleus of the meaning and this is what happened in the very early stage of *Facebook* use.

Diachronically, users had tendency to write more than uploading visual texts while in the later stages of use they shifted to a pictorial communication experimenting the new medium-specific tools. This shift from writing to uploading is read was initially read as a prediction of intense multimodal production on social media; however, the CEO of *South China Morning Post* is eventually pointing out a going back to writing with the advent of new messaging apps (FCC, 2017). The same could happen about the blend of public and private sphere that merged in the social media but at the same time generated an uncontrolled shift from private to public, that now the messaging platform could re-establish in favouring a private access to content.

This section was very much concerned with discussing how the combination of textual and visual resources is dictated, not only by the potential of each semiotic mode, but also from the platform hosting and influencing their semiotic performance. The analysis of the intersemiotic relations draws attention on how the medium influences the meaning-making process and the co-deployment of different semiotic resources to construct the branding discourse.

Multisemiotic systems appear organized in a way that is faithful to *Facebook* platform and that interestingly recall the semiotic work on printed media. Instances of references to paper materiality are instant film posts, scanned pages of magazines, lengthy texts. Those semiotic compounds are symptomatic of a strong attachment to the offline practice that has been identified as a search for authenticity and legitimization. This latter matter is also part of an overarching issue related to the emergence of social media that is authorship and copyright. In the era of copy-and-paste, texts are available online and they are shared by different users. There is no way to prevent users from sharing and appropriate other users' texts, but at the same time this is the feature alimenting the ideology of interconnectivity.

At the same time, the fear for a mediascape out of control that created the channel conflict between luxury and the internet is related to the power of users to generate content and circulate it by losing authorship on that. As counter movement users started seeking for legitimization for copyright on the production of content, we witnessed a proliferation of photographs with embedded signature. This practice originally destined to artworks and professional photographs now characterize digital photography blurring the boundaries between professional and *amateurs*.

4.3.2 Intertextuality: curating luxury fashion brands

Research findings presented a rich diversity of intertextual constructions. Intertextual references represent the interwoven constructions, which incorporate the medium, the audience, and the concept of production and distribution. The medium characterized by internal semiotic loaded nodes, enhances the intertextual nature of the internet. The audience is key based on their knowledge background decode intertextuality. Same applies for production and distribution of meanings, which are produced and

distributed based on the target audience able to decode them, and it re-semiotizes the elitist feature of luxury branding discourse which is considered lost in the digital era (see Chapter 1).

Additionally, users, consuming social media texts, become prosumers. Specifically, *Facebook* posts once shared become public domain and are subject to implementation of the meanings as the user is given the affordances to interact with them and modify their perception.

The findings are organized into two different sections: Section 4.3.2.1 maps the different intertextual references identified in the dataset and across brands, Section 4.3.2.2 focuses on the discussion of the processes of artification of luxury emerged as consistent patterns.

4.3.2.1 Intertextual references

The findings for the intertextuality are reported brand by brand because of its specificity based on the CoO. Intertextuality contributes to the construction of the transmedia branding discourse described in Section 4.3.1.3.

The findings for intertextuality are presented on in Table 4.26 to understand which brands and modes construct the intertextual references.

Table 4.26 Intertextual constructions

Brand	Posts		Textual constructions		Visual constructions		Multimodal constructions	
Burberry	122	29%	40	38%	3	17%	79	26%
Gucci	208	48%	36	35%	9	53%	163	54%
Louis Vuitton	94	23%	28	27%	5	30%	61	20%
Total	424	100%	104	100%	17	100%	303	100%

Table 4.26 shows that 424 out of 597 posts examined are characterized by explicit intertextual references, which refer to specific domains brought into the narrative to build the brand identity of the firms investigated. Within the 424 posts which accounts for the 71% of the full corpus, *Gucci* accounts for 48%, *Burberry* for 29% and *Louis Vuitton* for 23% of the intertextual references identified. Within their own narrative *Gucci* deploys intertextuality in 68% of the posts, *Burberry* for 74%, and *Louis Vuitton* for 73%. All the three brands present a high percentage of intertextual references within their posts and texts and new media texts especially are intertextual by nature (Halliday, 1978; Petroni, 2011).

Intertextuality is instantiated through both textual and visual resources, and the findings show its semiotic labour distribution. The distribution of the semiotic labour shows that textual resources (N=104) (Table 4.28) carry relevant meanings for the understanding of the narrative, and the visual resources (N=17) (Table 4.29) display the subjects of the narrative; however, the majority of intertextual references are construed through a collaborative semiotic work of text and image (N=303) (Table 4.28) in the construal of the multimodal artefact.

Textual constructions of intertextuality evoke different references and emotions

(Table 4.27).

Table 4.27 Example of textual construction of intertextuality

Textual construction	Intertextual realization
LV at first sight… This Valentine's Day, declare your *LV* with a *Louis Vuitton* Small Leather Good. http://vuitton.*LV*/1tyH7pN	The intertextual reference is construed through the use of '*LV*' instead of 'love' facilitated by the presence of the consonants 'L' and 'V' in the word 'love'. The construction '*LV* at first sight'[70] is an idiom which has been used for the first time in 1385 by Chaucer in his work *Troilus and Criseyde* and has entered the common use throughout time. This expression is used to recall the magic of love which is celebrated in the festivity mentioned 'Valentine's Day' for which the small leather goods are meant to be purchased for. The act of giving one of the items as gift is described as a declaration of love, which in this case linguistically coincides with the brand name.

The example shows how intertextuality constructed through a word such as 'love' is effective in proportion of the background and experience of the reader. It evokes feelings and emotion which will be negative or positive according to the audience. In this case, *LV* relies on the common attitude about love, which is positive and addresses those ones who respect the festivity as a celebration of it. The post was shared February 6, the target audience is a global one; however, there are countries in which the festivity is not recognized as a local one but as a tradition imported from the U.S.A such as Ireland which has a local festivity which is on January 25 (St Dwynwen's Day) or Brazil which has its 'Dia dos Namorados' on 12 June. Hong Kong has actually two Valentine's Days. The data retrieved with the icon of global distribution confirm that the post is targeting a global audience. I assume that if the data were retrieved with an IP in Ireland or Brazil the fan page would contain references to those festivities as well.

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[70] *OED*, http://www.oed.com [01/03/2017]

This has not been done for those data but the M.A. thesis (2013) contains posts in Italian language as the data were retrieved from there. This is one of the powerful functions available in the new media which allow the brands to massively reach the audience but at the same time develop a degree of customization of the messages.

Visual construction of intertextuality is enacted when the brand can rely on visual elements only and still convey the full meanings (Table 4.28).

Table 4.28 Example of visual construction of intertextuality

Visual construction	Intertextual realization
Gucci updated their cover photo. June 1, 2015 · 🌐 Like Comment Share	This post does not include any creative textual actions. The text which composes the post is semi-automated and indicates the nature of the post. The image intertextually refers to a specific collection which belongs to a fashion season, Cruise 2016. An additional intertextual reference is about the use of flowers which are a consistent *leit-motif* in *Gucci*'s creations.

The example above brings into discussion the use of consistent elements in luxury fashion goods which contribute to the construal of brand identity, which aims at being identifiable throughout time. In contrast to fashion goods in other segments of the sector, brands positioned in the high-end market present timeless features, which the potential consumer is educated to and is expecting from that particular brand (Kapferer, 2012). For instance, any tartan will be associated with *Burberry*, floral patterns with *Gucci*, Monogram with *LV*, to give some of the most iconic examples. The practice of branding products in a soberer way other than imposing the logo has been boosted recently due to the rejection of the consumer to carry visible branded items (Rambourg, 2014).

The example in Table 4.29 shows the most frequent intertextual constructions.

The reference is simultaneously given by both text and image.

Table 4.29 Example of multimodal construction of intertextuality

Multimodal construction	Intertextual realization
	Text: 'To Hong Kong – from London with love' The textual resources establish a relation with a British movie *From Russia with Love* [1] (1963) directed by Terence Young. The film is very well known as being the second movie of James Bond's series with Sean Connery. The story is based on Ian Fleming's nov el from 1957. This reflects the influence of popular culture and strengthens the relation between fashion and cinema which is a constant coupling in the data. **Image:** the image re -semiotizes the two cities mentioned in the text which are Hong Kong and London by creating a combined 3D postcard which positions Hong Kong skyline and London Big Ben and architecture together in a festive setting which is represented by fireworks at night. The dominant colour is *Burberry*'s iconic colour.

The example above is an instance of branding entertainment. *From London with Love* (2014) is the title of *Burberry* film for the global festive campaign, which once shown in London flagship store, was sent travelling around the world to build the image of the brand. This particular film was the first shown globally and starred Romeo Beckham. Later, *Burberry* continued its cinema tradition launching *Mr. Burberry*[71] (2016) directed by Steve Mcqueen, and *The Tale of Thomas Burberry*[72] (2016) by Asif Kapadia. This latter telling the story of *Burberry*'s founder instead of celebrating Christmas was actually received by the audience as a trailer of a film, and netizens started populating social networks with requests of releasing an actual movie

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[71] *Imdb*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5620080/ [03/03/2017]
[72] *Imdb*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6219898/   [03/03/2017]

(Shepherd, 6 November 2016).

Additionally, the journey of the movie around the world fashion cities, in this case of Hong Kong, performs multiple functions. Among them, the establishment of Hong Kong as fashion city (Soames, October 2012, p. 151), and the global outreach of the brand, as well as the use of the city of origins along with British young celebrities to promote the brand.

The functions of intertextuality in corporate communication are mapped in relation to the USP of the three luxury firms examined, which provide generalizations for the luxury goods market (Table 4.31).

Table 4.30 Intertextual function and distribution across brands

INTERTEXTUAL FUNCTION	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	DISTRIBUTION ACROSS BRANDS		
		Burberry	*Gucci*	*LV*
Association with (art, music, cinema, mythology, fashion system, religion, architecture, profession, literature, events, minimalism)	26%	9%	59%	32%
Instant film (white frame)	21%		100%	
CoO (CoO, fashion cities, specific association)	17%	52%	26%	24%
Engagement (ordinary life experience, festivity, paper invitation, backstage)	15%	77%	13%	10%
Iconic (product, pattern)	8%		98%	2%
Legitimacy (artistic photography, fashion system)	5%	30%	47%	23%
Production	2%	68%	12%	20%
Values (brand, core)	1.5%			100%
Brand location	1.5%			100%
Sense of continuity (from past to contemporary activities)	1.2%			100%

Establishing credentials (celebrities in branded activities)	1%	98%	2%	
CSR	0.8%		100%	
Total of posts	424			

The findings for intertextual references unfold the sources of inspiration used by the three firms to craft their editorial content to be shared. The results are here presented in order of frequency of occurrence in the corpus starting from 'association with' (132) which has been left as a generic category; however, in the annotation the associated domain is specified as art (Table 4.31), music (Table 4.32), mythology (Table 4.33), literature (Table 4.34), and many other references.

Table 4.31 Association with art

Post	Intertextual function
	The post shows one of the artworks collected in the art project *GucciGram*[73]. Nic Courdy[74] is an American artist from Palestinian origins who creates his artworks by combining elements from past and present. The background often resembles the work of Old Masters and he digitally adds on elements which recall the contemporary world. In this case *Gucci*'s iconic floral pattern is used to pay homage to the brand; however, this pattern is the result of *Gucci*'s Italian heritage which celebrates the Renaissance in Florence.

The example in Table 4.31, is an instance of the association with art and given by the nature of the project, the involvement of professional artists, the reference to the work

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[73] *GucciGram*, http://digital.*Gucci*.com/*Gucci*-gram/p/1 [01/03/2017]
[74] *Nic Courdy*, http://niccourdy.com/ [01/03/2017]

of Old Masters as a source of inspiration for digital art, the combination of past and present in one hybrid work. This multiple intertextual construction foregrounds the practice of the firms examined as major players in the luxury fashion goods market as actually an obligatory process which characterize this sector. It relies on the semiotic construal of branding discourse as the ultimate instance of brands' self-construal image based upon the cultural heritage inherited from the context in which they were first created. The whole project *GucciGram* is used to elevate the contemporary mass customized luxury production to an evolved form of the artistic workshop tradition of the artisans from the past. The project will be used to discuss the relation between luxury fashion and art (see Section 4.3.2.2).

The example in Table 4.32 is an instance of association with music.

Table 4.32 Association with music

Post	Intertextual function
	'Behind the Bag (and the Music)' The relation between fashion and music is unfolded through the 'spring film' whose development is shared through posts (transmedia). In this post *Gucci* displays a peaceful landscape maybe in Orient given the oriental lamp in the image and positions the nature at the origins of the bag and the music. Nature is where Lykke Li finds inspiration from and it is also where *Gucci* designers look for elements to combine for their creations. Lykke Li is well known for creating music which borrows from different sources of inspiration.

The example in Table 4.32 show how brands construct intertextual references to music. *Gucci*, as specific case, the brand, which mostly refer to music, whereas *Burberry* and *LV* present fewer instances. The example demonstrates the manner in which brand and

music is romanticized. The narrative constructed presents Lykke Li[75], a Swedish singer, who has been commissioned to star in a storytelling project presented as *Lady Web*.

Lady Web project positions *Gucci* in a unique deployment of association with music, which differs from *Burberry*'s one, which uses British talented musicians as models for its campaigns, or *LV*'s association with music as dressing celebrities appearing at music events.

Lady Web project provides an example of how *Gucci* instantiate uses a parallelism between the brand creation and the composition of a song. In *Lady Web*, Lykke Li is a young composer and musician from Sweden who was invited by Alessandro Michele to promote the bag *Lady Web* to whom was also dedicated a hashtag. Lykke Li is the protagonist of the campaign, which uses her music as a soundtrack, but in the findings what users consume are the flashbacks which describe the sources of inspiration for the composition of her songs. This reflects the association of *Lady Web* bag as a precious item, which accompanies people through successful journeys, but also through their life.   Lykke Li and the bag are inseparable and at the same time a parallelism between the process behind the composition of a song merges with the process behind *Gucci* creations. Sources of inspiration for Lykke Li' songs are nature and memories so are for *Gucci* items.

Another *Gucci*'s example for the association with music is given by the *Facebook* posts about the costumes designed for Madonna's *Rebel Heart Tour 2016*. Notably, it carries additional meanings related to the personality of the testimonial. For Madonna's costumes this is not only a milestone in *Gucci* development, but also for Alessandro Di Michele. Madonna is regarded as a timeless music icon whose

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[75] *Lykke Li*, http://www.lykkeli.com/ [01/03/2017]

performances have been referred to as shows rather than concerts. Her costumes, in functional terms, perform representational, interactional, and compositional meanings; however, the focus in the dataset is more related to narrate the process of preparing the costumes, which are metonymically represented by hats crafted in Rome and shows as sketch and prototypes, until the post of the first stop of the tour in Toronto when costumes are in action. As findings show, music as integral part of *Gucci*'s strategy has been recently confirmed by the news about a mini music festival labeled *Gucci*[76]. The findings also showed how *Burberry* relies on the associations with the music world by transforming runways into shows constructed with live music and inviting British talents for advertising campaigns for instance. The latter also enhances *Burberry*'s link to its CoO because of the choice to promote British talents.

Another association emerged from the findings is with mythology (Table 4.33). *Gucci* is also the brand to provide instances of the use of 'association', based on its cultural rehistege and CoO.

Table 4.33 Association with mythology

Post	Intertextual function
	'Designed by Alessandro Michele, the limited edition bag features an orange leather patch inside the embroidered with a bee and the city's name'. 'A double tiger head closure references the Greek God Dionysus who is said to have crossed the river Tigris on a tiger sent to him by Zeus'.

The example shows the construction of intertextual reference to mythology. The textual resources within the post tell the story of the Dionysus bag, named after the Greek god Dionysus. The myth inspired the design and the reference is visually omnipresent as it is incorporated in the name of the bag. It is not rare to find luxury goods which carry the name of their inspiration and in this particular case *Gucci* is again confirming its cultural heritage. Mythology (Greek and Roman) has a strong influence on Italian culture as the territory was historically colonized by Greeks for instance and many monuments are left as artefacts. Also, Italian places occur in the literary production in mythology and this emphasizes the relation between Italian and ancient Greek and Roman arts. Italy as being the CoO of *Gucci* is an embedded intertextual association which the audience is aware of. This core value of the brand will be further explored in chapter 5 in the discussion about the concept of heritage which characterizes European brands (Kapferer, 2012).

Other intertextual references present instances of association with literature, *Burberry* for example has linked its S/S Accessory Collection 2015 to a British writer (Table 4.34).

Table 4.34 Association with literature

	Literature *Burberry*
	'A limited edition box set of the works of Bruce Chatwin'. *Burberry* S/S 2015 Accessories Collection includes the box set of literary works written by one of the most prominent post-war British writers. Chatwin[77] was a travel writer, novelist, and journalist.

Burberry by associating its products to Bruce Chatwin's works celebrates British literature and in particular travel literature as an exploration of unknown places. The commitment to the community, which luxury brands observe is the result of the awareness that the CoO plays a major role in their brand image. The partnership established for this project included *Burberry* and *Vintage* (UK publishing). The international press covered the news about this unusual collaboration by emphasizing the fact the *Burberry* took inspiration from Chatwin's literary work for its travel collection[78]. This again confirms how luxury fashion brands construe their appeal thorough the deployment of intertextual references aimed at positioning their work as inspired by arts in general and transfer positive association to the items.

The three brands examined present a high percentage of construction of intertextual references to 'instant film', which is realized through a visual white frame

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[77] *Bruce Chatwin*, http://www.brucechatwin.co.uk/ [01/03/2017]
[78] *Harper's Bazaar UK,* http://www.harpersbazaar.co.uk/fashion/fashion-news/news/a34397/*Burberry*s-ode-to-bruce-chatwin/ [01/03/2017]

within which the images are contained. This is a peculiar characteristics of the data retrieved from the corporate fan page of *Gucci*. The following examples (Table 4.35 and 4.36) materialize the intertextual reference to the instant film, which recalls both a vintage practice in photography and the strong relation, which *Gucci* has with the printed media.

Table 4.35 Instant film

Post	Intertextual function
	The image reports two instant films used to construe a piece of art as belonging to the art project *GucciGram*. The artist Anil Can aims at combining past and present. The focus is on the use of polaroid but the post offers other information which will not be discussed in this place.

The example above shows the use of white frames in a single-image post; however, as shown in Table 4.35, it also occurs in the construction of multi-image posts, which signals that it is a feature of the photos itself and not a layout provided by the platform.

Table 4.36 Instant film

Post	Intertextual function
	The use of the reference to the instant film is different as this is not explicitly construed but it is an interpretation which recalls an internal practice which characterizes the plan of a collection. In the process of realizing a campaign, photos are used to keep track of the shoots as it is in the planning of the collection for the look books of the prototypes [79] . The shooting generates those white framed images which *Gucci* shares on its social networks.

Overall, the interpretation drawn on the use of these white framed images is that *Gucci* wants to engage the audience by making it participant of the ongoing creative process; however, *Gucci* seems to use a lot of reproduction of printed material which either suggests the pressure of posting or the voluntary reference or attachment to offline practices. This latter suggests a willingness to pour authenticity and faith to the old way of production (see Chapter 5).

Intertextual references, like 'city brand', recalls the value of CoO, more specifically city of origins, fashion capitals, or particular places, which are used to build positive attitude towards the brand. The post below (Table 4.37) shows an instance of these intertextual references and also includes a reference to 'location brand' realization.

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[79] Personal experience in a fashion firm.

Table 4.37 CoO and location brand

Post	Intertextual function
	'Salone del Mobile' 'Milano Design Week at Palazzo Boccini, Corso Venezia, 48' Milan is the Italian capital of fashion, and it is also the city hosting the 'Salone del Mobile' [80] and the 'Milano Design Week'. Salone del Mobile is the international reference for design and the exhibit a piece during this event legitimizes the brand as operating at a higher level of creativity. Palazzo Bocconi is a monument of Milan which has been recently re-discovered and used as prestigious location for particular exhibitions and events.

The use of the *Salone del Mobile* to exhibit *LV*'s piece allows a mutual benefit association as *LV* is recognized as prestigious for the opportunity to exhibit here and at the same time Palazzo Bocconi earns exposure through the brand and its media content.

Intertextual references are also used to create 'engagement' through the semiotization of ordinary life experiences, references to festivities, use of paper invitation, glimpses from the backstage. Posts performing these intertextual references are here represented by the example in Table 4.38.

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[80] *Salone del Mobile*, https://www.salonemilano.it/en/ [01/03/2017]

Table 4.38 Engagement

Post	Intertextual function
	Engagement in this post is created through the visual mode in the display of a paper invitation to the fashion show. This engages the audience as it creates the illusion of an individual invitation and recalls an old practice which nowadays has been replaced by new media. , the invitation performed through language encourages the audience to follow the Instagram account of the brand which as it is mentioned has been taken over by the artistic director of the collection. This practice is found to be *LV*-specific in the data.

The post in Table 4.38 also informs about the integration of old and new media and the mutual references to each other. The interpretation of this post is again the construal of this mass customization which is enacted through the combination of individual address via media for global outreach.

In order of frequency, it is the turn of 'iconic' as identifier of either iconic products or patterns which do not represent the object of the posts, but instead the source for the intertextual reference, which provides the positive association for the actual object which the discourse is about (Table 4.39).

Table 4.39 Iconic

Post	Intertextual function
	'Inspired by the lining of the iconic *Burberry* trench coat' In this post there is the launch of a product as brand stretching practice. The association between the new item and the iconic product in the transfer of the pattern to appeal the audience and convince it the even if *Burberry* is not leader in the watch industry the product is up to the standard of the brand, part of the process of production and refining of the details is also shown. The use of the iconic colour in the background augments the perception of iconicity.

The example above shows how a brand constructs associations between a product belonging to the brand stretching category and the iconic and core products. The new product category inherits the *aura* of iconicity, but regarded as more affordable.

The three brands examined also rely on 'Legitimacy', which is intertextually crafted in relation with artistic photography, fashion system, or references to authoritative voices used to position the brand in the pantheon of reputable firms ruling the luxury fashion market. The numerous examples point out to the role of fashion photography in the digital era, for example, among others, the example below (Table 4.40) is representative of this intertextual practice and highlights the role of the photographer as part of the branding strategies.

Table 4.40 Legitimacy – artistic photography

Post	Intertextual function
Burberry October 22, 2015 The Burberry #SnapchatCampaign. Captured by Mario Testino. Search 'Burberry' on Snapchat to watch the first 24 hour fashion campaign, from 5pm London time tomorrow. 👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share	'Captured by Mario Testino' Mario Testino [81] is a world-famous photographer invited by *Burberry* to realize the seasonal campaign. The choice of this particular photographer enriches the brand with an aura of iconicity given by the international artistic career of Mario Testino who is renowned for his portraits of contemporary icons such as Lady Diana and for his exhibitions in numerous museums all over the world.

The example shows how Mario Testino employed by *Burberry*, links his work to the conceptualization of beauty and its dissemination in different fashion magazines such as Vogue. Mario Testino has also used his work for philanthropic causes and received prestigious awards. These positive associations are immediately transferred to the brands that invite him to contribute to their campaigns.

It is common practice for luxury brands to invite well known photographers to realize photo shootings for their campaigns as the parallelism between art, photography, and fashion photography has been recently highlighted by the interest in organizing temporary exhibitions and permanent museums for the brands. The fame of photographers is given by their collaborations with fashion magazines, celebrities, and firms that immediately make them part of the fashion system. In this particular case (Table 4.40) the use of an artistic photographer for a 24hour-campaign to be shared on Snapchat contributes to different aspects of luxury fashion firms operating

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[81] Mario Testino's official website, *Mario Testino*, www.mariotestino.com [30/08/2016]

in the new media. *Snapchat*[82] is a social media, whose distinctive feature is the limited availability of the content in terms of time. In the use of *Snapchat* for *Burberry* campaign for instance, this will only be available on *Snapchat* for 24 hour. This re-construes the sense of exclusiveness and limited accessibility of luxury goods which is now given by the constraints of the medium used to distribute the branding narrative. Snapchat will be further explored in Chapter 5 as one of the future developments of this study due to its novelty and continuous evolution. In this context, Snapchat is not examined as a medium, but as part of information shared on the hosting platform which is *Facebook* used to vehicle traffic towards other media. The use of Mario Testino for this activity upgrades digital photography and gives new media the connotation of media able to host photographers' creations and being worthy to be used in such a high-end sector. This reverses the assumption in Chapter 1 about the erosion of luxury due to the use of new media and feeds the ultimate goal of this project to identify opportunities in the use of social network which do not push brands activities towards massification.

Other intertextual references emerged from the findings, CoO, for instance, is a key element of luxury fashion discursive practice as it is a key value of each branding narrative analyzed; however, the frequency of the reference does not score as the highest because the three brands selected as being global brands do not need to explicitly refer to their CoO as it is generally given as common knowledge to the audience. In terms of 'partnership' as symmetry with 'store location' has been observed which immediately recall the *Burberry* posts using both intertextual references because of the proximity of the flagship store and the partner (Table 4.41).

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[82] *Snapchat*, https://www.snapchat.com/ [30/08/2016]
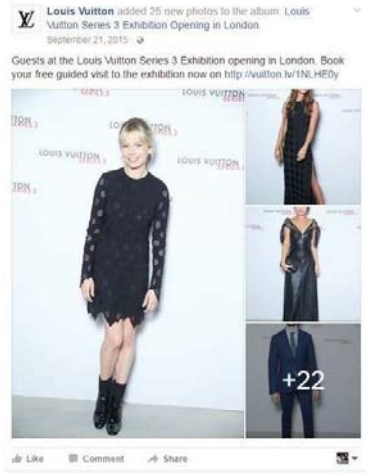
Table 4.41 CoO - partnership and store location

Post	Intertextual function
	'Rebel Rebel' refers to a local business partner that is a florist that contributes to make sense of the reality by relying on the meaning of flowers as being associated to gifts for mothers, or women for particular festivities. In the same way, there is the information about the store location which coincides with the flagship store in London, first digital store, and also the unique providing the services of the partnership between *Burberry* and Rebel Rebel.

Other forms of intertextuality are found to be construing 'aspiration', which is given by the use of the runway as the aspirational world to be consumed through the texts and be achieved through the purchase of the products. Important references are also related to the process of production of the products which brands refer to highlight to link their items to the artisanal practice of handicrafts which is far from the massive production of other industries. This also falls into the categories of references, which assign the brand to the luxury goods market and focuses on the conventional definition of luxury (see Chapter 2), which is here recalled for legitimacy of positioning.

Louis Vuitton, for example, draws our attention on the importance of creating a 'sense of continuity', which links the contemporary activities of the brand to the old ones in order to address the long tradition behind the practices (Table 4.42).

Table 4.42 Sense of continuity

Post	Intertextual function
	'Series 3' 'Exhibition opening in London' The fact that at the time of the post they are running series 3 already suggests that there have been series 1 and 2. Also we know from other posts which London is not the only city to host the exhibition.

The traditional use of this sense of continuity explained in Chapter 2, as well as the example offered by *LV* (Table 4.42), is explanatory of how luxury brands tend to reproduce a sense of continuity in sharing posts which are intentionally link to each other and which feeds the overarching branding narrative throughout time even within the contemporary timeframe.

Additionally, the example in Table 4.43 is another instance of those posts, which inform the viewer about the use of *Facebook* posts to construe the narrative. The narrative is the result of the joint work of several posts connected by cohesive devices, which are realized through different modes. 'Long tradition', explains the origins of a branded product go beyond the boundaries of specific items and focus on the origins of menswear for instance, but also 'inspiration' is recreated in this post as in most cases posts contain more intertextual references.

Table 4.43 Long tradition

Post	Intertextual function
	'Kim Jones takes inspiration from India for the latest Men's Spring 2015 Campaign: an exploration of the origins of menswear.'
	India is the country which inspired the collection presented in the post and additional information is provided regarding the origins of menswear.

The post gives India the credits for the origins of the menswear; however in the history of clothing the information seem to be Eurocentric and attributing the birth of fashion in general to France in which also the word 'tailor' was coined in the form of 'tailleur'[83]; however, Indian tradition of tailors is very well known around the world.

Explicit forms of intertextual references in the most conventional terms are citations of particular sources. *Gucci*, for instance, cites Roland Barthes (Table 4.44).

Table 4.44 Citations

Post	Intertextual function
	'The Contemporary is the Untimely' (Roland Barthes) By bringing Roland Barthes on stage, Alessandro Michele, tries to legitimize his view of the contemporary. The idea behind the collection is to blur boundaries and go beyond the conventional rules of fashion to boost creativity (Amsden, 20 November 2015). , women do not wear any make-up, floral patterns are worn by both men and women, and the outfits overlap between the two.

The post reports the interpretation of the contemporary given by Alessandro Michele,

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83   *OED*, http://www.oed.com/ [01/03/2017]

which did not excite the fashion system and it collected not little criticism. The quote from Barthes appeared also on the wall of Shanghai exhibition about the concept of 'contemporary', which was curated by both Alessandro Michele and Katie Grand and was entitled "No Longer/Not yet" as ultimate description of the 'contemporary' (Amsden, 2015). This could be interpreted as an attempt to soften the criticism by infusing his thoughts with authorities such as Roland Barthes.

In contrast, Alessandro Michele is quoted as well in order to legitimize his own work and provide an interpretation of collections. This information is often used to craft the press release to accompany the fashion show. The press release of a fashion is aimed at providing guidelines to the press in terms of interpretation of the collection itself. This type of citation is defined as 'pseudoquotes' (Okonkwo, 2010) and it is a practice very well known in the fashion system and luxury fashion goods market in particular to construe authoritative voices based on the internal voices within the brand world. In this case, the artistic director of a campaign (Table 4.45).

Table 4.45 Pseudoquotes

Post	Intertextual function
	"There is a more nuanced, subtle and multidimensional romanticism in my collections, moving away from overt sexuality'. Alessandro Michele, *Gucci* creative director'. In explicitly citing Alessandro Michele, this post relies on an internal authoritative voice which functions as source for clarifying the style of the campaign. The quote is reported from the creative director as a caption to the visual resources.

The use of pseudoquotes is a common practice in luxury goods market (Okonkwo, 2010), and in the digital era it acquires a bigger impact due to the ease to be distributed and recalled at convenience.

Looking back at citations and at the example above (Table 4.45), Alessandro Michele who is the authoritative voice of the pseudoquote needs to call on board Roland Barthes to legitimize his interpretation of the contemporary. The use of citations and pseudoquotes contributes to the discussion about personification of the brand in different terms from the ones introduced by the findings but more related to the idea of getting to know who is behind the scenes. It is related to the fact that in the luxury goods market the ownership of work is as important as in the artistic production. Personification of the brand starts from the use of family name till the identification of people who create the brand identity throughout time. This is in contrast to the use of the word 'personification' in this chapter which mainly refers to the resembling of human participants through inanimate objects to indicate the brand.

Overall, intertextual constructions are realized through textual, visual, and multimodal texts. Intertextuality benefits from the core values of the brands, which represent the sources of inspiration for the branding strategies used in the social media. The findings showed the dominant sources of intertextuality, and among others, art is the most significant to luxury fashion, as it is constructed in higher percentage, but also intrinsic part of the brand identitity.

4.3.2.2 Discussion

The previous section presented intertextuality as an embedded feature of discourse (Halliday, 1978). Intertextuality also characterizes advertising both offline (Cook, 1992; Feng & Wignell, 2011; Tanaka, 1992; Vastegaard & Schroeder, 1985) and online

(Lam, 2013), and social media posts as hybrid discursive practices inherit this feature as well. Despite the discursive practice, intertextual references are used to construct positive associations between brands, products and other elements, considered able to generate additional values.

Luxury fashion branding discourse construct intertextual references based on the relation between the brands and elements such as cinema, music, and art, among others. Among all of them, the artistic component of luxury in the digital era acquires additional meanings because of its reproducibility boosted by the industrialization 4.0. The sublime aura of luxury goods, given by their endurance and origins in exotic places, found its primordial erosion in the reproducibility of art (Benjamin, 1935).

Reproducibility clashes with the uniqueness and rarity of luxury and transforms the goods into a commodity. The process of production becomes automatized and dilutes the symbolic value of artisanship (Kapferer, 2015). When luxury becomes an industry, brands change their purpose and focus on the financial growth to please their shareholders more than preserving the actual brand identity and products. As a consequence, communication changes as well and the rational claims behind the advertisements blur the boundaries between luxury and premium goods. The relation between the two worlds finds its definition as "structural proximity" (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012, p. 107). Both of them detaining a symbolic and visual value occur in the same social environment (Peterson, 2008). Both aim to construct beauty and hedonism based on the aesthetics of taste from the past (Cothey, 1990; Gethmann-Sierfert, 1995; Schmucker, 1998).

Overall, art is visually constructed through the exploitation of Renaissance and it relies on the composition of the image, the use of particular colours or patterns, poses

of the models, attention to details, pastiche forms, source of inspiration. This phenomenon named 'Renaissance effect' or appropriation along a continuum line based on perception and intertextuality accomplishes the function of upgrading the status of the product, evoking the features of Renaissance, building a strong relationship to the heritage of the country, and Europe. This is an established practice, which not only applies to original European brands but it is borrowed from other emerging brands Vietinio for instance albeit being from Vietnam is still willing to attach itself to France and use Renaissance art as a strategy to attach itself to its colonial times.

The findings provide instances of intertextual references to the art world in different forms: *GucciGram*, a project that transforms art into a hybrid digital form of art (Kastner, 2014), exhibitions organized about the (hi)story of the brand, visual merchandising display organized as if they were glass cases for pieces of art, and also sponsorship and participations to art events. Furthermore, the fact of having a creative director playing a pivotal role behind the scenes of a brand that becomes the actual face of a brand and of a specific fashion season (Topping, 2012), and also collections featured with artists, make the whole process of production strictly related to art in the era of commercialization.

GucciGram is a virtual space created by *Gucci* to negotiate celebrations of the brand with the artist. Artists are commissioned pastiche, which combine *Gucci* elements, from patterns, to products, with artworks from the classic times and Renaissance. In addition to the works commissioned, *GucciGram* also hosts spontaneous contributions of artists who follow the same style. In the realizations of digital artworks, a mutual process of branding between the brand and the artist takes place. *Gucci* legitimates the artists as such and gives them the opportunity to be

globally consumed, and at the same time *Gucci* is associated with art. Moreover, the fact that the works are pastiche of classic artworks and *Gucci* elements, the brand goes through the process of artification.

Artification of the brands occurs in the sub-corpora of *Gucci* and *LV* inviting the audience to visit exhibitions and announcing participation and organization of art events. In terms of continuity, *LV*, for instance, also have a series of exhibitions that keep the audience waiting for the next round of artworks. At the same time, the use of terms belonging to the semantic field of art like the use of the verb 'visit' to encourage the audience to go to the shop implies that the visit does not necessarily lead to a purchase; however, the post itself is constructed to increase the revenues. The arrangement of the merchandising in the flagship stores recalls art galleries and the journey of the customer is planned to create the visit to a museum and sometimes even taken to the level of private collections[84]. Some brands from time to time host artisans in the shop to enhance the perception of the product as handcrafted to justify the price. *LV* for instance shares on *Facebook* its participation at *Salone del Mobile* and the location where to visit to legitimize its products as art pieces.

Other studies (Kastner, 2014; Nervino, 2016) explained the way intertextuality is constructed, the present study is concerned with the fact that social media are used to promote the artification of luxury with the aim of re-establishing the luxury aura, but also the commercialization of luxury goods as art, which dilutes art as well in the era in which art has become a business itself; however, art "elevates wealth" by default because it is an "elitist language" that crosses the geographical boundaries itself (Kapferer, 2015, p. 74). Entering a new market through semiotic choices belonging to the art repertoire frames the brand as a "guest" instead of a "conqueror" and favours a

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[84] Store observation and research on innovation in retail experience.

long-term love affair (Kapferer, 2015, p. 74). Coincisely, the proximity between art and luxury aims to revamping the brand starting from heritage like *LV* that reinvents its iconic Monogram via artistic collaborations (e.g. the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami); enhance the cultural component of branded creations; reducing the perception of the goods as reproducible (Benjamin, 1935); creating craftsmanship barrier to newcomer brands (Kapferer, 2015).

The intertextual references described in this section are a synthesis of the process of artification of luxury that operates at different levels and involves different institutions (Kapferer, 2015). Figure 4.74 summarizes the portfolio of artification practices in terms of institutions involved, degree of engagement, and impact on brands. The highlighted parts represent the features found in the corpus.
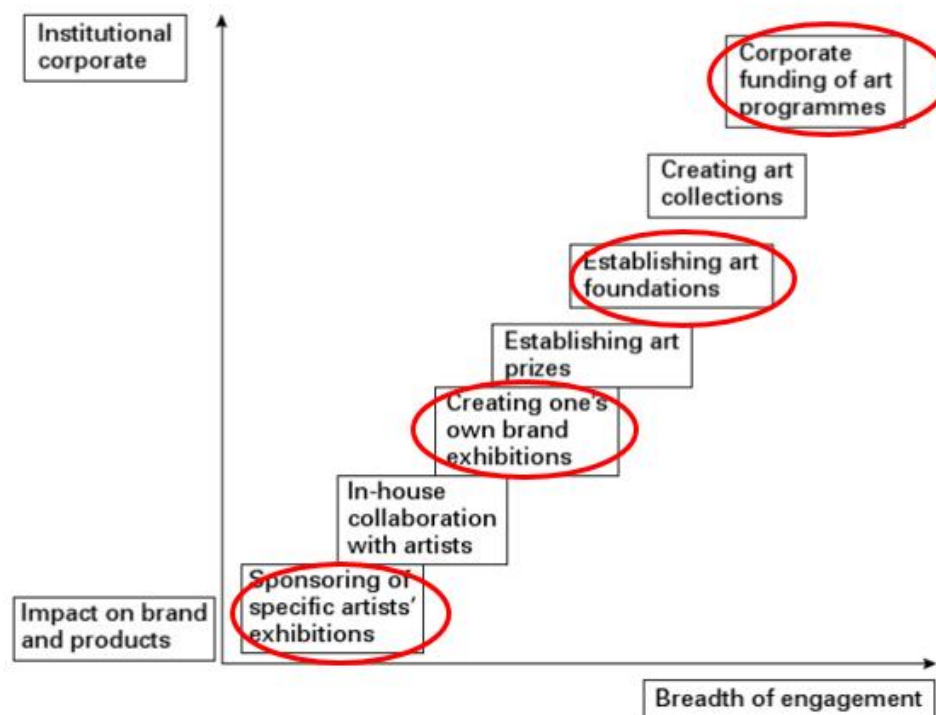

Figure 4.74 Artification ladder. Adapted from Kapferer (2015, p. 81)

Kapferer's figure (Figure 4.74) has been edited with red highlighting to point out the

strategies adopted by the brands examined and available in the findings. Creating art collections is a usual practice of *Gucci* and *LV*, in addition to having brand exhibition, in-house collaborations are a leit-motif in the process of reinventing the Monogram for *LV* and revamping the floral pattern for *Gucci*, sponsoring artists' exhibition covers the CSR activities of *Gucci* and *LV*. *Burberry*, in this practice, remains isolated and does not engage in artketing strategies because it would suggest an artificial and forced association to a world dominated by Italy and France.

Figure 4.75 describes the contemporary artistic scenario as invaded by non-purely artistic works like fashion artefacts, for instance, that claim the label of art and succeed it in obtaining it thanks to the highly curated discourse about them. Here, the highlighting refers to the instances encountered in the findings.
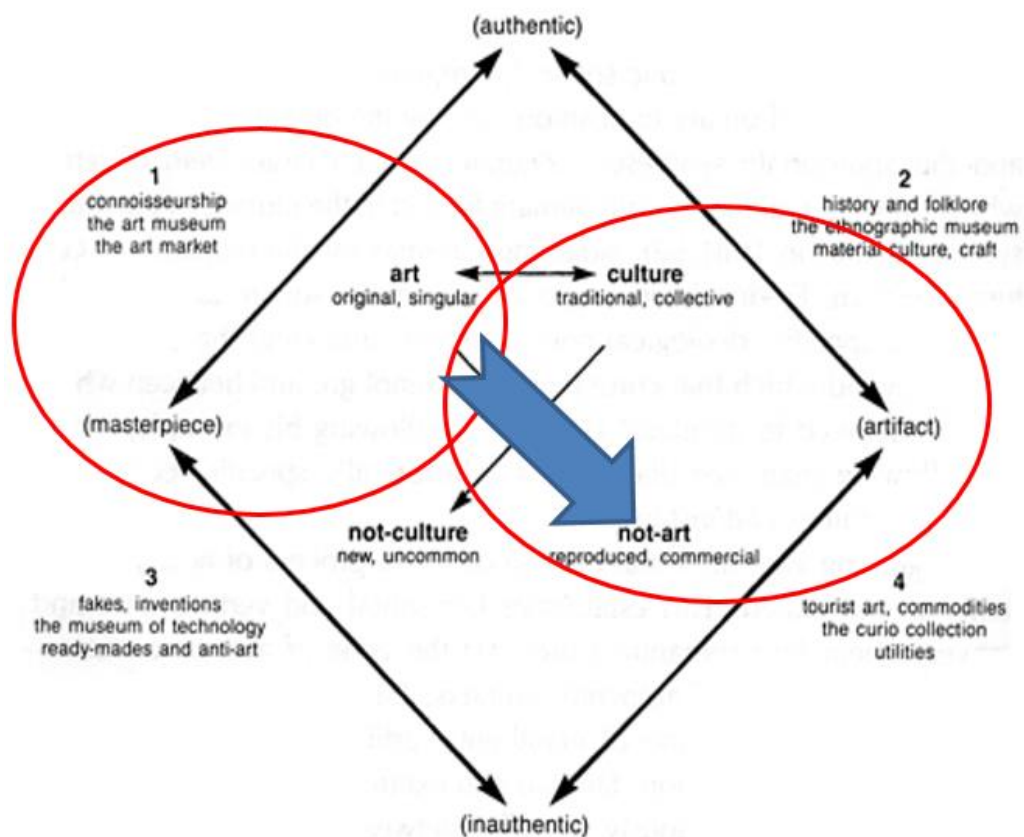

Figure 4.75 The art-culture system. Adapted from Sturken and Cartwright (2009, p. 64)

Figure 4.75 adapted from Sturken & Cartwright (2009) shows a cline, which distributes creations from authentic to inauthentic and from masterpiece and unique piece to artefact, and redefines works according to the value of art and culture. Based on those alternative values positioned at the extremes of the figure; however, they do not represent a genuine mutual exclusivity. The brands examined operate along the cline that perpendicularly crosses the zones of connoisseurship and commodities because conceptually they produce unique masterpieces that are later distributed on a larger scale as commodity; therefore, the shift from one side to another, following the blue arrow, is due to the discursive construction of the brands and products that elevates the commercial soul of the business behind that.

The process of artification occurs in a diverse way for *LV*, and it is almost inexistent in *Burberry* sub-corpus. The reason dates back to the history of the respective CoO and its transfer to brand (hi)story. *Gucci*, the Italian brand, relies on the Renaissance effect (Belfanti, 2015a; 2015b), and it even dates back to Classicism with reference to Ancient Greek art (see Section 2.2.3). *LV*, being from France, in the dataset does not have any particular reference to its CoO; however, it undergoes artification by treating its products as artworks. *LV* was first established in 1854, in contrast with *Gucci*, founded in 1921. Hence, *LV* relates to art through artistic manifestations of its own creations such as exhibition, use of promotional material from the past, revamping its iconic Monogram through artistic collaborations. *Burberry*, founded in 1856, is the one that enacts artification by designating its trench coat as a 'heritage'. The trench coat was designed in 1901 for the British Army, as celebrated in its last short film[85]; however, *Burberry* is keen to target young generations rejuvenating the trench and conveying innovation and high-quality.

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[85] *The Tale of Thomas Burberry*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6219898/ [09/07/2017]

Perhaps, *Gucci* is using past to compensate its short (hi)story, whereas *LV*, and *Burberry* do not need to emphasize what they have as given.

4.3.2.3   Emerging site-specific discursive practices

Research findings obtained from the analysis of the dataset in its different semiotic modes and their semiotic interplay offer instances of emerging site-specific discursive practices (Ravazzani & Maier, 2017; Tifentale & Manovich, 2016; Zappavigna, 2016; Zhao & Zappavigna, 2017). The emerging site-specific discursive practices are the result of the interdiscursive performances of the texts, which rely on the adoption of intertextuality and the appropriation of semiotic resources from other contexts to enhance the communicative purposes of the corporate *Facebook* posts.

The site-specific discursive practices are generated by the mode-combinations framed by the use of social media platforms and the continuous experimentation of semiotic construal of branding messages. They are hypertextual advertisements, advertorials, live streaming, meta-representation, selfies, and instant films. First of all, corporate *Facebook* posts as hypertextual advertisements represent a site-specific discursive practice itself characterized by a generic structure given by the platform and a specific communicative purpose given by the corporate nature of the agenda behind the construction of the editorial content. They are a combination of advertising discourse and hypertexts.

Secondly, among the *Facebook* posts analyzed, hybrid discursive practices - advertorials - have been identified as instances of re-semiotization of YouTube tutorials linked to the post via a hyperlink categorized as mode-change hyperlink (Lam, 2013). These types of text are instances of re-semiotization of meanings across platforms and adapted to the affordances of the medium. If YouTube is projected to

host videos, *Facebook* in re-semiotizing the same content and willing to diversify the experience utilizes the semiotic resources of text and still images to grab the attention of the user and redirect him/her to the original media text via the input of a hyperlink.

Thirdly, *Facebook* posts promoting the consumption of information like the case of live streaming of a fashion show linking to an external platform able to host a live streaming of an event. The category of mode-changing (live) hyperlinks represents the birth of a discursive practices, which generates consequences in the accessibility of information and goods in luxury fashion industry (production and distribution) in terms of corporate communication, and at the same has an impact on the business models of brands. For instance, the *Burberry* "'See Now Buy Now' Fashion Show" (Halliday, 2015; Cochrane, 5 February 2016) becomes not only a discursive *genre*, but a new business model that increases the number of pieces produced for the runway collection and the all the supply chain involved in the process of production of the garments changes going from a sampling collection to be consumed by celebrities only to build the image of the brand, to marketable pieces to be available online, and in-store (Okonkwo, 2007; Gnoli, 2012). The limited access to the pieces is instead constructed in terms of instant availability for the few and accessibility to the mass after months. The exclusivity is then transformed into instant rarity as the product of its times (Thurlow, 2015; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016).

Moreover, this discursive practice focuses on another aspect of communication, hyperlinks performing the live function have been labeled as mode-change (live) to be distinguished from a hyperlink whose destination is an archive. In the case of live streaming, the problem encountered is to retrieve the data if not deposited in any archive. Obviously, fashion shows are documented and re-semiotized in different forms because they are used to maximize aspirations; however, the launch of Snapchat

that first released the live streaming videos brought up the discussion about the impossibility to capture the 24h stories of Snapchat that dissolve once the screen is accessed on both sides of the communication chain (Gualberto & Kress, forthcoming; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2010). This does not allow "intelligent reflection" because there is not time to contemplate and no archive is available (Gualberto & Kress, forthcoming). In the dataset Snapchat is present with its screenshots, to be considered the fourth emerging *genre* detected in the data, and hyperlinks directing to the live streaming of fashion shows. Furthermore, the references to Snapchat in the dataset connote a pioneering attitude of the brands towards the social mediascape in contrast with the channel conflict still in vogue.

The fourth discursive practice identified is based on a meta-representation of other media texts. The sharing of printed media texts the dataset also presented instances of screenshots of Snapchat snapshots that controversially make Snapchat snapshots part of an archive against its nature. This is interpreted as a promotion of a promotional tool and at the same time the advertisement of an editorial content to be consumed. Hence, it is another example of how branding discourse is tailored made to attract the millennials that colonize and explore all the emerging messaging platforms. Brands in that sense show their up-to-date attitude towards technology.

The fifth is the selfie, and its meta-representation of a photo of someone taking a selfie. Selfies have been examined by scholars especially in terms of identity construction (Zappavigna, 2016; Tifentale & Manovich, 2017), upgrading of status while reporting a trip to a specific destination or visit to a museum (Ok Lyu, 2016), and identification of selfies as a new *genre* in a particular context of culture like celebrity culture (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2015). This latter reflects more the use of selfie in the dataset that interestingly portrays the shift from an institutional and top-down

elaboration of editorial content to consumer-oriented communicative strategies. Hence, by looking at photography as a social activity in the last two decades it has evolved from a moment of creation of memories for private consumption to a massive practice aimed to construct an aspirational world built on the ideal self to be consumed for the others (van Dijk, 2005). Selfie is a manifested occupation of a specific moment in history and the focus of attention is no longer the fact captures in the snapshot but the presence of the photographer. Selfies incarnate the consumer-oriented communicative strategies because they are UGC *genre*. It is no longer the case that printed media and advertising campaigns dictate the rules for the perfect photography and inspire ordinary people to emulate the pose of celebrities, but instead today's practice pushes celebrities to take photos in the ways the audience has actually established as model to be followed. The bottom-up ruling influenced fashion photography and contributed to the dilution of luxury fashion because the innocent selfies shared by creative directors and models are a manifestation of acceptance of the reversed roles. The dataset reveals the emergence of new *genre* and they are a reflection of discursive practices established by the users. Recently, marketing strategies have been populated by a series of experimentations of UGC and UGA (Rossolatos, 2017) that slowly entered the branding activities. Consumers have acquired the title of prosumers and turned the fear of luxury brands for content out of their control into a powerful tool. Projects such as *The Art of Trench* for *Burberry* and *Gucci Eyeweb* marked the era of institutionalization of UGC as a contributor to brand identity in luxury goods market. Besides its recognition in the luxury goods market, the use of selfies and photographs portraying consumers with products is widely spread in different sectors and represents the new word-of-mouth (WOM).

The sixth practice emerged is the use of photos resembling instant films that keep

the frame of polaroid in the process of being posted on *Facebook*. The dataset reported this practice as a prerogative of *Gucci*; however, a cross-check conducted *a posteriori* on a dataset from 2017 from both *Facebook*, and Instagram confirmed that the use of white framing has been incorporated as a spread semiotic choice by other brands as well, *Burberry* included. The use of white borders already in 2010 was intended to be a feature of *Facebook* platform as reported on *Facebook* website. The purpose of editing the borders was meant to give photographs "an authentic feel"[86]. White borders confer authenticity to photographs that become a direct extension of offline practice that perceived as belonging to reality. I would then argue that based on the fact that the shared opinion in regard to the white framed photos shared by *Gucci* as instances of authenticity and product of reality that the brands chooses to share these photos to legitimize the digital practice as true relationship between the brand and the audience without the mediation of marketing departments (Kapferer, 2015; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016). *LV* statement of creative director's management of social media accounts performs the same function.

Additionally, the semiotic construction of a discourse based on authenticity is interpreted as the willingness of the brand to bring the audience behind the scenes of the process of production that is realized through different photographic experimentations that are documented through polaroid photos (Johannessen & Boeriis, 2016); therefore, my additional claim includes the use of white framed photos as sharing the process of creation of editorial content and taking the user on a journey from production to consumption. Corporate *Facebook* posts not only display final products like printed media in which space has a price due to advertising and printing

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[86] Adding Borders to Your Photos, *Facebook website*,
https://www.facebook.com/notes/photobucket/adding-borders-to-your-photos/372480343308/
[20/04/2017]

costs, but instead offers an opportunity to share inedited content that would never be consumed otherwise. Digital photography and smartphones in this sense reduce the timeframe between production and distribution of photography because the waiting time for printing and view of the final product is inexistent (Johannessen & Boeriis, 2016). Digital photography allows photographers to take photos whose they know the result differently from the past (Johannessen & Boeriis, 2016). I observed this phenomenon based on my experience in a fashion firm that provided me with the awareness of this particular type of photographs as being the prototypes of a collection and subsequent campaign. Discussing this, other colleagues kindly examining my dataset the concept of intertextuality, came up as a fundamental pillar of the interpretation of texts. But, who the is brand talking to? The firsthand answer would be brands on social media talk to the masses, and only the first interpretation reflects the dominant perception; however, I would argue that in the construction of the branding discourse the segmentation of the audience is parallel to the segmentation of the market, and to the fragmentation of information claimed by the CEO of *South China Moring Post* (Liu, FCC, 2017) as a product of our times. Brands construct their branding discourse aware of this segmented knowledge and play on distribution as a mode to target different audience at the same time.

In a nutshell, the fact that *Facebook* pages are liked and followed indistinctively by fashionistas, competitors, consumers, potential consumers, aspirational consumers and the apparent democratic distribution of the discourse is mediated by the individual social identity of the information consumer that decode meanings based on his/her own experience. In the case of editorial content aimed to convert information consumption into short-term revenues ATA and SATA help with the spatio-temporal location of the meanings to reduce the social distance within the stratification of the

market and explicitly sell the items for occasions such as Mother's Day, Christmas, in which the entry products inhabit the discourse more than the iconic products.

Hence, different semiotic resources contribute to shape meanings and create discursive practices that perform blended socio-semiotic processes (see Section 4.4). The different semiotic phenomena identified depend on the evolutionary shift from printed media to new media and the dynamic digital context in which the screen as interface that mediates the production of meanings and its distribution by enabling and constraining its consumption according to its size (Jenkins, 2013). Moreover, the conspicuous production of photos and consequent shares is reinforced by the continuous demand for information raised by the internet that framed the instant culture where texts are created and quickly pulverized becoming obsolete within few seconds. This is in contrast to fashion magazines which are published monthly and maintain readers waiting for longer period of time.

4.3.4 Summary

The interplay of the different affordances involved in the meaning-making process were also observed as a natural development of the intersemiosis process enacted by the compositional meanings. The findings regarding the LOG-SEM relations between text and images reported on the co-deployment of textual and visual resources to construct meanings in which both resources contribute at the same generality (Martinec & Salway, 2005). This enhances the role of textual resources as anchoring the potential of the visual resources to be interpreted in various nuances. In contrast, the system of elaboration presents an optionality of exemplification in which the meanings conveyed by text as more general than the ones constructed via visual resources that in this case limit the potential of the textual resources. The system of

exemplification recalls Barthes's (1987) framework for the systematization of the relations between text and images and it translates the level of delicacy of 'text more general' and 'image more general' in 'anchor' and 'relay' respectively. In this sense fashion photographs and captions disseminated through *Facebook* posts are interpreted as a re-semiotization of magazine editorials. The instances of extension instead assign more information to textual resources over visual because given the *genre* of social selling textual resources compensate the multisensorial experience replacing touch for the identification of fabrics for instance, and the interpersonal relationship that characterizes an offline encounter with a brand ambassador (Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2016; Jewitt, 2016). The small percentage of enhancement equalizes the role of text and images by preventing the evaluation in terms of density of meanings.

Additionally, the specific mode-combinations are symptomatic of application of branding strategies designed for social media, the orchestration of different semiotic resources and their semiotic labour is governed by the hosting platform. Eventually, the intersemiotic relations become a signal for detecting the attachment to printed media that interferes with the nature of the medium by enhancing the hybridity of the platform. In constructing the branding narrative an important role is played by intertextuality that is both constructed through textual and visual resources simultaneously with few instances of monomodal intertextuality.

Intertextuality restore the antique relationship between luxury and art by enhancing the sense of continuity from the Renaissance (Belfanti 2015a; 2015b; Kastner).

The intertextual references and interdiscursive performances are constructed through the deployment of different semiotic resources, and enacted the formation of site-specific discursive practices as a product of hybridization of practices from offline and online experience. The multimodal analysis highlights the orchestration of different modes as experimentation of digitalizing the branding discourse that are used to construct the features of luxury in an offline world. The discursive practices resulted from the interdiscursive performances are namely: the *Facebook* posts construed as hypertextual advertisements, advertorials (advertisement +tutorial), live streaming which also contributed to a new accessible format of fashion show (Mohr, 2013; Halliday, 2015), meta-representation of other media such as photos of Snapchat stories posted on *Facebook* to display the Snapchat activities and facilitate media integration, selfie which is not new to netizens but acquires an additional meaning in framing the affordability and accessibility of luxury brands, instant film *Facebook* posts which materialize the fact that online entities strive for authenticity by borrowing features from printed media.

The site-specific mode-combination together with the emerging discursive practices contribute to the ultimate purpose of social media of building the visibility of the brand globally. The hypertextual nature of the digital multimodal artefacts promotes the integration of different platforms, but at the same time reconnects the digital media with the printed ones creating a transmedia net (Jenkins, 2006) that feeds the overarching storytelling about the brand.

4.4 Branding discursive practices: an interwoven of socio-semiotic blends

This section addresses the third research question: What are the socio-semiotic processes that frame the branding discursive practices of the corporate *Facebook* posts?

4.4.1. Multisemiotic blends

The socio-semiotic blends have been identified through a systematic analysis of the different component, namely the nature of the platform, the brand agenda, ATA, SATA, and CTA in its textual and visual instantiations. The section is organized as follows: Section 4.4.1.1 presents the overall findings for the identification of the socio-semiotic processes; Section 4.4.1.2 shows the comparison of the results across brands; Section 4.4.1.3 provides a discussion in relation to previous studies; Section 4.4.1.4 summarizes the section.

4.4.1.1 Facebook platform, brand agenda, ATA, SATA, and CTA

This section unpacks the result obtained from the analysis of the socio-semiotic processes based on the elements involved in the constriction of corporate *Facebook* posts namely the platform, brand agenda, ATA, SATA, and CTA.

Corporate *Facebook* posts, given the nature of the platform and the brand agenda behind their use, perform the socio-semiotic process of 'reporting' and 'recommending' in their sub-categories of 'chronicling' and 'promoting' respectively. 'Reporting', because *Facebook* by default is a collection of status updates bundled together to create a sequence of events that generates a narrative flow on the timeline; 'recommending', because those status updates have a promotional agenda disguised as storytelling posts that do not directly call for purchase of products.

ATA, being totally generated by *Facebook* platform, reinforce the 'reporting' process by conveying the essential information about status updates for example the brand posting it, the date to freeze the event in time, the target audience indicated by

the icon of content distribution.

Findings obtained from the analysis of SATA also contribute to the 'reporting' meaning of the post and extend the function to the 'expounding' process in its sub-category of 'categorizing' because of the labeling system that allocates the status updates into albums in the case of album-posts for instance. The example below (Image 4.89) gathers the socio-semiotic processes of 'reporting' and 'expounding' consistently unfolded by the semi-SATA.

Image 4.89 Reporting and Expounding in the SATA
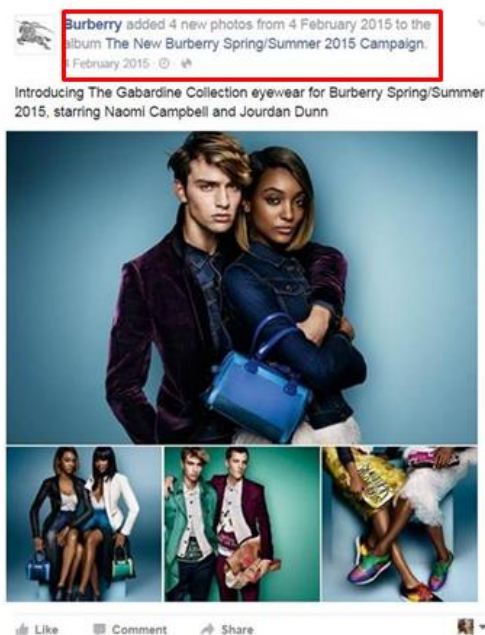
The two processes of 'reporting' and 'expounding' present the action of adding images to a named album that becomes a specific label that works as a classifier and makes the post a searchable talk providing granularity to the narrative of the brand and facilitating the navigation of the corporate *Facebook* fan page (Nielsen, 2000; Zappavigna, 2012).

Overall, *Facebook* platform, brand agenda, ATA, and SATA generate the multisemiotic blends of (Reporting +Recommending+Expounding) identified as fixed formula characterizing corporate *Facebook* posts. These blends are combined with the blends generated by CTA. CTA are examined in their textual and visual resources, individually annotated first and later combined for the definition of the multisemiotic blends.

The results for the textual resources are presented in Figure 4.76.
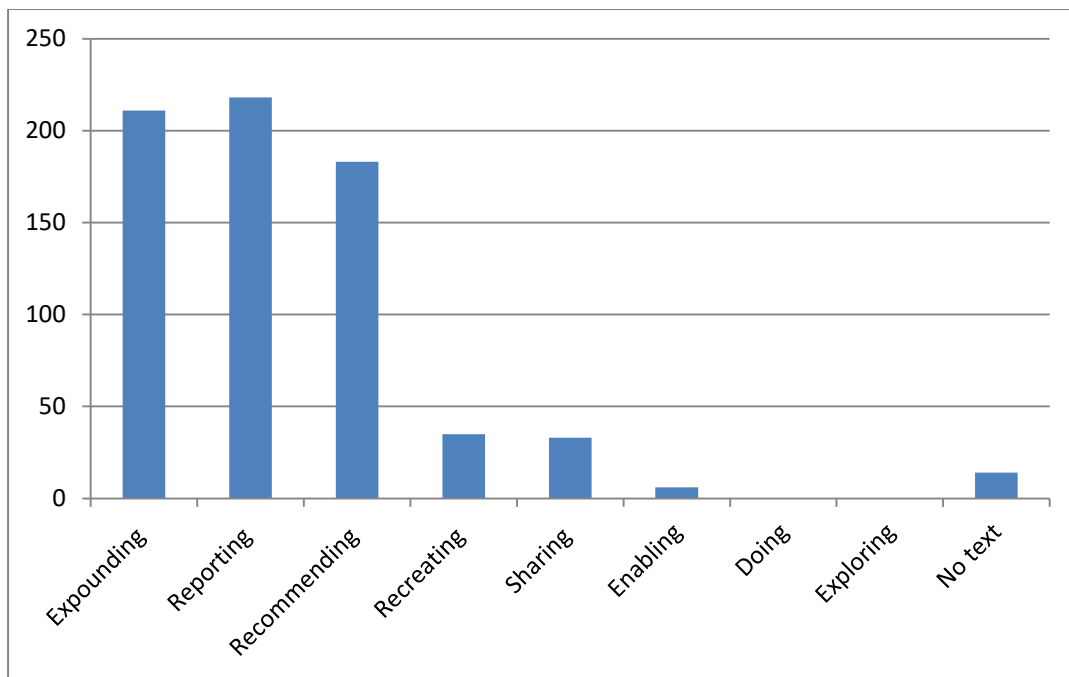
Figure 4.76 Socio-semiotic processes performed by textual resources

The socio-semiotic processes constructed through textual resources are 'expounding' (N=211, 30%), 'reporting' (N=211, 32%), and 'recommending' (N=183, 26%). The findings reflect the fixed formula obtained through the examination of the medium used to convey messages in its social semiotic order, the brand agenda behind its use, and ATA and SATA that are totally and partially produced by the *Facebook* platform. Precisely, those socio-semiotic processes of 'explaining', 'chronicling', and 'promoting' are frequent. In smaller percentages, textual resources also construe 'recreating' (N=35, 5%), 'sharing' (N=33, 5%), and 'enabling' (N=6, 1%). Also, a few posts have not been annotated as they consist only of images (N=14, 2%). Examples of the socio-semiotic processes occurring with the highest frequency are provided in Table 4.46.

Table 4.46 Examples of textual construction

Socio-semiotic process	Post	Textual resource
Expounding		The text explains the object of the post by providing details.
Reporting		The text reports about the issue of a cover with *Gucci* items. This post freezes an event in time.
Recommending		The use of the imperative in this post pragmatically re-construes promotional discourse in inviting the audience to follow the official Instagram account of *Louis Vuitton* as it has been taken over by Kim Jones. The item promoted here is the content which has to be consumed to enhance brand awareness.

Table 4.46 provides examples of the socio-semiotic processes constructed through

textual resources and at the same time shows which elements have been considered to

annotate such socio-semiotic processes. The semantic and lexico-grammatical features reported as indicators to assign a specific process constitute a theoretical contribution to the application of the registerial cartography (Matthiessen, 2015).

Figure 4.77 shows the distribution of the visual semiotic labour across processes.
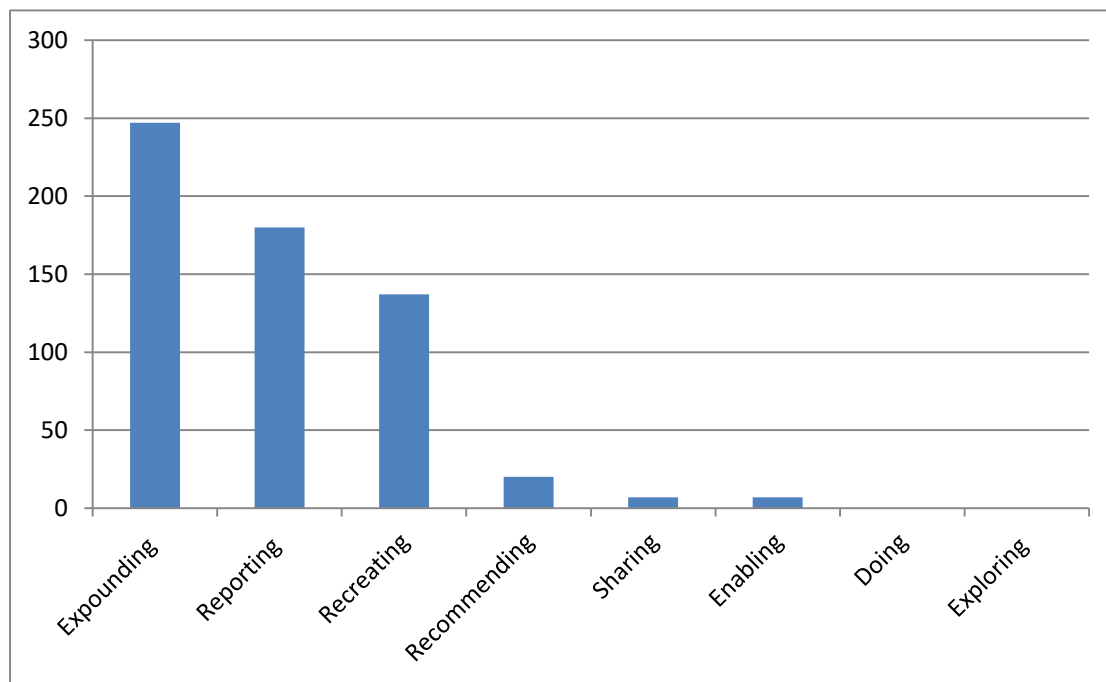
Figure 4.77 Socio-semiotic processes performed by visual resources

For visual resources the most frequent socio-semiotic processes are 'expounding' (N=247, 42%), 'reporting' (N=18, 30%), and 'recreating' (N=137, 23%). The visual resources are more difficult to annotate because of their both ambiguous and ambivalent meaning; however, the systematic annotation based on the representational and interactional meanings discussed in the previous sections facilitated the identification of the socio-semiotic processes. 'Expounding' occurs into two sub-categories, namely 'explaining' and 'categorizing'. 'Explaining' is instantiated through narrative processes describing actions, whereas 'categorizing' is instantiated through conceptual processes that classify the items displayed within a specific category. The classificational processes is very often related to the semiotic labour of

the SATA and the textual semiotic work. 'Reporting', same as for the textual resources, construes the sub-category of 'chronicling'. 'Recreating' is totally construed through narrative effect, mainly realized through extradiegetic colours and explained in the previous section. In smaller percentages, also 'recommending', 'enabling', and 'sharing' are constructed through visual resources.

Table 4.47 shows examples of 'expounding', 'reporting', and 'recreating' socio-semiotic processes.

Table 4.47 Examples of visual construction

Socio-semiotic process	Post	Visual resource
Expounding		The image is explicative of the text and offers details about the content conveyed by the textual features. The images allow the visualization of the details which compose the item. This post is also one of the album-post types identified in Section 4.3.2. The function of the images is to explain and unfolds the details of a product.
Reporting		The use of the cover of a magazine as image in a post freezes the event which is a cover dedicated to *Gucci* in a specific timeframe. In the case of covers, they are kept as archive and constitute milestones in the media plan of a brand.

Recreating		The image in this post has been categorized as performing a 'recreating' process because of its romanticizing feature given by the use an advertisement from 1965 which entitles the campaign as 'Volez, Voguez, Voyagez' which suggests the reference to the Spirit of Travel at the core of the brand values. Also the colour side of the picture provides a background which semiotizes the idea of holiday as it is linked to the overarching narrative of a campaign which tries to recall exotic landscapes to evoke holiday mood.

Textual and visual resources in the construction of the socio-semiotic processes perform differently, the Figure 4.78 shows the path of both modes distributed across the processes.
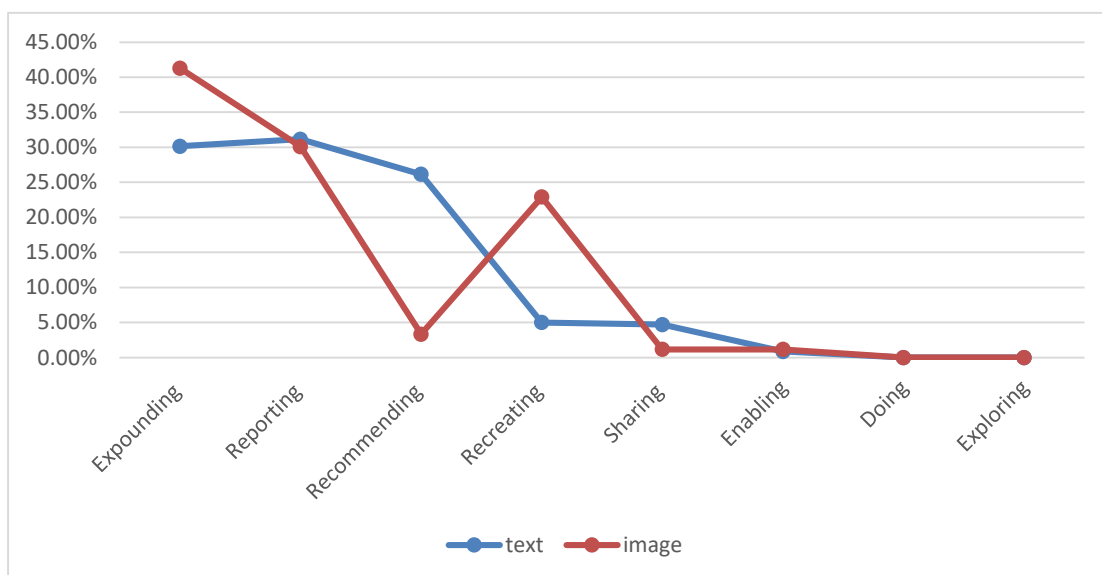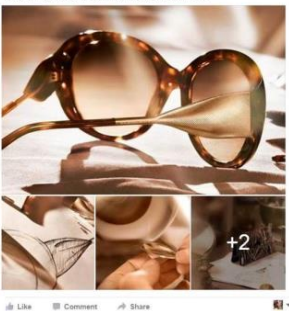

Figure 4.78 Socio-semiotic processes across modes

Figure 4.78 summarizes the semiotic behavior of textual and visual mode in the construction of the socio-semiotic processes. The textual resources homogenously perform expounding, reporting, and recommending, and the line drops in the other processes. This demonstrates the linear behavior of textual resources that analyze individually do not present much variety. The visual line instead illustrates a more heterogeneous, and unpredictable behavior of images. The interesting curve shows how images do not perform any explicit recommending socio-semiotic process, but shift the semiotic labour to more recreative activities.

The results have also been analyzed in terms of co-occurrence between socio-semiotic processes constructed via different semiotic resources. Table 4.48 reports examples of co-occurring events between the textual construction of 'expounding' and the complementary semiotic work performed by the visual modes.

Table 4.48 Examples of 'Expounding +'
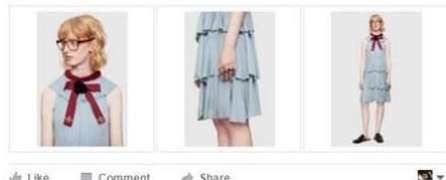
Socio-semiotic process	Post	Description
Expounding + expounding		The text is explaining a procedure and the image is visualizing the information needed to find *Gucci* account on Snapchat. The image is a mixture of Snapchat logo and *Gucci* logo and iconic pattern. This is an identifier of the context in which the text is trying to guide the *Facebook* user.

Expounding + recreating	Burberry added 5 new photos to the album *Crafting eyewear from The Gabardine Collection*. 7 April 2015 New Burberry eyewear for Spring/Summer 2015 featuring feminine, modern shapes inspired by the fabric of the iconic trench coat +2 👍 Like 💬 Comment ➤ Share	The text is explaining process of production of *Burberry* eyewear as inspired by the iconic trench coat and the image has been categorized as 'recreating' due to the use of extradiegetic iconic colour which is used to re-construe the iconicity. Also additional information in the images create the sense of sequences which compose the narrative about the creation of the product.

When textual resources are performing the expounding socio-semiotic process in its sub-category of explaining and categorizing, the visual resources implement the meaning-making process with high percentages of fields of activity of 'expounding' (74.16%) and 'recreating' (22.01%). This happens because when textual resources are providing information about a particular item or classifying it into a specific season or list of products the images exemplify the meanings conveyed through text by visualizing the items. The recreative element instead contributes to the aura of the product by relying on the brand values, the features of the narrating field of activity overlap with meanings such as CoO effect, city branding, or visual representation of brand values such as traveling for *LV*.

The field of activity of 'reporting' constructed through textual resources co-occurs with 'reporting', 'recreating', and 'expounding'. Table 4.49 shows examples of these occurrences.

Table 4.49 Examples of 'Reporting +'
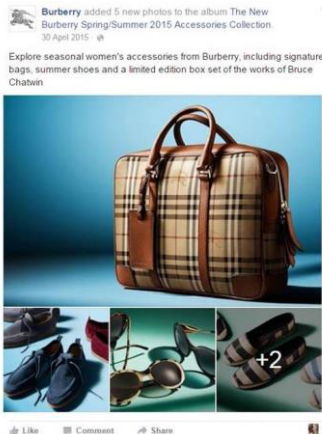
| Socio-semiotic process	Post	Description
Reporting + reporting		The text describes an event which is re-semiotized in the images. Both modes are reporting the event.
Reporting + recreating		The text is reporting on the campaign, the place of the shooting, the photographer, the artistic director, while the images are offering a more artistic shoot which create a romanticized version of the actual shoot. The viewer does not know whether it wants to be associated to a painting for the sense of thick texture which is construed or simply create a story behind the display of the products.
Reporting + expounding		The text is situating the share in a specific timeframe to better understand the object promoted. The explanatory images provide details of the product described.

As shown in the examples, when textual resources accomplish the task of reporting,

visual resources work to construe the socio-semiotic process of reporting which symmetrically visualizes the events reported, recreating which adds a storytelling feature to the events through extradiegetic colours for instance, and expounding which provides more information to enhance the understanding of the reader.

When textual resources convey a recommending process, images construe the processes of expounding, recreating, and reporting as shown in Table 4.50.

Table 4.50 Examples of 'Recommending +'

Socio-semiotic process	Post	Description
Recommending + expounding		The text is promoting women's accessories fom a specific collection indicated in the semi-automated text action, the images are providing explanatory examples of the items available categorizing them within the same collection.
Recommending + recreating		The text is promoting the shoes which are presented in the images. The recreating feature of the image is in the position of the shoes as they are stepping if they were worn by a human being. Also the use of the colour recalls paintings and intensifies the shape of the shoes with the use of the light. The shoes appear as they were alive.

Recommending + reporting		The show live streaming is promoted in the text as media text to be consumed. The image here reports on the preparation of the fashion show. We see the artistic director at work preparing for the show, lights are up, and the sequence of models (instant films in the back) is ready.

The examples above show that when textual resources perform a reporting socio-semiotic process, visual resources construe the processes of expounding in order to clarify the object of the recommendation, recreating by softening the promotional discourse with storytelling features, and reporting when the promotion is enhanced by a more explicit construal of aspiration through celebrity endorsement for instance.

4.4.1.2 Socio-semiotic processes across brands

Findings also show that socio-semiotic processes are deployed differently across brands as they reflect the application of different strategies (Figure 4.79).
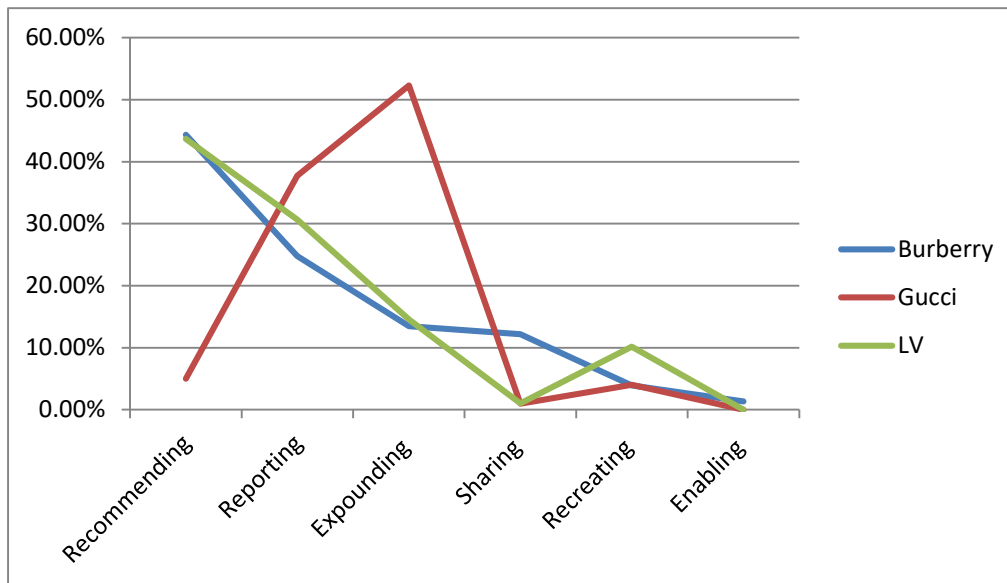
Figure 4.79 Socio-semiotic textual processes across brands

Burberry and *Louis Vuitton* perform 'recommending', while *Gucci* uses 'expounding' as its first choice. This informs about the *Facebook* agenda of the brand, which in the case of *Gucci*, is found to be devoted to the introduction of the different products which needs to categorize and classify to allow the user to locate them in seasons for instance. In terms of similarities 'reporting' is the most performed process and it is an adaptation to the function of the medium.

Findings related to visual semiotic labour across brands are reported in Figure 4.80.
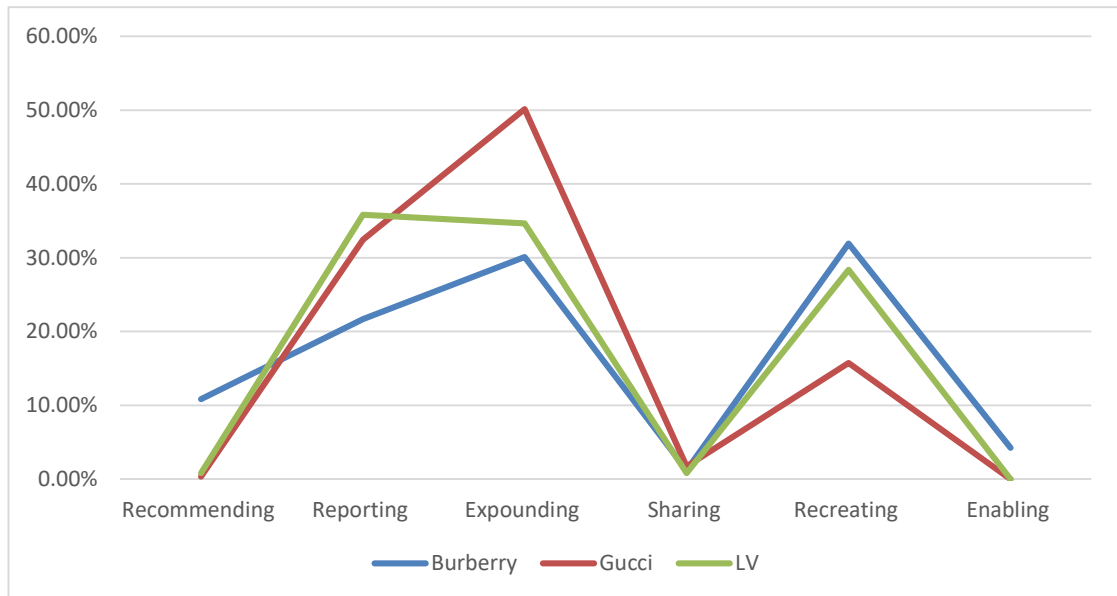
Figure 4.80 Socio-semiotic visual processes across brands

Figure 4.80 informs the viewer about the role of images in the construction of branding discourse and how it varies across brands. Images shared by *Burberry* are characterized by a 'recreating' feature followed by 'expounding' and 'reporting'. *Burberry* favours the use of extradiegetic colours used to construe the recreating socio-semiotic process in comparison to *LV* and *Gucci*. *Gucci* instead in congruency with its textual features prefers 'expounding' and 'reporting' over 'recreating' as an instance of rationalizing the use of social media platforms. The high percentage of expounding confirms that *Gucci* sees *Facebook* as an exhibition gallery for its products in which text functions work as captions to the images and both resources complement each other in the semiotic construal of the branding discourse. Reporting, expounding, and recreating are the major processes also for *Louis Vuitton*. *LV* prefers 'reporting' over the other two as it uses *Facebook* as a gallery of events and it maintains the focus on the (hi)story of the brand which span from revamping the past through contemporary events to create new milestones in the brand's life.

4.4.1.3 Discussion

The branding discursive practices in the dataset are characterized by an interwoven text of socio-semiotic blends that aligns with the ongoing debate about the hybrid nature of new media (Petroni, 2011; Biber *et al.*, 2015; Egbert *et al.*, 2015; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2016). The data analysis confirms the hybrid feature of discourse shared on the internet, and in the specific case of corporate communication acknowledges the multiple components that frame the construction of corporate *Facebook* posts. Hence, corporate *Facebook* posts are the result of a specific set of socio-semiotic processes instantiated through a multimodal inventory of resources summarized in the following formula of multisemiotic blends:

(Reporting +Recommending+Expounding) ± Enabling ± Recreating ± Sharing

'Reporting', 'recommending', and 'expounding' are respectively the fixed socio-semiotic processes given by the task performed by the ATA as instance of the *Facebook* platform nature and function, the brand agenda behind the use of *Facebook* platform, and the SATA whose aim is to categorize the discourse to enhance the navigability of the content. 'Enabling', 'recreating', and 'sharing' are the most frequently occurring socio-semiotic processes mapped through the analysis of the CTA constructed through textual and visual resources.

This set of socio-semiotic processes frame the branding discursive practices elaborated to accomplish specific tasks that are summarized as follows:

- *Reporting:* enriching the branding narrative with informative posts reporting on the events that make the (hi)story of the brand;

- *Recommending:* promoting the products as part of the branded dream to be

consumed to participate in the narrative;

- *Expounding:* categorizing the information provided in the post by locating it in time and space and in the flow of events as well;

- *Enabling:* instructing the users on the use of the products or indicate the steps to follow to get them;

- *Recreating:* dramatizing the information to create engagement and entertain the users;

- *Sharing:* disseminate content that provides access to information not available on other media to enhance the experience of the user and establish a relationship with the audience by blurring the boundaries between public and private between brands and users. It also refers to sharing values, in this case brand values.

Overall, the socio-semiotic processes blend one another and characterize corporate *Facebook* posts reflecting the use of the digital platform as a visual merchandising display that, enriched by a storytelling touch, makes the disposal of the items resembling an art exhibition that tells the story of craftsmanship, quality, innovation in design, bonds to the country of origin and worldwide renowned fame.

The multisemiotic blends identified in the dataset characterize the branding discourse and strengthen the topological representation of the registerial cartography by promoting the nature of the socio-semiotic processes as no-mutually exclusive and with the tendency to merge (Matthiessen, 2015).

Notably, business scholars applying content analysis to social media posts shared by luxury brands assign a single label to each of them by focusing on the function of the post identified as: informative, entertainment, explorative, and participative

(Talukdar, 2016). In linguistics, quantitative studies on computer-mediated discourse have been conducted through manual coding of corpora for the elaboration of taxonomies but the problematic blurring between neighboring registers was found to be a consistent pattern that contributes to the definition of new media texts as hybrids (Petroni, 2011; Biber *et al.*, 2015; Egbert *et al.*, 2015; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2016). Against this background, this study acknowledges social media discourse does not perform a unique function, but it potentially provides tools to enact different discursive practices simultaneously. Moreover, given that one single post is a multimodal ensemble of different modes, each of them contributes to forging the meanings and the way they vary across modes.

The choice of deploying a specific digital platform along with the brand agenda behind its use embeds a set of meanings that create hybrid between the registers of reporting and recommending (McLuhan, 1964; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2016). This is also enhanced by the combination of social semiotics and branding in the backstage of this research project abstracted into systems of different order to map the significance of the dataset. For the material systems, the physical order frames corporate *Facebook* posts as discursive representation of the reality materialized into luxury fashion goods, whereas the biological order suggests the idea of a reversed Maslow's pyramid where luxury prioritizes the "self-actualisation needs", "esteem needs", "social needs" and "needs to belong", over basic needs (Jackson & Shaw, 2009, p. 5). In terms of immaterial systems, corporate *Facebook* posts become essential for the construction of luxury itself, and in the social order are interpreted as the materialization of the ruling class (Marx & Engels, 2006) that imposes a specific taste for computer-mediated consumption of information first and hopefully followed by goods consumption. In the semiotic order, the idea of luxury consumption is conceived as satisfaction of desire for belonging and self-construction.

The socio-semiotic processes concerned with the field frames the configuration of the dataset to inform tenor and mode. Tenor aimed to explain the power relation and negotiation between text producer and consumer intended as brand and target market that blur in the social mediascape and assumes prosumer nature. Mode focused on the channel and its materiality that enables and constrains the use of textual and visual resources.

4.4.1.4 Summary

The findings presented in this section describe the multisemiotic blends, which characterize corporate *Facebook* posts, and at the same time contributes to the methodological development of the registerial cartography, providing additional empirical application.

Corporate *Facebook* posts are the result of a specific set of socio-semiotic processes instantiated through a multimodal inventory of resources, which follow the formula of multisemiotic blends:

(Reporting +Recommending+Expounding) ± Enabling ± Recreating ± Sharing

Overall, the socio-semiotic processes blend one another and strengthen the topological representation of the registerial cartography by promoting the nature of the socio-semiotic processes as no-mutually exclusive and with the tendency to merge (Matthiessen, 2015).

Furthermore, the annotation of the corporate *Facebook* posts enabled the creation of taxonomies for the identification of the socio-semiotic processes in the visual resources (see Chapter 3). This is part of the methodological contribution of the present study.

4.5 A 21ˢᵗ century discursive definition of luxury fashion

This section is concerned with the achievement of the goals of the study and establishes the relationship between the branding discursive practices investigated through the social semiotic data analysis and the conceptualization of luxury fashion in the 21ˢᵗ century.

This section comprises three sub-sections: Section 4.5.1 discusses the medium as an active agent in forging the branding discourse and foregrounds the features of luxury that have changed due to the adaptation to the intensive, massive, and instant communication built by social media ecosystem. Section 4.5.2 lists the evolving and changing features emerged from the discursive construction of luxury. It also provides a new definition of luxury that recognizes luxury goods market as fragmented at distinct levels in which the three brands examined represent the aspirational stratum. Section 4.5.3 follows up on the new conceptualization of luxury and summarizes the differences emerged across three brands in terms of financial assets, CoO, and affiliation to association for the preservation of the luxury aura reflected in their semiotic construction.

4.5.1 Luxury adaptation to the social media ecosystem

Research findings have shown how the semiotic construction of luxury fashion branding discourse in the social media is framed by the enablers and constraints, which characterize the medium (Bateman *et al.*, 2016; Eisenlauer, 2013; 2014; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Section 4.1 has presented the semiotic labour of the different semiotic resources involved in the construction of luxury and discussed how discourse is shaped by the layout units and the medium-specific features, but also how textual

and visual resources' meaning making process is influenced by the hosting platform.

All the results have been interpreted as an adaptation of luxury to the social media ecosystem, which they were not used to. As stated in the literature (see Chapter 2), but also more recently by *Forbes* in its section *BrandVoice* under the category *Investment and #DeLuxe*[87] in an article entitled "Why Luxury Brands Need To Go Digital" (24 January 2017), "staying out of the online fray is no longer an option for most luxury brands, especially if they want to be where their shoppers are". Implicit within the previous statement is the resistance within the luxury sector. The admission that avoidance is no longer an option for luxury goods providers point to the usefulness of the present study to the sector; therefore, Luxury firms need to be online to reach their potential consumers and this present study is very much concerned with the way luxury brands are constructed in the social mediascape. A key issue in need of address is overexposure. In luxury goods market, the high-involvement of consumers is necessary to justify the high-price of the products through connotative and financial value communication plays a fundamental role (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

The discussion about channel conflict is abandoned in this study in favour of a positive approach that focuses on ways to detect attachment to printed media and use of new media as an opportunity to mass customize the product display. The social semiotic analysis offers a more comprehensive and highly contextualized understanding of the use of elements that materialize attachment to offline practices such as polaroid photos and digitized versions of paper invitations to fashion shows without assuming that channel conflict is the explanation for that (c.f. Okonkwo, 2010;

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[87] From *Morgan Stanley*, a company that advises, trades, manages and distributes capital for governments, institutions and individuals. *Forbes*, https://www.forbes.com/sites/morganstanley/2017/01/24/why-luxury-brands-need-to-go-digital/#73b8e6be1026 [20/04/2017]

Nervino, 2013).

The findings are reflection of the 21st century's challenge to craft editorial content that appeals to the digital natives, the notorious millennials as known as the generation Y, and now leaving space to the generation Z. These new generations are responsible for the confused and still under experiment marketing strategies elaborated in the recent years because they are not easy to categorize under a generalized consumer profile. The controversial scenario of globalization that, on the one hand, connects people in different ways by reducing the physical distance (Lechner & Boli, 2012) and, on the other hand, remarks divergences in terms of digital inclusion and access to information and goods (see Chapter 2).

In the luxury goods market, it is agreed that in the 21st century power relations have been reversed and brands are no longer dictating the rules of the game but they shifted towards a consumer-oriented approach breaking their status of players of anti-laws marketing (Kapferer, 2015). Findings elaborated in Section 4.2 demonstrated how images used in the social media present different features from the ones constructed on printed media. If printed media construe luxury as unaffordable, social media promote affordability to target the new consumers.

Recently, media coverage amplified the power of the generation Y in reviewing how brands like *Gucci* and *LV* twisted their aesthetics to seduce millennials without abandoning their heritage, but reinventing it [88]. *Gucci*, in particular, elaborated strategies to win millennials and grow its profits. Besides redesigning its online marketing and sales strategies by renovating both website and stores, *Gucci* used online channels to manufacture exclusivity, for instance the creation of a capsule

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[88] *Style, South China Morning Post*, http://www.scmp.com/magazines/style/fashion-beauty/article/2084368/6-fashion-brands-focusing-millennial-followers [01/05/2017]

collections limited to *Net-a-Porter*'s customers, and introducing a 90-minute rapid delivery in partnership with *Farfetch* in 10 cities around the world[89].

In the past, the *Gucci* locking sealed any social status, *Burberry* logo and the iconic trench coat constituted the *USP* for any *Burberry* product, any resemblances of *LV* Monogram were evocative enough to create desire, but in the instant world, consumers have become more demanding in terms of information (Rambourg, 2014; see Appendix I). Knowledge of those products allows consumers to choose, the more they know the more diverse experience they look for; however, social media holds power because what the audience is exposed to is determined by the algorithms (Gualberto & Kress, forthcoming).

Algorithms drive distribution in the digital era and it becomes the most significant semiotic mode (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The fact that it is framed as instant communication and provides an immersive experience into the life of the user, as Bezemer and Kress (2014) point out, the moment in which the post is created and appears in the newsfeed, users assume they are consuming a live update and immediately locate it in a spatio-temporal dimension that may not coincide with the actual event. This is particularly relevant in the consumption of news.

While browsing *Facebook* timeline and seeing articles whose title and photograph appeal to, once clicked on the embedded hyperlink and redirected to the source page it often happens that the text is not a live update and fresh news but a recycling of popular articles shared and that collected likes, shares, comments, so that the administrator of the page re-proposes to generate buzz. Of course, the

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[89] *Style, South China Morning Post,* http://www.scmp.com/magazines/style/fashion-beauty/article/2091503/*Gucci*s-latest-revival-fueled-sequins-not-sex?utm_source&utm_medium&utm_campaign=SCMPSocialNewsfeed [01/05/2017]

understanding of this process requires an accurate consumption of the information enlightened by the awareness of social media dynamics aimed to manipulate the algorithm. Digital natives do not seem aware of those mechanisms and ignore the manipulative nature of those platforms even when highlighted by insiders who proclaim their invention as a damage to the socio-economic and political asset of today's society (El-Bermany, 7 November 2016; *FoxNews*, 21 May 2017).

Affluents and millennials drive the revenues of luxury firms because of their success enhancing their appetite for rewarding products. At the same time millennials are the digital disruptors in the market because their first encounter with luxury is mediated by technology. The huge amount of information consumed online makes those consumers more knowledgeable about products and it becomes their leverage in the decision-making process for the purchase. This connoisseurs community (Atkin, 2014), growing in China as the new middle class (Rambourg, 2014), along with the BRICS and new emerging economies in South East Asia, triggers the "status needs" (Kapferer, 2015, p. 90).

Findings from Section 4.1 show an increasing number of targeting activities towards Asia, not limited to the extension of the distribution circuit, but devoted to an immersive experience of the brand world with educational exhibition [90] and (hi)storytelling events. The branding discourse seems to accomplish the function of teaching a taste (Bourdieu, 1979) always seen as a Western hegemony over others (Baudrillard, 1998). What new consumers want instead is the freedom to choose, and interacte with the brands, become equal to them and exercise their purchase power

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[90] Exhibitions are also used to collect information about potential consumers. I have visited few luxury fashion exhibitions in cities such Hong Kong, Seoul, London, and all of them at a certain stage of the registration or even at the location as part of the experience requested contact details, and more general information about taste (Bourdieu, 1979). This can be located into CRM strategies to enhance the mass customization.

(Kapferer, 2015); however, brands are aware that an equal relation erodes the prestige of the brand referring to Veblen rules (1957). The findings of the analysis of the interactional meanings showed how this egalitarian discourse in conflict with the willingness for preserving exclusivity creates a clash.

Luxury is the product of the times in which it is conceived, produced, distributed, talked about (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). It is rooted in a specific socio-economic context and it plays a social and economic role in defining status through conspicuous consumption or becoming a tool for self-reward abandoning the label of distinction for the others (Chadha & Husband, 2007). Hence, how to appeal to the digital natives? In the information age, the internet transformed the 'less is more' minimalism (Browning, 1855) into the culture of "scalability", "big data", "buzz campaign", leading to the conclusion that either luxury transforms the internet or accepts its destiny of web dilution (Kapferer, 2015, p. 116). Based on the key-role played by discourse in imposing a hegemonic position of brands in the luxury pantheon, the solution is to benefit from the ubiquitous power of new media to educate consumers and recognize brands as luxury.

The internet is the realm of openness, proximity, horizontality, collaboration, transparency, and even though it does not provide any control on the discursive dissemination, it still allows monitoring the buzz (Riones & Casper, 2014). Big data have become a popular tool among luxury brands that rely on news feeds to track discourse, both branding, UGC, and the recently identified user-generated advertising (UGA) (Rossolatos, 2017) disseminated in the web (Paparelli, 2016). Also, the internet is a bus lane to the new generations through new media distributors such as *Net-a-porter.com* and *Yoox* (Riones & Casper, 2014). These new media distributors are direct channels to the new riches at all strata of the society in which *vox populi*

identifies luxury in the brand names more than their values (Kapferer, 2015). When Silverstein and Fiske in 2003 foresaw the emergence of a mass indulgence in the U.S. through the consumption of luxury goods made widely accessible by the booming construction of shopping malls and the semiotic simulation of heritage of American lifestyle brands, prestige was turned into masstige by brands such as *Ralph Lauren* and *Marc Jacobs*. These latter, along with *Shanghai Tang*, more recently, initiated the appropriation of luxury *coda* that stretched out till *H&M* and *Zara* and led to an abuse of the word luxury. *Coda* become the higher level equipment of the twinking deluxe to play that game of social distinction. Once those *coda* are standardized and commodified lose their allure and are abandoned by the rich ones and cannibalized by affluents.

Moreover, the digital landscape offers the opportunity to scholars to have unlimited access to information and collect data for the analysis of branding discourse circulated online; however, luxury is timeless while online information gets pulverized every second by new ones. How long can luxury last in the instant world then? Which type of editorial content is up-to-date in the fast pace of information age? Quality information stays relevant over time and in terms of branding, storytelling relying on nostalgia (Fontana, 2010) works as entertainment in which commercial purposes are undertones. In luxury goods market:

> less explicit and understandable the advertising is, the better it is. Advertising here seeks to create a distance, but at the same time it also tried to communicate to the many. This social construction of advertising as art holds communication as a full 'product' of the creative brand (Kapferer, 2015, p. 53).

Overall, the present study reported a mismatch between the branding discourse

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analyzed and the description of luxury ads offered by Kapferer (2015). The hypertextual advertisements are not projected to create distance (see interactional meanings), and they become mass attention grabbers (Bateman, 2015). The findings of the identity construction highlight a shift from the construction of brand identity to the promotion of product identity. Also the marketing strategies applied construct ethos but mainly rely on external sources such as celebrity endorsement and photographers from the fashion system (c.f. Kapferer, 2015; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, 2012). They also rely on rational claim strategies focusing on the details of the products to contribute to the process of negotiation of value (Hall, 2006). In addition to that, the editorial content preserves the connotation of art when constructed to create intertextual references to fields such as art, music, history.

The branding discourse analyzed presents the features of an art gallery showcasing artworks (Atwal, 2014) that in this case are on sales and perform what it has been defined as "social selling" (Chitrakorn, 2015). Social selling is intended as the process of developing relationships as part of the sales. Brands in this case perform social selling while promoting and selling their products to a network, *Facebook* for instance; however, the Euromonitor's Grant does not subscribe to a positive attitude to it because it is convinced that even though social media are a powerful and cost-efficient medium of communication, the channel does not allow to engage the potential consumer through a genuine personalized shopping experience that could contribute to the brand identity (Chitrakorn, 2015).

The power of social media is the everyday life's encounter. What dilutes the aura of luxury is that using social media, but at the same time overexposure to luxury in the offline domain, turns an extraordinary experience into ordinary life. In the past, fashionistas and *aficionados* would wait for the new issues of *Vogue* to see the new

collections presented at the fashion week and going through the pages of the magazine meant touching a thick laminated paper worthy the expensive price of consuming that information. Nowadays, the news feed system of *Facebook* allows users to like the page and receive updates on their own timeline. With one click users will not miss any news about the brands they liked and the waiting time for the release of the news is suppressed and actually filled by the backstage information shared by the brands. Social media in this sense have definitely impacted the editorial business that is still struggling in redefining their role as authoritarian voices. Recent conferences like the *Foreign Correspondents' Club Conference* discussed the problematic relationship between printed media and new media in the resealing of news (FCC, 2017); however, the fashion system preserves magazines such as *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, among others because their biblical status is directly linked to the iconic image of their editors and then mainly sold through strategies based on ethos. At the same time, those magazines live by the revenues from advertising more than actual sales because printed media still represent an investment in controlled brand positioning.

Notably, luxury brands, emerging brands, and brands willing to establish themselves in the fashion system, are still ready to pay a conspicuous capital to be on a cover, back cover, or in the first pages of a magazine[91]. The purchase power of the brand is not only based on the actual investment but also on its brand identity in the establishment of a mutual branding process from which both the magazine and brand benefit. The different stakeholders involved in the production and distribution of a printed magazine constitute the power game that influence the positioning of the brand paying for the cover for instance, but at the same time also other brands interested in

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[91] While doing my internship I had access to the media plan of the company and saw how most of the advertising budget is still devoted to printed media and how expensive a cover on *Vogue*.

the same issue.

Arguably, the advent of new technology weakened this power game because social media, massively defined as democratic, are governed by an algorithm that responds to investments in building the visibility of the posts shared but at the same time does not guarantee any fixed compositional distance among brands. This democratization already challenged in Chapter 2, it is more a collectively artificial construction of an egalitarian consumption based on interactions between brands and users in an environment controlled by an algorithm. Brands can buy their own visibility but they do not control their competitors' visibility. Platforms provide equal tools to all brands and it is their own duty to exploit the meaning-making potential; however, differently from negotiations with a third party like a magazine for instance, with social media brands talk directly to their audience even though as systematically confirmed by this study the platform plays a major role in the production and distribution of information.

In social semiotic terms the medium influences the negotiation of meanings in their conception and dissemination in the society. McLuhan (1964) discussing how media, in specific reference to TV and radio, were becoming the message foregrounded this investigation by positioning the platform affordances at the centre of the analysis to fuel the understanding of meaning-making process as the result of the negotiation of power relations among the different agents involved. In McLuhan's (1964) terms, the choice of the medium contributes to the positioning of the brands in the market and in this specific case erodes the aura of luxury because *Facebook* is constructed as a democratic tool (Chapter 2).

The choice of using *Facebook* to build and distribute the editorial content initiates

a meaning-making process itself. This contributes to the construction of branding discourse. Discourse, which is intended to solicit elitism, is instead counter-authored by the materiality of its hosting medium. In the site-specific discursive practices analyzed the intersection among context, design, discourse, and the process of production and distribution in is an interwoven process that translated different agents' actions into negotiated multimodal artefacts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Hence, the multimodal texts are construed at the level of expression and content plane and the sign-making process is interpreted in relation to luxury meanings.

4.5.2 Evolving and changing features of aspirational luxury

Findings have demonstrated that the conventional concept of luxury is diluted and transformed into a more accessible entity in need for a new definition. Findings have provided semiotic instances of the evolving and new features that luxury has acquired while going online and which define it in the 21st century.

Based on the semiotic construction of the branding discourse, brands portray themselves as a reward based on the taste of consumer that is reachable for the mass but exclusively constructed for the connoisseurs community. Luxury is still aspirational but the selectivity of the brand no longer belongs to the brand, but it is based on the knowledge of the audience and the natural selection based on background and willingness to understand. Intertextual references solicit the curiosity of the audience and lead them to virtual places where to explore the detailed information and learn about the intrinsic value of the goods. The additional value constitutes the new knowledge acquired and the enrichment of an experience that does not need to include the purchase but a discovery of something unknown. This resonates the interviews presented in Chapter 1 that actually pointed out how the awareness of the dynamics of

luxury goods market and the use of social media can be tools to educate the consumer to untold stories.

In the digital era, luxury is selectively distributed based on the audience reception of the messages. Purchase becomes more focused on brands to which consumers are loyal as well as the consumption of information about those brands. The aspirational aspect of the brands is the engagement constructed with the audience that is aware of the brand reputation and is willing to explore new collection which reinvents the brand heritage. Sales are driven by seasonal items, because the loyal customers own the iconic products and their interest is in showing that their taste goes beyond the contemporary style. Additionally, they want to show their power in being able to get those products before the others, following social media instant reward of being the first one to know it, find it, afford it, own it. Hence, luxury in its aspirational meaning has turned the key features of luxury into extended and stretched characteristics infused by social media ideology. Figure 4.81 displays this evolution.
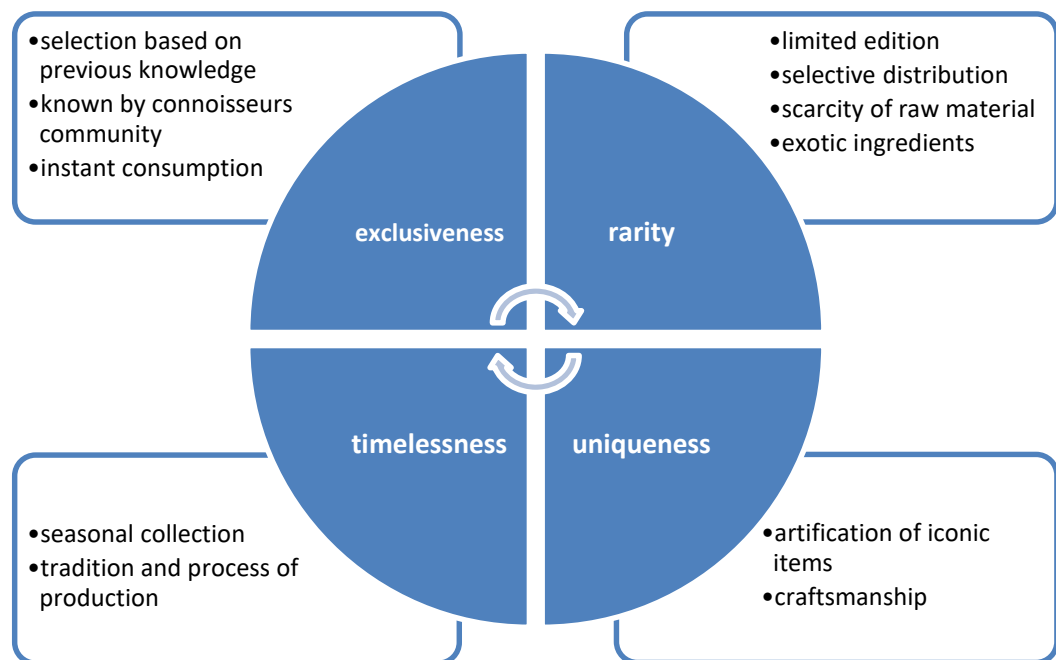

Figure 4.81 Aspirational luxury. Elaboration of the findings in comparison to the conventional concept of luxury

The blue wheel represents the core features of conventional luxury that are expanded into the whole square with the extension and realization of those features in the findings. Exclusiveness is translated into a selectivity based on the previous knowledge of the audience that makes the goods available to the connoisseurs community only. Rarity is given by the production of limited editions available in specific virtual and physical spaces, then distribution becomes 'phygitally' selective, scarcity refers to the raw material used to craft the products usually made of exotic ingredients. The instant consumption and availability for certain consumers make a difference, for instance the opportunity to buy from the runway that is subjected to instant accessibility to the live streaming of the fashion show. Timelessness becomes a feature of seasonal collection that can be treasured as instances of encapsulation of times, and products of a traditional process of production that revamps iconic products and patterns and combines them with the trends of the context they are produced and distributed. The uniqueness of the pieces is based on the fact they are talked about as undergoing a process of craftsmanship and artification.

Based on this new taxonomy of aspirational luxury, the segmentation of the luxury goods market can be represented as it follows (Figure 4.82):

Überluxury - confidential brands

Aspirational luxury - connected brands

Meta-luxury - honest brands
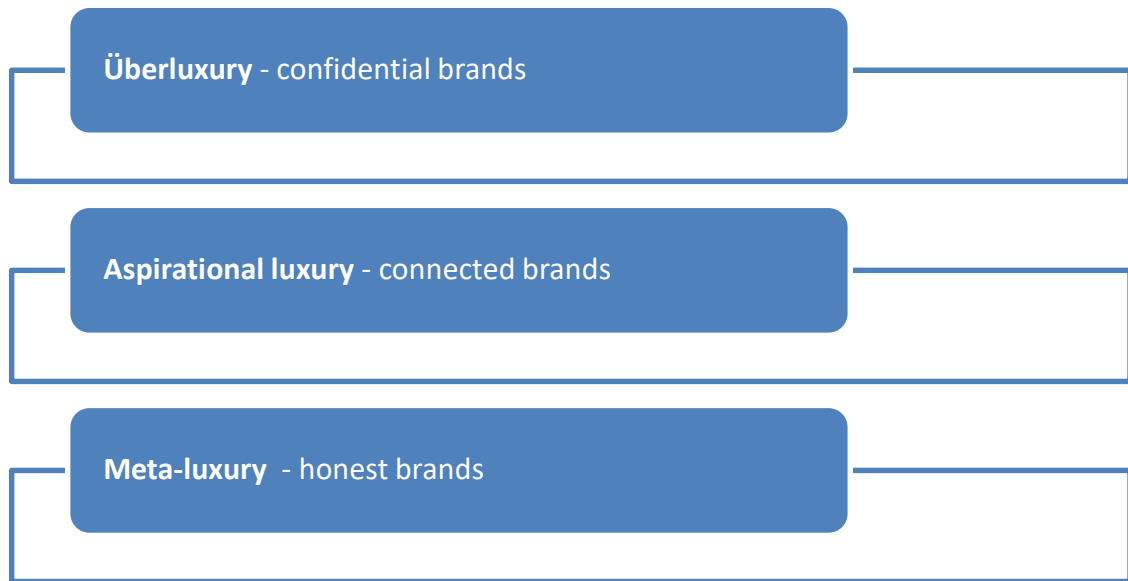
Figure 4.82 Discursive stratification of luxury. Elaboration of the findings and adaptation of Kapferer's definition of luxury (2015)

This new stratification is based on the discursive construction of luxury in the social media. The brands examined for this study belong to the category of 'aspirational luxury' because as previously explained they represent the opportunity for the self-reward based on the knowledge that the audience shares about the brands. These brands definitely benefited from the global brand awareness gained though social media and developed strategies that tend to focus on authenticity of design and production more than brand reputation. This segment of luxury is in-between überluxury and meta-luxury.

The first one is an evolution of the conventional concept of luxury that it is taken to the extreme of unaffordability that is based on the fact that those brands perpetrate a confidential communication that selects the audience and are known to a wider audience only after consumption. This mainly characterizes luxury experiences and service industries like tourism in which social media are used to report events and activities. Those are not accessible because of unknown provenance and addressing

exclusively members-only audience and specific individuals. Hence, communication is a manifestation of luxury that is unaffordable because it is depicted as unreachable based on the fact that the source of information and as well the source of those goods is not accessible in terms of distribution of information and goods. Fashion shows belong to this world because they are well established as exclusive events to which the audience is not admitted and can dream about it, knowing details, but not joining.

Überluxury is limited to the happy few that know about it, brands are defined as 'confidential' brands "that are high in product luxuriousness but not in dreamability, at least based on name" (Kapferer, 2015, p. 66). Elitism in this context changes and is no longer about restricted but about viewing what is not accessible; therefore, while aspiration brands promise the opportunity to succeed and be part of this dream, überluxury reinforces the dichotomy between super-rich and the rest of the world. Social media in this sense help to reinforce the global understanding of a social stratification whose luxury becomes the visual materialization (Veblen, 1957). The third segment merging with premium goods actually is labeled as meta-luxury because it includes those brands whose aura is based on craftsmanship and have established a relationship of trust with the audience that is aware of the process of production.

Luxury brands in the financial ecosystem shaped by the transformations of 21st century have undergone under a process of adaptation to the new socio-economic conditions and have taken part on the evolution (or involution for conservatives) of the whole luxury goods market. The species able to survive the digital transformation had to cope with the fact that digital tools not only inevitably change the communication practices of the brands but at the same time have consequences on the business model. This unstable condition and need for reconsideration of financial asset leads firms to either transform or consider options of joining the conglomerates or sell

their companies to foreign investors as it happened to *Valentino* sold to the UAE (2012) and *Krizia* became Chinese (2014).

Branding discourse is characterized by transparency, which is a manufactured and crafted through discourse and established as authentic reality. In a recent article entitled "The End of Lying: The New Transparency in Luxury & Politics" (Parks-Taylor, 30 May 2017) our times are captured into the idea of transparency. In agreement with the author, the contemporary society based on the myth of neoliberalism enhances the freedom of consumers to choose among a wide range of products and given the global coverage of social media the volume of information available allows the access to different information and goods (Parks-Taylor, 30 May 2017). This justifies the consistent label of democratization of luxury, that only in very recent articles (Parks-Taylor, 30 May 2017) and this study as well has been re-defined as popularization because of its artificial egalitarian dimension. But the understanding that I have of social media and the luxury goods market is a power game in which the consumers have the illusion of choosing, but instead their choices are driven by a pre-set selection process conducted by the institutional agents within the fashion system in the case of the three brands examined in this study for instance.

Fashion system was unveiled to a wider audience with the movie *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). The movie gives an overview of fashion journalism by showing them the process of creating an issue for a lifestyle magazine starting from the menabó, and discusses the world of fashion from inside by providing lessons like the following one:

> You think this has nothing to do with you. You go to your closet and you select... I don't know. (…) But what you don't know is that that sweater is not just blue, it's not turquoise. It's not lapis. It's actually cerulean. And you're also blithely unaware of the fact that in 2002, Oscar de la Renta did a collection of cerulean gowns. And then I think it was Yves Saint Laurent... wasn't it who showed cerulean military jackets? (…) And then cerulean

quickly showed up in the collections of eight different designers. And then it, uh, filtered down through the department stores and then trickled on down into some tragic Casual Corner where you, no doubt, fished it out of some clearance bin. However, that blue represents millions of dollars and countless jobs and it's sort of comical how you think that you've made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry when, in fact, you're wearing the sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room from a pile of stuff.

Elaborating on the quote from the movie released in 2006, the advent of social media did not change the fact thar the top-down dissemination of information is still vivid, and even if threatened by the UGC and UGA, at the end of the day, likes, shares, comments, are made in response to content that the algorithm decides to show.

Findings have already shown how the issue of positioning lies in the fact that all brands have the same enablers and constrains and appear as all equal to the audience; however, the audience will be exposed to content matching his/her social media activity history. For instance, while conducting this research my *Facebook* news feeds are populated by luxury brands and premium brands and fast fashion brands are almost absent because by visiting the corporate pages of luxury firms the cookies recognize my profile as interested in that market segment. This is a natural development of a community with similar interest in terms of branding, but in other aspects of life social media end up creating a bubble in which the user does not have exposure to different ideas (El-Bermawy, 7 November 2016).

The creation of ideological tribes is given by the fact that the algorithm works for association; therefore, if a user marries a specific political idea he/she will massively get news feeds converging into it instead of divergent ones opening for discussion (El-Bermawy, 7 November 2016). The "one-side-propaganda" (El-Bermawy, 7 November 2016) increased the proliferation of populist discourse in the social media and left us dealing with Trump and Brexit.

New luxury, conspicuously described as luxury for all, and mass reward for the happy many because of its democratic access (Nueno & :ue lcho, 1998; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003), is re-defined in this present study as aspirational luxury incarnated by connected brands. The semiotic construction of spatio-temporal dimensions influences the perception of the power of the brand and (hi)storytelling is found to be focusing on external instead of internal sources because millennials challenge the authority of brands claiming for honest communication that in the findings is detected in the rational claim strategy that replaced the conventional ethos-oriented one (Parks-Taylor, 30 May 2017). In this context, studies predict that by 2025 strategies focusing on more transparent (discursively constructed) may revolutionize luxury industry based on the re-definition of luxury from inside strated by *Kering Group* based on three components "care, collaborate, and create" (Parks-Taylor, 30 May 2017).

The evolution of site-specific discursive practices are the result of a consumer-oriented construction that relies on the authority of external elements of the brand that cannot be challenged by the audience and create a symbolic authoriity (Karpin & Scott, 2010), such as the Renaissance effect and art-related activities.

Additionally, web-influencers are very well-received because emerged from the audience, celebrities forged by the soft-power of popular culture and got closer to audience through the performance of ordinary practices such as selfie, social media account management, conversations with the audience.

The properties of scarcity and rarity, which characterized the conventional luxury are accepted as artificial and virtual respectively as long as they convey a feeling of exclusivity that is as ephemeral and volatile as the platform hosting its semiotic construction and perceived as a short-term privilege within the rhetoric of newness

and dynamism symptomatic of the instant society (Kapferer, 2015; Groth & Daniel, 1993). The visibility is no longer a goal of the brand but of its product in framing a specific lifestyle that millennials have embraced and transformed in a commodification of the extraordinary that spreads luxury everywhere and calls it everything as such (Kapferer, 2015). In this way, brands find a way to re-evaluate the use of social media and consider it an opportunity to revamp their strategies (c.f. Okonkwo, 2010; Kapferer, 2015).

Aspirational luxury, despite its new spatio-temporal dimension that conveys accessibility, is injected by the fact that also non consumers participate in the creation of the image of the brand. Those individuals animated by the desire for the brand start frame themselves as connoisseurs. Voyer (2015), in analyzing *Hermés* blog, verified that the most fervent supporters of the brand online were fans who could not afford *Hermés* goods. This was motived by the fact that in their vivid discussions with the actual consumers and other fans, those non consumers found a way of start constructing themselves in association with the brand. In the same way, corporate *Facebook* pages being liked by millions of fans do not directly reflect the revenues, but gain brand value. This brand value is transformed into financial value based on the brand awareness fed by those fans who may or may not be potential consumers. Findings revealed that the brands examined build their USP on a promise of affordability. The findings show that a high percentage of products are entry-products within the luxury goods segment such as perfumes, lipsticks, accessories. They represent a luxury dream that can actually be turned into reality.

Those evolving features and consequently new definition of luxury are the result of the advent of new technology, blurring the boundaries between luxury and premium goods, dissolving the distance between brands and users, constructing luxury goods as

desirable goods available for short-term self-pleasure, combined with the growth of middle class in the emerging markets, China in particular, disrupted the whole luxury goods market. It generated an increase of demand and actual purchase of goods, and at the same time socio-political instability, and the formation of luxury conglomerates cannibalizing family brands and their listing in the stock exchange to preserve financial capital, produced a series of changes in the luxury goods market that ended up in a popularization of the goods that once affordable for the happy many shift from being aspirational products to commodities. All those ingredients contributed to a recipe for a new segmentation in the luxury goods market based on the features emerged by the analysis of the semiotic construction of branding discourse available in the text of our times that reflect the adjustment of luxury brands to the digital natives.

In a nutshell the branding discourse derives from the numerous discursive experiments conducted by the brands to appeal to millennials in their own environment. This transformation promoting a consumer-oriented approach dismantled the brand-centric attitude of firms in favour of a more sales-oriented strategy to please the stakeholders.

Advertising has always spoken the "language of transformation", promising to satisfy consumers' aspirations based on the emotion of "envy, desire, and belonging" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 275). Following the paradigm, luxury advertisements were expected to depict an inaccessible glamorous world destined to the elite able to afford the product (Kapferer, 2015); however, the present study showed a shift from an unreachable world such as the super-rich world (UHNW, 1% of world population) described by Jaworski & Thurlow (2017) in clear dichotomy with ordinary people, to a more affordable experience pushed towards a virtual egalitarian access to it.

Attempts of coinage of new terminology for the concept luxury after new media such as "meta-luxury" (Ricca & Robins, 2012) and "luxury new media" (Armitage & Roberts, 2014) encapsulated the development of the industry in the recent years and the new perception of luxury among the new consumers identified as the millennials, whose consumer behavior is tormenting both researchers and practitioners as it seems to differentiate from the usual luxury consumer; however, as reviewed in Chapter 2, none of the studies systematically analyze the semiotic construction of luxury as instance of branded generated discourse, and in this study is filling the research gap.

Luxury industry today is driven by mass production and high demand and deals with consumers who are aware of the "rarity" as the "precondition of luxury" that has become "abundant rarity" (Kapferer, 2012) injected with an aura of exclusivity artificially realized such as limited editions (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 2); therefore, discursive features of standardization and commodification are used in the new media to emphasize brands' "ubiquitous existence... across countries" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 2). This allows the "quite homogenous consumer experience hence vision" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 2). This being the main reason why people can identify the same luxury brands around the world with few changes (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 2). In light of the statements above luxury is not seen as an allusive concept but a "reality incarnated by brands" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 2). In this case discursive incarnations in the digital environment crafted by the brands to establish their brand identity and get in touch with their aspirational and potential consumers are analyzed to identify those evolving and changing features.

New media is no longer seen as a threat but undergoing a process of sanitation of their image through the unfolding of the institutional discourse crafted and shared on

Facebook to "semiotize" the concept of luxury through a multimodal construction. Leaning on the successful example provided by De Beers' advertising campaign "A diamond is forever" first launched in 1947 and relevant still today as the proof of how discourse has manufactured the endless desire for diamonds, this study scrutinized discursive practices as the ultimate resource to overcome the "channel conflict" of new media for luxury (Okonkwo, 2010). Moreover, it provides a new vision of those tools as an opportunity for those brands that have already colonized social networks. The attention to discourse is given by its role in creating distinction among brands and products (Duchêne & Heller, 2012) through the generation of additional "symbolic capital and prestige" (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016, p. 2).

The mass accessibility in contrast with the exclusiveness of luxury has to be seen as strictly related to mass media such as television and radio that lack of customization and traceability of the audience that are instead a feature of new media (Chun, 2006). On social media, brands as individuals, are called to perform "communicative functions" mainly based on *Facebook* post requests like (Lee, 2011, p. 6-7): explaining "what are you doing right now?"; updating people about your daily life (diary); expressing opinions and judgements and request feedback; reporting mood; leaving away messages; initiating a discussion; addressing a specific target audience; sharing a quotation; humour or *Facebook*-related discourse regarding new tools.

The present study shows a luxury constructed as an "everyday" experience (benchmark) made of outstanding, highly innovative, rare qualities (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013, p. 6) to sell a dream of exception that is the "ordinary of extraordinary people, and the extraordinary of ordinary people" (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013, p. 6). Dreams have a dimension of non-accessibility and yet remain at a close distance (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013).

Colonizing the cyberspace represents a semiotic choice itself in terms of "distribution" of branding discourse that in socio-semiotic terms includes a decision process of "preservation" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 6-7) and exposes the branding discourse to the UGC likes, comments, shares, and after 2016[92] also to negative reactions such as sadness and anger which crafts meanings (Chaykovsky, 24 February 2016). It is undeniable that choices in terms of distribution contribute and play a fundamental role in the definition of luxury and it becomes semiotic. For instance, the choice of brands such as *Chanel* not to use e-commerce channels to sell their products is to be interpreted as a way to preserve the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the shopping ritual experience.

Notably, in April 2016, with the change of the creative director YSL deleted the Instagram feeds before the date of this new era for the brand, to mark the beginning of a revolutionary innovation (Maoui, April 2016). In this way, Instagram remembered only the new YSL, and rebranded a new brand identity. New media provide the opportunity to disseminate this statement globally and at the same time being a powerful tools for collecting information about the audience, Okonkwo (2010, p. 55) among all the instances of threats foresaw the new media as:

> an exceptional avenue for luxury brands not only to track consumer tastes, but also to get into their minds through a level of transparency and openness that has never been seen before. (..) Through the social web, luxury brands now have the opportunity to see, feel, perceive and anticipate the psychological evolution of the wealthy online whether they are clients, potential clients or the wider public.

The interest for the construction of the editorial content in the luxury industry instead of other sectors comes from the difficulty for luxury brands to craft a branding discourse that can incarnate the nature of luxury. This differs from other industries

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[92] First tested in few countries in October 2015 in response to the demand for 'dislike' button.

with low-involvement in the consumer buying decision process (e.g. stationery) in which the promotional messages can be built up on the *Unique Selling Proposition* (USP) structure based on the idea that there is a problem and the product is the solution for the consumer to reach the satisfaction (Reeves, 1960). The luxury industry is characterized by a high-involvement buying decision making process in which the purchase intention is driven by the idea of brand as a system of assets universally recognized as an additional value (Okonkwo, 2007; Kapferer, 2008; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The *USP* behind the construction of luxury examined in the dataset is still a strong response to consumer demands but it relies on aspiration towards the goods; however, this aspiration is no longer the result of an awareness of unaffordability but instead a message from the brand that suggests the audience 'Yes, you can'.

4.5.3 From brand equity to financial value: a social semiotic journey across brands

This section is concerned with the differences emerged across brands, which contribute to the new definition of luxury. Indeed, brands from different CoO and different business models and visions present different branding discourses and discursive practices. Discourses reflect brand management strategies, which have always been tools to achieve brand equity based on the effective coincidence between brand identity and brand image obtained by a symmetrical encoding and decoding communication process (see Chapter 2).

Luxury brands were family owned and their brand value was the result the strong collective imaginary fed by the brand heritage synthetizing family name, founder, history of the brand, CoO, exotic taste, tradition, craftsmanship, and all the magic

ingredients combined to craft the mysterious alchemy of the unique aura of luxury (Pucci-Sisti Maisonrouge, 2013). Luxury brands were the incarnation of intangible assets associated with material goods perceived as unaffordable and hence desirable. In the digital era, the discursive construction of luxury brands and goods leave space for power negotiation which dilute the boundaries between luxury goods and commodity goods based on the fact that the digital natives represent the new middle-class ready to buy high-end products as long as they rationally satisfy their self-esteem short-term needs.

Against this background the growth of family brands into luxury conglomerates benefits in terms of profits, more demand equals to more profits, but at the same time suffers from the subversion of the luxury equation. Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2014) elaborated a luxury equation to explain how the growth of luxury brands is actually pushing to a fragmentation of the industry, also claimed in this study, according to the value of dream preserved. The equation below summarizes the formula for luxury:

Luxury dream = (Brand Awareness + Heritage) - Penetration

Luxury is identified as dream, and as such it should embed the feature of unaffordability, long waiting time for the achievement and the result of combination brand awareness and heritage. The reduction of the value of the dream is given by the degree of penetration that the brand reaches. In this context, penetration is interpreted as the penetration in the life of the target market in terms of actual affordability, overexposure, the internet penetration. Hence, the closer the brand goes to the target market the less aspirational it becomes. But if the dream is turned into a financial dream for the brands, then the aura of the brand is at risk.

The three brands examined in the dataset are all listed in stock-exchange and interested in remaining relevant in the market to generate profits. At the same time when companies go public the mysterious dynamics of the brand values fade out and leave space for explicit financial values (Kapferer, 2015). Brands are transformed in corporation entities whose purchase and negotiation power in terms of real estate and advertising is higher but at the cost of a direct proportional wider access to information and goods (Kapferer, 2016).

The differences among the three brands have been identified as linked to the brand vision and its situated position in the domestic market in relation to the luxury authorities at the national level. This latter provides an understanding of the socio-economic and financial aspect of the definition of luxury. First of all, *Burberry* and *Gucci* appear to be closer to each other in terms of semiotic construction of meanings, while *LV* seems to distant itself from the instant reality which social networks drag users in. This is confirmed by the fact that the findings of this study demonstrate that *Burberry* and *Gucci* exploit the potential of the *Facebook* platform as visual merchandising tool, while *LV* treats it as an information board in which users learn about *LV* activities. *LV* is also the brand that started with the social media management in the hands of creative directors to report on the development of collections and campaigns.   Secondly, the differences across brands reflect the way luxury goods are conceived their respective CoOs. Chapter 2 in presenting the conventional concept of luxury had already examined the definitions provided by the three different national authorities *Altagamma*, *Comité Colbert*, and *Walpole* and defined luxury according to those among other sources. Altagamma has an innovative approach to luxury as being design-oriented, *Comité Colbert* is more attached to tradition, *Walpole* claims a focus on craftsmanship. This vision is translated into the characteristics of Italian luxury that

actually in recent times and according to insiders never aim to be defined as luxury that is seen a prerogative of French brands, but consider Made in Italy as hegemonic CoO in terms of creativity and design which does not clash with the rational claims and focus on design as art constructed through intertextual references. French brands instead see themselves as absolute luxury and confide in their ethos to position themselves in the market based on the long history and tradition in the luxury pantheon. This is reflected in *LV* discursive practice. British brands, *Burberry* in this context are constructed based on their artisanal process of production and defined as meta-luxury (Ricca & Robins, 2012).

In using the associations as parameters the clash between conventional luxury and its discursive construction seems to be irrelevant but this present study is conducted with the awareness of power relations in the luxury scenario and enlightens this discussion by challenging those associations based on their nature. These associations are not independent because their shareholders are brands themselves. The associations represent a union of brands that for self-survival necessitates members which are protected under the regulations of the association. This interdependency creates biases in the definition of luxury because it has to cover the brands which took part in the association. *Altagamma* (literally meaning 'high-end') went through a mutation that re-conceptualized Italian luxury into High-End Italian Culture and Creativity part of the Italian style[93]. Nowadays, it also includes premium brands across different sectors from coffee to clothes, the focus has shifted to quality, in searching the word luxury in the search engine of the website it only occurs in the participation to conferences dedicated to luxury. This is an instance on how to change a concept and its perception in the world, discourse again, and in this case lexical

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[93] *Altagamma*, https://altagamma.it/ [22/05/2016]

choices play a role in the position of Italian brands in the global market.

Comité Colbert, given its name after a merchant at the court of King Louis XIV, places French brands at the guidance of luxury industry globally[94]. *Louis Vuitton*, part of the organization sticks to the vision and does not distance itself from the conventional concept. The organization includes brands across different sectors but the membership is based on strict selective criteria which not allow the erosion of French luxury tradition.

Walpole, interestingly presents British brands as luxury and it is named after a former Minister Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745) who boosted British economy when in charge[95]. , the nature of the organization has a more financial-oriented focus also suggested by its founders *Financial Times* and *British Airways* among others. The world covers most of the pages and is part of the criteria; however some brands are included if they demonstrate potential for their future position in the luxury pantheon.

Luxury has its first enemy in financial profit. When luxury brands listed themselves in the stock-exchange they abandoned their independency from capitalism and devoted themselves to sales. Furthermore, the affiliation to luxury conglomerates increases the number of shareholders and stakeholders and the pressure for robust financial performances. Luxury is no longer there for its own sake but to satisfy the interest of financial investors. Discourse instead is the only masquerade of the ultimate financial objective and offers an escape to the dream that luxury is supposed to represent; however, it has been confirmed that in the minds of consumers, luxury is first of all iconized through brands and their products (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016). In the year 2014, *Louis Vuitton*, even though the present study finds it very

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[94] *Comité Colbert*, http://www.comitecolbert.com/histoire.html [22/05/2016]
[95] *Walpole UK*, http://www.walpolebritishluxury.co.uk/history [22/05/2016]

much attached to the conventional definition of luxury according to the semiotic construction unpacked, was declared in danger because of its huge popularity in China (Rambourg, 2014). This huge popularity was due to the fact that *LV* had been on the wish list of the emerging middle-class for decades and when the higher income came, the best way to show it in the society was to buy a *LV* bag. This increased the revenues for *LV*, but diluted the aura of the brand. Both scholars and media were declaring the democratization of the brand and its new connotation as middle-class brand; however, its remarkable growth kept it in the graces of Wall Street and *Interbrand* as a powerful brand in terms of financial value (Kapferer, 2015). The perception of *LV* as belonging to the pantheon of luxury brands is also supported by the affluent consumers that recognize in the purchase of Monogram the materialization of their aspiration (Kapferer, 2015). This also reinforces that new stratification proposed in which *LV* belonging to the category of connected brands is destined to grow because it can satisfy the emerging middle-class while the UHNWI would go for it has been categorized as confidential brands.

Gucci, the Italian brand, is very much attached to its roots and even in the process of embracing digital transformation the narrative shared via new media is able to reinvigorate old myths. The findings showed that *Gucci* includes in its collections products named after protagonists of Greek myths to construct an aura around them. The Dionysus bag for instance was named after the Greek god Dionysus. It is not rare to find luxury goods which carry the name of their inspiration like the case of the bag *Birkin* by *Hermès*; however it may be more selective based on knowledge to choose a loaded name like Dionysus. Mythology (Greek and Roman) is at the roots of Italian culture because the territory was historically colonized by Greeks and inhabited by Romans since ancient times, but in other countries those names may not be self-

explanatory, as well as for a younger, lower educated demographic. Here again, the perception of the opportunity to select the audience based on the fragmented reception of information or instead the power of media to educate the audience about art, history, literature via the brand, becomes relevant.

Burberry, in terms of shift from heritage to legitimization of its role in the luxury goods market occupies an ambiguous role. Heritage is re-semiotized in the digital landscape by adding the value of innovation and targeting younger consumers. Legitimization stands for the search for external entities to upgrade the status of the product such as celebrity endorsement and photographers and models from the fashion system. The semiotic construction of the brands assigns it the label of the most distant from the conventional concept of luxury among the three examined. *Burberry* was the first brand to join the digital world, the pioneering one in experimenting and testing marketing strategies to target the digital natives, and its aura has been diluted in favour of digital innovator; however, *Burberry* has drawn the attention of scholars and the anger of its competitors and practitioners from the industry because of its role of digital disruptors that immediately classified the other brands as outdated. *Burberry* in terms of digital practices is still the driver towards innovation, this brand has always been the first to launch new strategies.

The present study identified diverse practices in its branding discourse, adopted by *Gucci* and *LV* as well. In terms of divergence from the conventional concept of luxury and its practices, *Burberry* accounts for involvement in a new segmentation of luxury that takes heritage to a level of reinvention to survive. *Burberry* re-contructs its iconic trench coat as an essential presence in young people's life symbolizing success. The trench coat has always been the core business of the brand and at the centre of all the brand stretching and extension strategies for its iconic image from the 19th century

resurrected by the project of rebranding entitled *The Art of Trench*. Need thrives success, and *Burberry* is an example of how to survive a crisis and finding an opportunity to rebrand and differentiate the offer in the market. *Burberry* and *LV*, differently from *Gucci*, have very well established iconic products and recognized as indisputable kings of the market in terms of trench coats for *Burberry* and travel trunks for *LV*. Their reputation was discursively built on the figure of the founder and creator that is linked to the product and perceived as inseparable part of it, and like *Burberry* and *LV* also *Chanel* for example whose success is described as combination of iconic designer and product cult based on Coco *Chanel* (Kapferer, 2015).

Conservative voices (interviewees' opinions in Chapter 1) will suggest that *Burberry* as *LV* should not be considered luxury because at their willingness to meet the increasing demand of the middle class; however, *LV* despite its wide consumption remains luxury and *Burberry* is still in the ranking as financially valuable because of its revival power. *Burberry* is an example of how digital media can represent a resource, and opportunity, and how the thread of damaging the aura can be overcome by establishing new values for luxury. It seems then that conservatives will have to accept the generational gap in terms of interconnectivity (Kapferer, 2015).

Interconnectivity is part of the revolutionary growth that brands have to cope with and it has produced an issue of legitimization stratified at different levels of brand activities (Kapferer, 2015). First of all, legitimacy in terms of luxury because in the digital world the term has been suffering from an abuse and associated with brands from different segments of the market; therefore, luxury brands have to face issues of positioning due to the emergence of competitors in terms of communication and visibility (Okonkwo, 2010). Legitimacy in terms of CoO due to the delocalization of production due to the increase in demand of goods and the need to reduce the cost of

production. This issue has been internalized by the respective government and fashion institutions to be solved with legal operations for the definition of standardized models for recognition. Legitimacy in terms of intellectual property because products are often counterfeited[96], replicated, or even construed as copies of cheaper products like the last case of Balenciaga and Ikea (Silipo, 24 April 2017). Legitimacy in the production of editorial content and information that in the web loses its authorship ad becomes public domain. Other instances of legitimization strategies are found in *LV* introducing the menswear collections by Kim Jones explaining the journey to India for the campaign and referring to India, which is also a target market for the brand because most of the luxury profits come from menswear (Chadha & Husband, 2007), as the land of origins of male suit. In this way, *LV* presents its creations as rooted in ancient traditions and at the same time targets India not as a conqueror but as an explorer that value the local tradition.

In a nutshell, the luxury fashion branding discourse analyzed construct luxury as a concept in need for re-definition through continuous statements regarding its origins and external forms of legitimacy. Brand heritage alone is not self-explanatory and necessitates further support. This is connected to the identification of ethos strategies relying on external resources more than internal ones, and the shift from ethos to rational claim strategies able to logically explain the value of a brand creation.

4.6 Summary

The multimodal corpus analyzed is a discursive representation of the adaptation of the three luxury brands to the social media ecosystem. It is unfolded into the labour of the

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[96] There is an interesting discussion about counterfeited luxury products and how they actually boost brand image that unfortunately cannot be discussed in this context.

different semiotic resources analyzed and their interplay for the production and distribution of meanings. The branding discourse presents patterns framing the *genre* of social media discourse and instill seeds for the institutionalization of new *genres* emerged from the mode-specific mode-combinations identified. Transmedia (hi)storytelling is constructed via a hypertextual and intertextual net that creates a 360° luxury world in which the user is invited to perform actions to participate to the branding discourse manufacture. In this co-creation process multisemiotic registers are constructed to articulate the shifts from heritage to legitimacy, brand equity to financial value, under the frame of a sales-oriented artification of luxury. Differences in discursive practices legitimate different understanding of luxury across COO. All those different discussions inform the creation of a new segmentation and definition of luxury within luxury based on its discursive construction.

The aspirational luxury identified as overarching theme for the three brands examined is incarnated by connected brands that embraced digital transformation and started experimenting ways of exploiting digital tools to target millennials. , connected brands are found to be characterized by a high consumer-oriented component that dilutes their aura as rare and exclusive luxury in favour of a more rational USP that focuses on the provision of an artificial scarcity and virtual rarity of the goods that are depicted as affordable and symbolize the opportunity to make dreams come true. In this way, the romantic image of luxury is not lost but materialized through a more rational-claim strategy and the construction of symbolic power through the intertextual references to art.

The branding discourse analyzed in its multimodal construction offered a fertile terrain to elaborate on the new concept of aspirational luxury that is mainly built upon the stratification of meanings unfolded through hypertextual advertisements

disseminated in a specific digital platform. The production and distribution of information affects the circulation of goods in McLuhan's terms. The branding discourse is a representation of the process of adaptation of luxury brands to the social media ecosystem that is affected at each level of linguistic stratification as reported in Figure 4.83.

Medium - instant global and ubiquitous visibility; selective power of the algorithm; continuous uploading of information; connecting the brand with the audience

Mode - hypertextual organization of the information; intersemiotic relation focus on elaboration and assign the same role to both text and images

Field - Textual resources introduce products under specific categories; Visual resources enact conceptual processes to overtly and covertly classify products

Socio-semiotic processes - Reporting; recommending; expounding

Tenor - Textual resources invite the audience for either a digital or physical encounter with the brand; visual resources construct an equal and personal social distance and empower the audience over the brand

Figure 4.83 Impact of the medium on the different linguistic strata

The medium, being the enabling and constraining frame within which meanings are produced and distributed, impacts the different strata of language in different ways. These strata converge and generate the new definition of 'aspirational' luxury for the three brands examined. Mode, field, and tenor investigated in the study provided a platform for the understanding of the communication dynamics behind the meaning-making process that operates at the level of mode within a hypertextual organization made of different semiotic resources namely medium-specific features, textual, and visual resources. In terms of field reality is constructed as a consistent classification

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of goods and their contextualization throughout fashion seasons. The socio-semiotic processes identified as fixed registers are reporting, recommending, and expounding. Tenor contributes to aspirational luxury in its establishment of the empowerment of consumers over brands and reduction of the distance between them in favour of a construction of an artificial egalitarian affordability.

Mode, field, and tenor have been investigated across modes and have been examined at the level of discourse semantics with annotation schemes based on different multimodal framework informed by social semiotics as derived from SFL. In terms of distribution of the semiotic labour across modes Figure 4.84 summarizes the major findings in relation to their contextualization within branding discourse.

Textual resources	• limited textual resources; • captions to the photographs;
Visual resources	• adjusting to the tenor; • photo-report of the process;
Multimodal text	• visual merchansing display; • art exhibition; • diary of the activities;
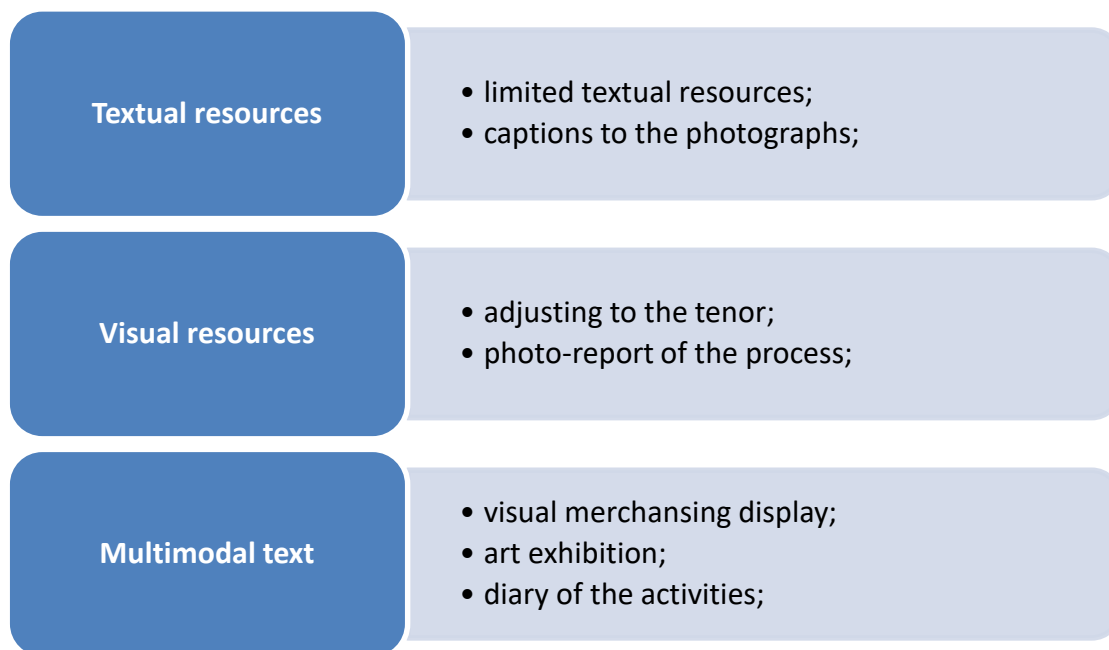
Figure 4.84 Division of the labour across modes

Textual resources have been identified as captions to fashion photography because of their limited work in terms of discursive representation of the luxury brands and their major role in the establishment of tenor. Visual resources were unpacked in terms of construction of social distance and colours to verify their contribution to tenor and

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mode as instances of framing the aspirational taxonomy of luxury. The combination of these two resources along with the medium-specific features described the role of branding discourse produced and distributed through corporate *Facebook* posts as accomplishing the function of narrating brands' life as if it was compiled by a gallery of products on sales according to the season enriched by the process of artification of the goods to legitimate the high-price.

The aims of the study were attained after a complex multimodal analysis and the interpretation of the findings from different perspectives. Luxury after social media undergoes a segmentation which distributes the abundant luxury brands across three different strata of luxurification: überluxury (confidential brands), aspirational luxury (connected brands), and meta-luxury (honest brands). In this chapter, the conventional concept of luxury has been reshuffled based on its semiotic construction analyzed as a product of its times and within a specific socio-economic content to give birth to a new definition articulated in a stratification of luxury that identified the three brands examined as aspirational luxury.

The three brands examined are positioned into the stratum of aspirational luxury based on the semiotic construction of their branding discourse. This conclusion has been made by elaborating the semiotic construction of those luxury brands in terms of marketing strategies and in relation with the conventional concept of luxury and the new discursive stratification (Figure 4.85).
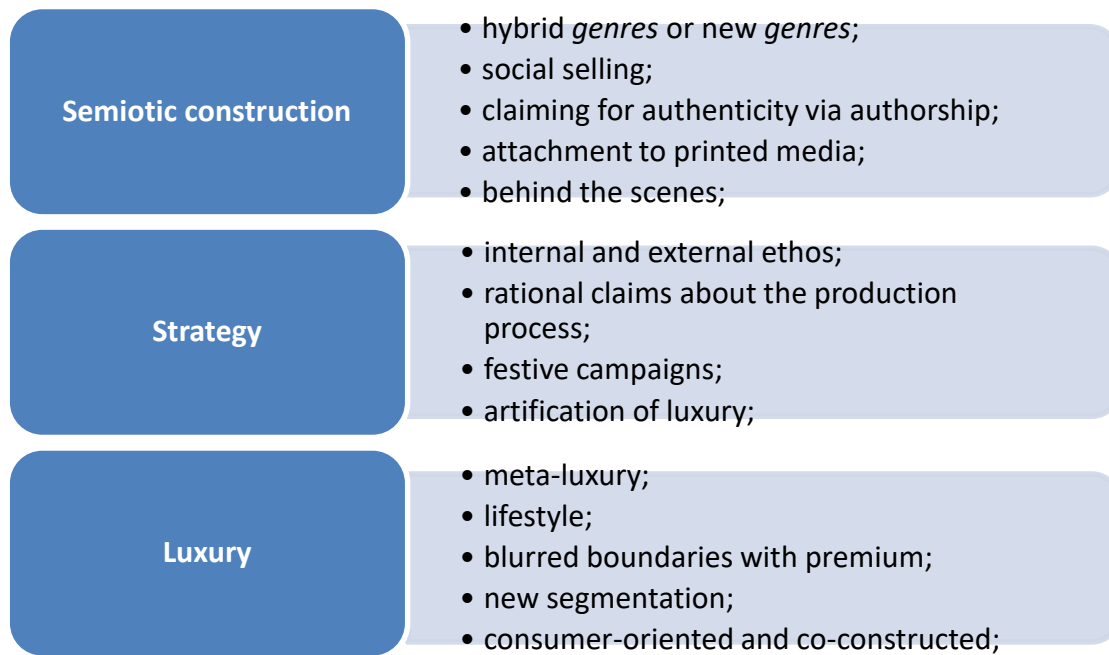
Figure 4.85 Methodological steps to define luxury

The semiotic construction of the three brands describe their branding discourse as the result of hybrid *genres* and new *genres*, social selling within the community of fans, symbolic authority and establishment of authenticity reinforced by the attachment to the printed media, ad willingness to take the audience behind the scenes of their creations and collections. In terms of strategy, the findings in terms of semiotic have been translated into ethos relying on external sources, rational claims and description of the production process, artification of luxury as stimulus to connoisseurs' community to learn about the unknown. All those information converging into luxury as discursive definition provide instances of realization of meta-luxury, lifestyle branding, blurred boundaries with premium goods, which create a new segmentation within luxury goods market that is more consumer-oriented and co-constructed not only discursively but in the sense that the business model of luxury is reshuffled from brand to consumer-centric.

In conclusion, the semiotic construction of branding discourse has informed about the way the medium contributed to forge a new segmentation within luxury

goods market that in this study is presented based on site-specific discursive practices

as instances of social constituted brand identity.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This chapter is divided into different sections: Section 5.1 summarizes the findings in relation to the research questions and the aims of the study. Section 5.2 discusses the contribution and implications of the study; Section 5.3 presents limitations and future research; Section 5.4 enriches the discussion with a personal definition of luxury; Section 5.5 concludes the research project.

The present study has conducted a social semiotic investigation into the semiotic construction of luxury fashion branding discourse in the social media. The study has followed the three tasks in van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotics. First, the study has created a multimodal corpus from the *Facebook* posts of the three luxury fashion firms *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *LV*, acknowledging the intersection of the medium, its algorithm, and the collection of the data from my own account and the nature of the semiotic resources extracted for this study. Second, it has conducted a multimodal analysis of the *Facebook* posts, examining the use of the semiotic resources inventoried in the specific social context (historical, cultural and institutional), and the interaction of individuals with the materials. Third, it has examined the multimodal resources as either evolved species of existing ones, or new types emerging from the context, the use of both old and new resources, and their interaction and mutual definition in the context.

The study has aimed to:

1) determine what is conceived to be luxury in the 21st century based on its semiotic construction;

2) investigate how the medium of the communication chosen to spread the branding discourse enables and constrains the division of semiotic labour;

3) map the site-specific discursive practices performed by the three luxury fashion firms selected for this research project.

The aims have been achieved through the following research questions:

1) How are different semiotic resources on the *Facebook* posts of luxury fashion firms used to construct their brand identity and values?

2) How do the different semiotic resources interact with each other in the production of the branding discourse in the *Facebook* platform?

3) What are the socio-semiotic processes that frame the site-specific discursive practices of the corporate *Facebook* posts?

This section is divided into different sub-sections summarizing the answers to the research questions (Section 5.1.1), differences among three brands (Section 5.1.2); overall branding narrative (Section 5.1.3); and achievement of the aims (Section 5.1.4).

5.1.1 Addressing the research questions

Section 5.1.1.1 summarizes the answer to the first question; Section 5.1.1.2 provides a synthesis of the answer to the second research question; Section 5.1.1.3 focuses on the third research question.

5.1.1.1 Different semiotic resources at work

The first research question identified the various semiotic resources used by *Burberry*, *Gucci* and *LV* in their *Facebook* posts and examined how they are used to construct their brand values and establish their brand identity. The different semiotic resources, namely medium-specific features, layout units, textual, and visual resources are

synergistically arranged to construct branding discourse.

The different resources deployed occur in diverse forms and perform specific functions that have been analyzed distinctively to understand the division of semiotic labour. Medium-specific features identified include hyperlinks, tags, and hashtags. These medium-specific features transform advertisements into hypertexts within the interactive layout created by ATA and SATA. Both ATA and SATA are identified as cohesive devices that help the navigability of the content within the same post and among different posts. The layout hosts the CTA constructed through the employment of medium-specific elements and textual and visual resources.

Medium-specific features are found to perform the textual metafunction of connecting different bits of information to initiate the weaving process of the branding narrative on the social media platform and across different media enhancing the transmedia nature of storytelling. The findings of the medium-specific features point out the interest of the brands in building credentials by referring to corporate websites as authoritative source of information and introducing the other social media as instance of a digital media strategy. Additionally, medium-specific features also construct interactivity which contributes to the interpersonal metafunction, mainly defined by textual resources.

Textual resources construed as captions are concerned with the engagement of the audience. The textual analysis shows similarities with the advertising *genre* and also the self-reference to the internet. Given the fact that language is also used to enhance senses which are not stimulated via a digital encounter, it also performs an ideational function by introducing products and describing features that are not conveyable through visual resources, such as the texture of fabrics.

Visual resources construed as instances of digital fashion photography construct ideational meanings by deploying the *Facebook* post canvas as shopping windows to display products. The product becomes the centre of attention in the *Facebook* platform. It shifts the construction of brand identity from ethos strategies towards the through rational claims based on the description of the products aimed to increase sales. Visual resources further adjust the semiotization of luxury to the interpersonal relationship established by the platform. This latter construes a relationship between brand and audience, in which distance is reduced and audience empowered. This type of relationship is controversial with the nature of luxury. In fact, in contrast with the conventional construction of luxury, it provides fertile terrain for the elaboration of a new definition and segmentation within the luxury goods market. Socially, it frames the brands as incarnations of a manufactured equality promoted by the millennial consumers (Bernát, 2017).

All the semiotic resources synergistically create meanings and construct the luxury branding discourse.

5.1.1.2 Multimodal interplay

The second research question examined the interaction of captions and photographs as semiotic modes, but also the medium-specific features in the branding discourse in meaning-making. Interplay of the different affordances involved in the meaning-making process was also observed as a natural development of the intersemiosis process enacted by the compositional meanings.

The findings regarding the LOG-SEM relations between text and images showed that both resources contribute at the same level of generality e.g. elaboration – exposition. This shows the role of textual resources as anchoring the potential of the

visual resources to be interpreted in various ways. In contrast, the system of elaboration presented an optionality of 'exemplification' in which meanings conveyed through text are more general than the ones constructed via visual resources which can limit the potential of a particular text. The system of exemplification echoes Barthes' systematization of the relations between text and images and it translates the level of delicacy of 'text more general' and 'image more general' in 'anchor' and 'relay' respectively. In this sense, the use of fashion photographs and captions disseminated through *Facebook* seem to be resembling the re-semiotization of magazine editorials. The findings also present some instances of extension in which more information is provided by textual resources over visual. Given the purpose of social media selling, textual resources compensate for the multisensorial experience replacing touch for the identification of fabrics for instance, and the interpersonal relationship characterizes an offline encounter with a brand ambassador.

The investigation of intersemiotic relations drew attention to the copy-and-paste practice behind the construction of the branding discourse, particularly affecting the writing process of captions. Intersemiosis enacted the creation of the narrative within each post and among different posts by highlighting the role of cohesive devices disseminated across modes.

Specific mode-combinations are symptomatic of the application of branding strategies designed for social media and the study concludes that orchestration of different semiotic resources and their semiotic labour is governed by the hosting platform. *Facebook* posts showcase products as if they were in an art gallery. This semiotic construction disguises the agenda of the brand of selling the products with the construal of (hi)storytelling instances. Eventually, the intersemiotic relations become a signal for detecting the attachment to printed media that interferes with the

nature of the medium by enhancing the hybridity of the platform. This attachment has been resignified into a statement for authenticity in contrast with the interpretation of digitalizations of printed media as lack of digital literacy and creativity.

Additionally, the intersemiotic analysis was extended to the medium-specific features and their interaction with each other and other resources. This enhanced the hypertextual and interactive feature of the texts in the creation of a transmedia storytelling.

The intersemiotic relations informed the orchestration of the semiotic resources within the *Facebook* posts framing, and also deconstrued intertextuality. This latter is instantiated through multimodal ensembles and mainly instill the process of artification of luxury goods. Artification is one of the features framing the new concept of luxury used to upgrade the status of goods in the era of automatization and reproducibility.

Instances of intertextuality also occurred with interdiscursivity and were identified to map emerging discursive practices, namely hypertextual advertisements, advertorials, live streaming, meta-representation, selfies, and instant films. Those site-specific discursive practices represent the convergence between advertising and digital media discourse in search for global visibility and authenticity.

The interplay of the different semiotic resources in their site-specific mode-combinations create socio-semiotic processes.

5.1.1.3 Multisemiotic blends

The third research question examined the socio-semiotic processes that frame the site-specific discursive practices of the *Facebook* posts of *Burberry*, *Gucci* and *LV*. It is

concerned with registerial cartography, which was operationalized at different levels to map the semiotic labour of the different semiotic resources in the construction of multimodal text and in the performance of different registers. Here, the analysis focused on the nature of the medium and purpose of communication as well as the semiotic labour of ATA, SATA and CTA, which were further divided into textual and visual elements that provided a formula for the multisemiotic blends construed via corporate *Facebook* posts:

(Reporting +Recommending + Expounding) ± Enabling ± Recreating ± Sharing)

Reporting synthetizes the function of *Facebook* to report on brands' life and to create the story line; recommending translates the brand agenda of promoting goods; expounding is forged by the medium-specific features that categorize the editorial content which is given by the optional combination of enabling, recreating and sharing. Enabling, recreating, and sharing are found to be characteristic of the editorial content created by brands to engage the audience by instructing them on how to use the products and how to find them (enabling), entertaining the social media users as part of the storytelling strategy (recreating), and sharing moments of brand's life as if the social media account belonged to an individual user (sharing).

Sections 5.1.2 highlights how the findings also showed similarities and differences among three brands examined.

5.1.2 Three different branding narratives

Overall, the three brands *Burberry*, *Gucci*, and *LV* share similarities in the process of instantiation of brand values and identities. All the three brands perform a high integration among platforms pointing at their websites as authoritative voice; however,

in this study, differences are more relevant to the understanding of luxury fashion. *Burberry*'s social media strategy is a consumer-oriented approach that aims to establish a close relationship with young potential customers enhancing their perception of affordability of goods. *Gucci*'s branding discourse focuses on the artification of its luxury goods and production and distribution of stories aimed to generate short-term feedback. It also uses *Facebook* as a teaching and learning platform to educate its potential consumers about the origins of its products and hence increase desirability. *LV* sticks to the conventional definition of luxury in many ways. It shares fewer posts than the others; it experiments less; it uses *Facebook* to invite the audience to experience the brand offline. It incorporates artification of luxury in its strategy and focuses on the personification of the brand by empowering the individuals behind its media platforms. Individuals are no longer the founders of the brand but the creative directors of the brand. *Gucci* and *LV* also present a strong attachment to the print media in seek of authenticity; however, this does not occur in *Burberry*'s branding discourse.

Section 5.1.3 explains how this branding discourse is not merely the sum of different types of semiotic labour performed by distinct semiotic resources, but a combination of different elements, namely the semiotic, social action, and social/institutional aspects of communication examined in the study.

5.1.3 Multimodal luxury branding discourse

The study focused on identifying the semiotic labour of each semiotic resource in its contribution to the construction of luxury branding discourse and, at the same time, the interaction of all the semiotic resources with one another, while performing their unique functions. The different semiotic resources synergistically interact with one another and create mode-specific mode combinations and generate site-specific

discursive practices, which frame the unique features of luxury branding discourse. The multimodal digital artefacts examined are the result of the adaptation of luxury branding discourse to digital platforms. It creates a clash between the nature of luxury and the internet, and in the process of construction of texts, the medium plays a role in the re-definition of luxury; therefore, the luxury branding discourse analyzed is the result of the semiotic resources and their interactions and the use of *Facebook* as the hosting platform with all its enablers and constraints. It is also the result of the socio-economic context in which the messages are produced, distributed, and consumed. The ultimate goals of the luxury branding discourse are to raise readers'/viewers' awareness of the brands through co-constructing *Facebook* messages and to generate revenues for the brands without diluting the aura of luxury.

The answers to the three research questions and the comparison of the results for the three brands helped achieving the three aims of the study.

5.1.4 Aims of the study

The findings led to the achievement of the aims through a qualitative interpretation based on the social actional and social/institutional perspectives. This section summarizes the achievement of the three aims: Section 5.1.4.1 summarizes what is luxury in the 21st century based on its semiotic construction; Section 5.1.4.2 points out the role played by *Facebook* in the re-definition of luxury branding discourse; Section 5.1.4.3 provides a synthesis of the site-specific discursive practices in the dataset.

5.1.4.1 Re-defining luxury

Based on the semiotic construction of luxury on social media, identified as texts of contemporary times, the three brands analyzed (connected brands) can be considered as representative of a segment of luxury referred to in this study as 'aspirational luxury'. Its features project an artificial affordability, thereby creating the impression to be accessible to the masses; meanwhile, the high price of these brands still preserves

the privilege of ownership to fewer individuals. According to this segmentation, what was conceived as unaffordable luxury in the past takes on a new definition as 'überluxury', assembling confidential brands which selectively reward the happy few by keeping both information and goods destined to the elitist group that can afford them. Both discursive stratification and definition of luxury reflect the consumer-oriented attitude developed by luxury against its conventional brand-centric and institutional historical tradition. Social media shifts the weighing needle of branding strategies from brand-centric to consumer-centric and erode the institutional concept of luxury in favour of a more fluid one willing to meet new individuals' needs.

5.1.4.2 The medium is the message

Luxury brands, in the financial ecosystem shaped by the transformations of 21st century, have gone through a process of adaptation to the new socio-economic conditions and has participated in the evolution (or involution for conservatives) of the entire luxury goods market. The species able to survive the digital transformation, presented as one of the major disruptions in the business asset of the firms, had to cope with the fact that digital tools not only inevitably change communication practices of brands but also have consequences on their business model.

5.1.4.3 Luxury branding site-specific discursive practices

The semiotic construction of luxury branding discourse was found to be the product of adaptation to social media features. This adaptation to a new ecosystem has generated the evolution of the concept of luxury and hybrid discursive practices. All the multimodal digital artefacts analyzed, the corporate *Facebook* posts are hypertextual advertisements, which gather together the features of advertising discourse enhancing the interpersonal aspect of communication through the

hypertextual elements of the internet. More specifically, other discursive practices characterize the dataset namely advertorials, live streaming, meta-representation, selfies, and instant films. Those site-specific discursive practices represent the convergence between printed and digital media discourse in search for global visibility and authenticity.

5.2 Contribution and implications of the research project

The study is significant as it fully achieved its aims. It provided elements for the definition of the evolving and changing features of luxury which were used to define a new segmentation within the luxury goods market, which reflects the 21st century. It showed how the materiality of the medium influences and contributes to the semiotic construction of branding discourse and how the process of production and distribution of discourse and goods are interconnected. The study unfolded the investable influence that the two processes have on each other.

The present study makes a significant contribution to the literature, and it has important theoretical contribution, methodological implications, pedagogical implications, and managerial implications, and other contributions.

5.2.1 Theoretical contribution

This research project contributes to the scholarship in applied linguistics, specifically social semiotics, digital humanities, corporate communication, and brand management.

The study contributes to applied linguistics in its understanding as appliable linguistics promoted by Halliday (1964) and Matthiessen (2014), who do not discern application from theory in the investigation of situated discourse. Instead, both stances are seen as mutually constitutive. Theory is necessary for the analysis, and the

empirical approach validates and empowers the theory with evidence by updating and enhancing the replicability on different sets of data. In this vein, the present study has gathered together different frameworks used to investigate multimodal artefacts in both digital and printed media, and constructing different text-types, to elaborate a theoretical and analytical framework to suit the specificity of branding discourse. Specifically, the adoption of social semiotics has been combined with the understanding of discourse as the primary sources for brands used to construct brand identity and values. The result of this combination construed corporate *Facebook* posts as hypertextual advertisements embedding features of advertising discourse given the communicative purpose and hypertexts as structural configuration. In fact, the annotation schemes used for the analysis relate the semiotic choices to the branding functions enacted.

Additionally, if social semiotics is the research area concerned with the investigation of signs in their social contexts, this study highlights the need for considering those signs as hypercharged and carrying semiotic meanings individually before contributing to the multimodal ensemble. In fact, captions and photographs in this study are resignified in their semiotic functions within the digital platform as basic units to further explore their derived extensions into for instance videos and GIFs.

In terms of social semiotic theory, the study also implements the visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006), and it contributes to the investigation of intertextuality by highlighting the need to unpack it across modes. Same for the socio-semiotic processes (Matthiessen, 2005), conventionally investigated at the text level, but annotated separately for each component of the text to follow the hybrid nature of corporate *Facebook* posts. Additionally, the framework for intersemiotic relations (Martinec & Salway, 2005) is adapted to the site-specific discursive practices by

acknowledging the impossibility to define *a priori* the nuclearity of one of the mode. The annotation schemes and taxonomies elaborated for this study are described in Chapter 3 and attached in Appendix III.

In terms of digital humanities, this study embraces the emerging theory of digital materialism (Reichert & Richterich, 2015), which construes the medium as an integral part of the semiotic construction of meanings and includes it in the compilation of corpora, in contrast to the big data trend, which disregards it and considers it a mere channel of communication and focused on web-scraping a huge amount of data instead. In this way, the mixed-method based on a qualitative analysis of the data with the support of quantitative results enhances the generalizability of the findings.

The contribution to corporate communication lies in the choice of analyzing multimodal texts. Maier in 2013 highlighted the importance of multimodal studies in the area of corporate communication to cope with the advent of multimedia and the information consumption behaviour developed by the stakeholders. Maier (2013) praises the proliferation of studies on advertising; however, as shown in the literature review (Chapter 2), advertising discourse in the social media is yet to continue to explore. The present study also provides a parallelism between discourse and business models, as demonstrated, luxury and the discourse which regards it inevitably shape and reflect each other.

The contribution to brand management is in the review of terms such as brand identity and brand image, used interchangeably in some studies, and re-defined in relation to the generic terms identity and image. In this vein, both brand identity and brand image are conceived as the result of the branding discourse. The term 'branding discourse' was used in this study to replace 'branded content' in order to highlight the

fact that discourse is not a product, but an ongoing process. Furthermore, brand management for luxury benefits from this study in the understanding of the consequences of the semiotic choices in the discursive constructions of brand identity and values, and conceptualization of luxury. This aspect is explored in the managerial implications.

Additionally, this study analyzes discourse from a multiple perspective and combines different disciplines to tackle issues emerging from observing the real world. In this regard, corporate communication practices were scrutinized in their context of usage and authentic texts were retrieved to formulate a research design and generate findings useful for both academia and the professional world. This research is situated in the space of intersection among different disciplines that have independently investigated the construction of luxury in the social media. By drawing on those disciplines, a comprehensive multi-framework was formulated by relying on the multidisciplinary approach promoted by social semiotics. The empirical approach adopted revealed how digital platforms like *Facebook* can enact ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions and contribute to the meaning-making process of the multisemiotic orchestration. In this vein, the present study has also useful methodological implications.

5.2.2 Methodological implications

This research project had methodological implications based on the development of a multi-framework adopted to analyze multimodal corpora consisting of new media texts because of its focus on the materiality of platform hosting the texts. The multi-framework, derived from the data-driven adaptation of existing multimodal frameworks, represents an analytical tool applicable to other sets of data. Additionally,

it is important to state that the two basic units of analysis considered for this study – captions and photographs – provide a solid configuration for future investigation of their evolution into GIF, moving images, videos, and live streaming.

The annotation schemes developed for this study include existing categories, extensions of them and totally new ones based on the annotation of the dataset. Chapter 3 describes all of them, and also summarizes the taxonomies defined for the annotation. Specifically, the present study implements the visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2006) in its representational and interactional meanings by bridging forms and functions and defining data-driven taxonomies. Taxonomies are also elaborated to identify the socio-semiotic processes. Those taxonomies represent the contribution of this study to the procedures for multimodal annotation. They have been defined based on quantitative evidence that strengthens the replicability of the model. In fact, 597 corporate *Facebook* posts were collected for this study and it is a big corpus in comparison to the multimodal studies reviewed that processed very small sets of data. This choice was made based on the empirical approach promoted by Bateman *et al.* (2016).

To validate the claim of applicability of the methodology and replicability of the study, different pilot analyses have been conducted during the elaboration of the framework to test the categories by multiplying the number of texts analyzed before examining the full dataset. Also, analyses have been conducted for independent studies on different datasets related to luxury fashion goods market but retrieved from other brands' social media pages. Interestingly, cross-use of editorial content has been identified to be an expected unexperienced use of new tools of communication. The call for diversifying the editorial content from one platform to another not to create a reversed curve of online fandom demands for exclusive content. This practice bores

the audience and encourages users to follow one platform only because different platforms do not guarantee the consumption of different contents but they only subscribe to the copy-and-paste practice and ideology.

The applicability of the methodology across media and sectors is built in the framework as an ultimate goal of the present study. Specifically, the identification of medium-specific features provided a platform for the mapping of enablers and constraints of media as framing layout for the meanings. The deconstruction of the medium-specific features contextualizes the meaning-making process by facilitating the exemplification of intersection between form and function. The multimodal corpus analysis of both text and images reveals the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions conceived via language, and the annotation of visual categories as manufactured representational and interactional meanings shaping and simultaneously shaped by the compositional meanings enacted by the different modes. The interplay of those modes in the hypertextual infrastructure of digital advertisements visualized the semiosis process enacted to achieve the brand agenda. Those methodological development have also been considered for pedagogical implications.

5.2.3 Pedagogical implications

The pedagogical implications of the study became evident when I taught two subjects at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University related to this research project. For instance, materials from this project and preliminary findings have been proved useful in teaching the subjects *ENGL3019 Fundamentals of Media Communication* and *ENGL2B02 New Media: New Meanings* in the academic year 2015/2016 with the objective of enhancing the multiliteracy competence of students and giving voice to their creativity. The dataset has been used as source for authentic multimodal digital

artefacts analyzed, and a starting point to understand the dynamics behind the production and the distribution of new media texts.

Additionally, the research methodology and findings are relevant to postgraduate students willing to engage in ESP and attain multidisciplinary research projects. Postgraduate attending taught courses could benefit from the introduction of the design process, which led to the theoretical framework. In fact, the project has been presented to M.A. students attending subject *ENGL4007 Multimodal Analysis of Advertisements* and to doctoral students attending the subject *FH6053 New Media* at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (a.a. 2016/2017). The project has also been presented to M.A. students attending the subject *CLC5404 Fashion and Visuality* at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (a.a. 2016/2017). Those sharing moments were useful to understand the pedagogical implications of the research project.

The observation of the new fashion system identified new professions, highly specialized in web communication, that have emerged lately, such as: bloggers, web copywriters, social media managers, especially in the luxury fashion industry, where every word, drawing, symbols inevitably matters. The findings of this study could be useful to universities in re-defining their curricula and meet the job demand of the job market as they prepare new crop of professionals to find the solutions to the new challenges arising from the incorporation of the new technologies in consumers' daily activities.

Overall, the research project enables the acquisition of professional expertise; bridges the gap between the classroom and the workplace; it enhances the use of authentic texts highly contextualized; it provides the students with a deeper knowledge of the mechanisms behind the meaning-making process of text production and

consumption (Bhatia, 2017); it turns the students into active learners as they are tech-savvy individuals aware of the dynamicity of the new media ecosystem.

This research approach to teaching has been found successful especially with students, who utilizes knowledge in their own professions and are able to interact in the class to provide more insights from the production side.

5.2.4 Managerial implications

The investigation of the concept of luxury in the search of a new definition, which reflects its identity as a social construction fed by the texts of its times, required an in-depth analysis of corporate *Facebook* posts as discursive constructions implicit with ideologies of the 21st century. The empirical approach adopted generated quantitative and qualitative results to articulate the argument of the evolution of luxury features and their co-deployment to craft a new luxury segment intended to meet the instant demand of the millennials. In this vein, the present study has useful managerial implications because it provides corporate communication practitioners in the luxury goods market with insights into their semiotic choices and consequences useful for their professional development.

The managerial implications pursued from the initial stage of the research, actually motivated by the confusion stated by both academics and practitioners involved in luxury studies, represent the most inspiring repercussion of this study. Besides, interviews and informal conversations with professionals in the luxury goods market, this work has been presented in various occasions to diverse audience ready to identify possible applicability of the study in the definition of media plans. Interestingly, against the skeptical attitude shown towards an outsider, marketing

specialists showed particular interest in the project by highlighting how a different approach could provide a different perspective and fresh ideas. The discussion led to the fact that the take-away for practitioners had to clearly identify directions for crafting editorial content and use channels of communication to build brand identity. This study did not intentionally pursue a prescriptive nature, but at this stage it is possible to provide information on the potentiality of the medium as a tool to produce a more definite branding discourse that is forged with full awareness of its distribution, enablers and constraints, and effects of those embedded features.

The research project contributes to the debate of how social media is redefining the concept of luxury fashion and explores the importance of social media in the realignment of brands' market position. Given the above, some ideas were put forward to help practitioners:

➢ The medium is the message.

In planning a media strategy, it is necessary to understand that the choice of medium generates a set of meanings, and also affects the production and distribution of the content.

➢ Explore the potential of the medium.

Each medium provides a set of tools that is very often not fully exploited. Most editorial content is duplicated across media.

➢ Diversify the editorial content within the medium and across media.

The social media ecosystem offers a wide range of choices in terms of media and it is important to diversify the editorial content to avoid cross-repetitions. Recent updates about platform implementation have announced the creation of cross-notification

which will simultaneously inform users about the availability of new content (Constine, 18 May 2017). Eventually, users will not to follow brands on diverse platforms to avoid the duplication of information.

➢ Lead the traffic to the website.

The findings obtained from the analysis of the hypertextual elements showed that brands use *Facebook* as a platform to vehicle the traffic to other media (printed and new), particularly to their website. The website was identified as a consistent destination of hyperlinks because in the cyberspace, it functions as the authoritative voice of the brand in contrast with the more unstable social media ecosystem in terms of authorship.

➢ Brand authenticity lies within the medium.

If printed media benefit from an authentic and authoritative aura, social media have built an image of contributors to fake news (FCC, 2017), which in the case of branding corresponds to the proliferation of communication agencies managing different branded pages and duplicating the strategies across them. Even if in the contemporary scenario, luxury brands have gotten back the management of their pages, a copy-and-paste tendency in terms of strategies and content does still exist and it does not differentiate between brands of different segments. The findings showed that *LV* presented a solution to this anonymity behind social media accounts by assigning their management to the creative director of the collection. In this way, besides enhancing the personification of the brand, it also draws a connection between the production of the editorial content and creations by spreading the artistic influence across different representations of the brand identity.

➢ It is necessary to create a unique branding discourse.

The brand awareness reaches the highest degree when a brand is recognized through its signs in the society, including the logo, the iconic pattern and product or the name of the founder. , luxury brands as myths disseminated in the society are easily identifiable and do not necessitate of their logo, so are their advertisements in the printed media. The social mediascape instead suffers from a redundant 'abuse' of the brand name in the captions because unlikely printed media where editorial content is carefully planned, on social media given the pressure for new updates to contribute to the ideology of the instant society, the content is very often the product of a copy-and-paste process. It would be useful to elaborate a unique stylistic feature for each brand to be able to add this discursive practice to the set of branding tools. Language can be used, as well as photography, to build brand image.

➢ Take the audience behind the scenes of your brand's life.

The findings confirmed that social media reduces social distance and affect the power relation between brand and audience. Instead of striving for a way of preserving the distance and manipulating power. Brands can bring the audience behind the scenes of events, collections, campaigns and share the different steps of the process of creation.

➢ Promote a learning experience.

An interviewee (see chapter 1) had already highlighted the importance of learning experience as take-away for the social media user. The findings also confirmed that brands such as *Gucci* and *LV* have incorporated a teaching and learning exchange in their media strategies. Learning about the brands forges the taste of the social media users who may become consumers in a long-term. Hence, social media can be used to educate future consumers, and provide social media users who cannot afford the goods with an experience which will make them feel a sense of worth. Not only brands can

teach the audience about themselves, but also about their CoO and heritage.

➢ Create rhetoric of newness.

In the social mediascape the rhetoric of newness rules the production and distribution of the editorial content. In addition to the medium, fashion as a sector based on temporary taste that become timeless when reaching the status of iconic and luxury, frames the consistent need for updating collections, and consequently, social media platforms. Hence, in designing their media plan, brands need to keep in mind the frenetic and fast-pace way in which information is consumed. Editorial content must provide new information to stay relevant because in the internet information inevitably pulverizes after a few seconds, and unless brands are able to become iconic as if they were art themselves, they would not be remembered. In the same way, that advertisements in printed media were able to penetrate our daily life with slogan, photographs, and colours, social media posts should aim to be remembered. The CEO of Rolex (see chapter 2), suggested how storytelling strictly related to the heritage of the brand and enhanced by the newness of its reinterpretation could be the key to a successful digital media plan.

➢ Exploit the algorithm and the search engine.

Since brands are subjected to the power of the algorithm and the search engine, they should use it. A more accurate semantic tagging could help brands to better categorize their editorial content and make it searchable.

5.2.5 Socio-cultural implications

The study also confirmed the concept of luxury as being still a marker of social stratification. The two inter-dependent concepts have both undergone a transformation

and inform each other's construction. Although the social aspect of luxury has not been deeply investigated in this study, it was considered as part of the research background in order to understand the evolution of and change in the features used to coin the new definition and segmentation.

The information gathered about the society in which the meanings were produced and distributed were indicators of how the data collected was an instance of brands' adjustment to millennials' attitude. The site-specific discursive practices have been found being instances of digital natives' manifestations and it captures a change in the profile of consumers enhanced by interconnectivity at the basis of the contemporary society.

The information revolution frames technology as ideology more than a mere set of devices, the concept of 'technoculture' (Roderick, 2016) helps understanding how technology and culture constituting each other are reflected in the social life, economic structures, politics, and popular culture (Shaw, 2008).

5.3 Limitations of the study and further research

Despite the useful implications of the study, it is not without limitations. Limitations are listed in Section 5.3.1. Additionally, the study generated findings, which provide opportunities for future research. Section 5.3.2 lists the directions for the future development of the present study.

5.3.1 Limitations of the study

The first limitation concerns the compilation of the multimodal corpus which currently includes three luxury fashion brands and one year of their corporate *Facebook* posts

composed by text and still images.

Undoubtedly, this corpus would benefit from the inclusion of other luxury sectors to enhance the representation of the whole market, making it possible to further generalize the findings and the addition of multimodal artefacts including moving images and videos. These aspects have already been explored in satellite studies and revealed the homogeneity of the semiotic construction of branding discourse due to the lack of expertise in the exploitation of the medium potentials. Hence, the inclusion of these features could have impacted on the results.

Another limitation of the study that has been considered but not carried out due to time constraints was the cross-checking of the annotation in focus groups with individuals not familiar with the frameworks to verify the perception of the semiotic construction.

5.3.2 Further research

A number of studies can be conducted as a sequel of the present study. First, an extension of the corpus created for this study is being considered in order to enhance the generalizability of the results. The extension is being planned to include brands from other sectors categorized as luxury goods including: jewelry, watches, yachts, cars, cosmetics, and so on. The corpus can also be enlarged in terms of other semiotic modes such as GIF, moving images, videos, fashion films, live streaming and fashion shows as new *genres*. The corpus can also assume a diachronic nature by including all the years of *Facebook* use for those brands.

The focus of future research could fall into the areas suggested for the *LVMH-SMU Asian Luxury Brand Research Initiative for 2018* in which academics and practitioners

list relevant issues in need for future investigation such as: the relationship between luxury and technology, overexposure *versus* brand awareness, the role of millennials, as the impact of group strategies, that are touched upon in this study[97].

Second, more specifically instances of advertisements in the form of videos could be explored. For instance, Chanel's campaign for *Chanel* N. 5 starred Brad Pitt in 2012[98], a video of 31 seconds in which the product appears after 26 seconds as the omnipresent in people's life. This is a clear example of non USP construction in which luxury is ideationally constructed through a nostalgic black and white recording of a man describing his life and making the brand part of it. The video became viral and was transformed into parodies that populated new media for months. The same happened to *Burberry* festive campaign 2016[99] where using the semiotic modes of movie trailers created in the new media audience the desire for the full movie (Shepherd, 2016). The video is an example of brand entertainment, it exercises an ethos and pathos oriented strategies as commercial in which the product is the story itself, it is not a movie trailer but it resembles it. , it belongs to the newborn *genre* of fashion films[100] recently institutionalized with the foundation of fashion film awards. These new text-types are of my interest for future research. A full movie about the story of Thomas *Burberry*, the founder of the firm. Undoubtedly, the internet generates the emergence of new *genres*, fashion films among others, that becoming of public domain and establish themselves through the process of reproduction and distribution on a larger scale. Despite its virality the anti-laws of luxury marketing were respected

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[97] *SMU Newsletter*, https://cme.smu.edu.sg/newsletter/1741?newsletter [05/06/2017]
[98] *Chanel Youtube Channel*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGs4CjeJiJ: [20/04/2017]
[99] Shepherd, J. (6 November 2016), *The Independent*, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/*Burberry*-christmas-advert-lily-james-the-tale-of-thomas-*Burberry*-film-a7400831.html [20/04/2017]
[100] *Good short films*, http://www.goodshortfilms.it/en/articles/the-rise-of-the-fashion-short [20/04/2017]

and luxury aura preserved.

Third, transmedia storytelling could be another path to explore. Posts across media and re-semiotization of the content has been observed to interpret the data and understand the hierarchical relation within the branding discourse instances. Websites of different brands have been investigated to understand the brand vision of the firms examined, observe other brands' cyber behaviour such as Coach and Shanghai Tang to claim the borrow of heritage features from European brands to enrich the brand values of these emerging high-end brands.

Fourth, the relationship between luxury and art offers a fertile terrain for research. It was partially started with the investigation of the semiotic constructions of temporary exhibitions, and Renaissance effect in advertising and product design in reference to the findings from the intertextuality analysis.

Fifth, luxury and sustainability manifested in the CSR activities of the brand have been observed in their deployment in the rebranding process of *Kering* in its new coinage of sustainable luxury as the segment to which they belong to. In order to investigate this topic, *Kering* website was examined in its multimodal rendition. This also leads to crisis communication and investigation of the UGC.

Sixth, the relationship between luxury and politics has been drawing my attention during the last American elections, Kate Middleton's appearances, and currently the G7 for what concerned the definition of luxury based on first ladies' outfit (Holt, 2017). Media have created the link between luxury brands, fashion brands in particular, and politics and, while producing news, the outfit of politicians become more important than their position, activity, events, or speeches (Young, 2011, p. 7). For instance, Michelle Obama has been defined as an example of "first lady effect" along with the

Chinese first lady Peng Liyuan (Adragna, 2013). Both have become style icons and Peng Liyuan, in particular, is now considered a threat for Western luxury brands. She has confirmed her intention to act as ambassador of Chinese brands and be able to let them register sold out in several shops after wearing some items.

Seventh, the study legitimately instills an interest for gender studies. Specifically, all the three brands in redefining their brand vision (Chapter 3) focus on gender equality, and *Gucci* and *LV* in particular promote women empowernemt in their CSR. It would be intriguing to investigate whether their branding discourse promotes a powerful image of women or it still sticks to the stereotipical construction of objectified women. The findings provide insights into the construction of models as dehumanized given the focus on the products. Recent news have also construed models as influencers and given voice by the social media platforms (Fernandez, 2017). In fact, the editorial side has always been managed by women; however, a first glimpse into gender equality on the production side, it is suggested by the textual analysis that found a dominance of male creative directors indistinctevely for weomenswear and menswear. Photography has instead seen an emergence of female gaze (Thawley, 2017).

In terms of gender, another possible development of the study could analyze brands targeting men and women and see how discourse is constructed respectively, but also its perception by expanding it to the UGC in respinse to the branding discourse.

Overall, the study could be further implemented from a perspective of economics, in which metrics considering the effects of luxury branding discourse could be elaborated in relation to sales volumes and goods consumption to statistically indicate the growth of the three brands within the luxury goods market.

5.4 My luxury after this research journey

Kapferer (2015), drawing on the anthropologist Marcel Mauss (Hubert & Mauss, 1981), mentions that when the possessive adjective 'my' collocates with the word 'luxury, this latter becomes a personal concept usually standing for an affordable item that allows the buyer to state a bit of the luxury world and feed his/her aspiration toward a particular brand. The purchase is usually one of those entry-point products such as cosmetics, accessories, or perfumes. And, the product acquires a sacred connotation because of the high-price spent to create an extraordinary experience different from ordinary life (Hubert & Mauss, 1981).

In this section, the collocation 'my luxury' is used to provide a definition of luxury based on my own experience as an individual demographically located in the generation Y but not really reflecting myself in the definition of millennial. I would argue that the definitions of generation X, Y, Z do not reflect the global world but that they are limited to the market research conducted to profile consumers. I might consider myself in-between generation X and Y, and feeling closer to X that is also perceived as a more fluid generation without specific demographic boundaries. Marketers would agree that there is no profile of such a consumer yet since each country develops at its own pace and the digital divide limits the access to information. Hence, digital divide refers not only to the actual access to the internet, but the level of technological literacy of people in a country. Besides mismatches in the identification of a generation, luxury studies, work experience in the fashion industry, in-depth analysis of luxury discourse and representation, direct observation of luxury practices in these studies provided me with a different attitude towards the use of the word 'luxury'.

My idea of luxury shares features of both conventional and innovative luxury. I consider luxury an extraordinary experience limited in access but not necessarily because of price but due to its intrinsic value that I attribute to the product or service. For instance, living in Hong Kong changed my perception of luxury. Hong Kong is for me the city that, on the one hand, turns luxury into mundane experiences and on the other hand, transforms commodities into luxury. If you go for a drink at Ozone Bar at the Ritz-Carlton is worthy HKD 200. Even though it is expensive for a drink, the experience of accessing such a location fully justifies the price. The definition for this expenditure is to me the equivalent of premium goods; however, I would not consider it as luxury but descending to ordinary life for expats in Hong Kong. In contrast with that, the trivial experience that I would have in Italy of having a 'cornetto' (Italian croissant) for breakfast, in Hong Kong, becomes impossible due to the low demand for such goods that does not justify the complicated and time-consuming suppliance[101]. In this case, such goods are not considered luxury based on price but on actual inaccessibility; therefore, luxury can assume different forms in different contexts and for different people. In Hong Kong, I experience luxury in the form of homemade food with authentic ingredients either from Italy, or from exotic places that enrich my food knowledge. City's Super, for instance, is very well known as food jewelry because of the high price of its products among expats. This metaphor derives from the view that going shopping for food at City's Super enables the customers to recreate a piece of their own world through a recipe that requires specific ingredients that can be provided only by that supermarket. One day, I will be back home, and *dim sum* will be my new luxury, bringing memories alive. Going for dinner to a restaurant that is not Italian remembering the time when in Hong Kong every day was a discovery made of new

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[101] Informal conversation with practitioners from F&B industry.

fruits, new types of flours, new fusion experiments that I would not dare to experiment alone.

Living abroad, has resignified my hometown into a luxury escape because I learnt to treasure my roots and appreciate the mundane things of my home life over the extraordinary experiences that would not reward me in the same way; however, I know that once back, time and space will reshuffle my idea of luxury. Hence, for me, luxury is not determined by the high price but by the extent of possibility of actually accessing the goods. Thus, the rarer and scarcer the goods, they more valuable are likely to be to me. So, sometimes, I am the one artificially constructing scarcity by assigning the product or service its rarity by intentionally not consuming it often.

During this journey, I have also considered the advent of new technology. One of the first roundtable about luxury I attended brought into discussion how new generations are ready to spend huge sums of money to keep changing their i-phone as soon as a new one is released. For those consumers, tech geeks, a little bit, like for fashionistas, having the last item available frames them as up-to-date consumers. I definitely appreciate the functionality of those devices, but I wonder if it is such a luxury being able to work wherever you are, because in the end, those consumers will state that it is a necessary device, not a luxury.

At the light of these reflections, and returning to the segmentation of luxury proposed, I consider luxury, conventionally speaking as those confidential brands, and the honest brands reserved to few connoisseurs. In the current study, the three connected brands examined materialize a new luxury. This new luxury is designed to be shared and consumed online, it is appealing, and not secret, it is for the masses that can afford it. It is not about the price, it is about the fact that it is available globally.

Recently, Vivienne Westwood remarked that in the contemporary society:

> if you want to be bold, you have to make a choice. And at least 50 percent of the people in the world have never made a choice or decision in their lives. They just follow their desire, and consume: opinions, McDonald's, whatever (Drier, 9 June 2017).

Westwood preached against the fast-pace of releasing collections driven by the increasing short-term consumption boosted by the new generations. She proclaimed the death of fashion, intended as high-end fashion, as part of culture in favour of consumption promoted by e-commerce agents (Drier, 2017). The past seems to be the golden age for luxury fashion and the instant world we live in represents the dark age hopefully leading to a renaissance.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The present study achieved its overarching aims and opened up discussions for future research. It actually left me with a reflection on our instant society in which short-termism characterizes our experiences and sets our desire for a rhetoric of newness that does not leave space for intelligent and accurate analysis; therefore, if technology, and the internet have become commodities that have turned the extraordinary into the ordinary, one may ask whether offline is an instance of new luxury? While acknowledging that the internet has become a physiological need that conditions our life, as a result of which we seem to be moving towards a more connected world, the question whether we will develop a taste for indulging escape in an escape to an offline oasis arises. I believe that there is no way back from embracing digital transformation, but we will probably treasure offline moments as extraordinary experiences over the always connected life that we have been building up for ourselves.

APPENDIX I INTERVIEWS

Language and image to construe luxury brands' im age online:

A cross-cultural approach based on multimodality and corpus linguistics

analysis

Interview letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Esterina Nervino. I am a PhD student in the Department of English at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I am working on a project about luxury fashion industry and the construction of brand identity on social media. My research aims to provide a better understanding of the use of different semiotic systems in the construction of brand identity online in order to contribute to the development of more effective marketing strategies.

The questionnaire here attached aims to collect information about luxury industry from academics and practitioners. The questions will cover different aspects of the topic and focus on the identification of the main features of luxury brands recognized as being globally renowned and at the same time well localized in specific target markets.

The interview might take approximately 20 minutes. If you need any further information please feel free to contact me by email e.nervino@   or by phone +852 3400 2059.

Thank you for your contribution

Yours sincerely,

Esterina Nervino

PhD Student in Language Studies in Professional Contexts

Department of English

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Consent form

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned

research conducted by Esterina Nervino.

I give consent to the PhD research project entitled 'Language and Image to Construe

Luxury Brands' Image Online: A Cross-Cultural Approach Based on Multimodality

and Corpus Linguistics Analysis', with Esterina Nervino (PhD Student) of the

Department of English at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University as the Principal

Investigator under the supervision of Prof. Winnie Cheng.

I agree that I have good knowledge of the objectives and procedure of the project. I

understand that the data collected will be only used for the purposes related to the

project.

My participation in the project is voluntary and I understand that I can withdraw at

any time.

(Please delete as appropriate)**

I ** agree / do not agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.

I ** wish / do not wish to be identified.

Name   Signature

_____   _____

Date 12/05/2015

Duration 18:19

Ester: Good morning Mr. Francis Gouten and thanks for your time. I am going to start this interview by asking you, since you have a lot of experience in luxury industry, how we can define the concept of luxury nowadays?

FG: It's a very good and large question. I belong to the old style of luxury and I am still making the difference between hard and soft luxury and when I say hard luxury it is watches and jewelry for instance and we could say soft luxury is fashion or perfumes which are things that are obsolete after one season or after two seasons.

I think it is very difficult to explain luxury today because luxury is a mass world. For me, luxury could be being alone on a desert island, it is a luxury today, but in terms of business we are facing two different worlds. We are facing the deep luxury which is know-how, small productions, handmade, service, exclusive pieces and the strong input of the financial people in the world of business using the luxury to develop and make money which I do not critique but it is two different worlds.

Ester: And may I ask what do you think about the concept of luxury in Asia since you have been working in Hong Kong and China as your market?

FG: Asia was a very good network and good carpet for luxury because of the society in Asia which is not Judeo-Christian society. Being successful is very important and people around you are happy if you are successful because they would like to be successful one day. I have always clichés when I talk about that with the European people. If you have a new car you have a fair chance that your neighbor scratches your car the first day. So it is a very different world. In Asia more than anywhere else you

are what you wear. It is very important. We are still in a society where money is important. At the origin probably because in Asia rich person was in charge of a village, of a clan he was in charge of any people. If you analyze the rich families today you see the respect for the old people who control the fortune of the family.

Ester: And following this question may I ask you if you think that there is any chance for Chinese brands to compete in the luxury market with the European ones?

One day. I think it is. You have already brands.   I think I said the same thing during the... You have le Lenovo, le computer. Nobody knows it is Chinese. You have le Lenovo everywhere in the world. China is different things. First of all, China is a very old new country. They need to rebuild their own roots by themselves.

Do you know a luxury brand in China today? Do you know a luxury brand in China today? And do not tell me Shang Xia and Shanghai Tang, they are not Chinese.

Ester: They are from Hong Kong so I would say I do not know.

FG: No. So I think it is coming. I think they have to rebuild. They have to re-understand where are their roots, where they come from.

You know the luxury brands in Europe are not coming from nowhere. It is a long history. It started with somebody in a workshop and a family.   And then why the important companies in luxury are born in 80'-50'- 1870 or for *Chanel* it was at the beginning of the last century? It is a long… They use their roots, the know-how of the people.

So as long as the Chinese will not rebuild that it will be difficult. Now they have fantastic potential market. They need to fill their own market first. I think China is in a period in which China will be less and less the factory of the world. And if they want to develop they need to serve their own country. And probably one day we will have Chinese brands, but I do not see it for the time being. We will probably have first Chinese creative people working for big names in the world because they have talent,

but I think it is too early. And also the image, the worldwide image of China is not yet at the right level. For people, for many people in the rest of the world China is copying, China is not a democracy, all the same stupid things, but still there. If I compare to Japan fifty years ago, Japan was producing shit, nothing was working and look what happens now, Japanese product, because there was a strong effort of the country to produce and to understand what would it be the world of tomorrow. China is still copying, is not yet creating.

Ester: And what do you think about Korea?

FG: Korea is a very interesting market which is, has the favour of Chinese and the world today because of… it is a trend. I do not know how long it will last. I do not know there is a very strong pillar under it, but it is interesting. But it is not. I think it is. It will pass, it is something interesting for the time being maybe next time it will be Vietnam or something else. I do not. It is ok, it is booming, it is perfect. Ok.

Ester: Do you think that Korean brands, especially in cosmetics, can they challenge Westerns?

FG: They are already. There is. There are. When you talk about the Asian brands in cosmetics you can make the people dreaming about nature about ginseng about all these kinds of things. Korea was well-known thirty years ago already. People from Hong Kong were going there to get their eye-surgery and now it is a big market for facial surgery. But the other, I forgot exactly the name but you have few good brands in China, in Korea for cosmetics, yes, why not. No problem with that. But you do not have Chinese cosmetics for the time being. You have L'Oreal producing in China, you do not have Chinese cosmetics for the time being.

Ester: Now I want to ask you a question. Actually is about what you said during the seminar. If you really think that social media are so dangerous for luxury.

FG: No. I did not say they are dangerous. I said that you cannot avoid social media.

Today there is more telephones that anything else. Everybody is using… I just thought, before you arrive there was a flyer I receive from the same company and the guy showed us something he did for *LV*. It is a five-second movie. So ok you receive, it is an aggressivity of things. Who knows how to use social media? Yesterday I met with a guy to talk with me again about a girl called Chiara Ferragni, it is an Italian girl, young girl.

Ester: the blogger?

FG: Yes.

Ester: Chiara Ferragni.

FG: She has four million followers and she is selling now in China a lot of shoes. The guy is selling the shoes for her. It is fantastic, it is good, but I have never heard about her name. I have never seen a shop with the brand. Ok so you can sell anything you want, so you will more and more use, social media will be more and more used. You have to be careful if you are a luxury brand. Again you are in the hard category of soft category? If you want to sell perfumes if you want to sell limited time products you can go. What is apparently the social media today, you receive a lot of information and the next day you receive other information and the ones from yesterday are dead already. So yes, you can make business with that, but what is it luxury?

Ester: Then do you think that the problem is…

FG: You know, excuse me, during the meeting there was one of my friend, the CEO of Piaget was there, *Chanel* was there and I did not want to hurt him but when they decided to decrease the prices there was an admittance of cue in fond of the sharp. Is it luxury?

Ester: So do you think that the problem is that luxury brands are actually using social media in the same way that other industries?

FG: They do not know how to use it. For me, today it is a fantastic tool. Few years

ago when I interviewed people in charge of IT in some big groups, they were hired, like to do some consultancy during meetings, they did not know why and there was no strategy and nothing. I think today they are the strong push for advertising agency, they are losing turnover with the paper advertisement and they found a new channel to capture the money of their clients. Some are good, some are not good. I do not think that for the time being, not all of them, but I do not think that for the time being the big groups understand how to use that. They need to... My theory, for me for any business I think you need to have internal people you cannot use people from outside. And the day the big groups will integrate this in their strategy… Today it is part, it is an external strategy.

Ester: I read on your website that you are the Chairman of the Luxury Club and according to the description

FG: No this was something finished, is over.

Ester: ok, because I thought that the description was…

FG: No. I tried, I had a partner, we came to see and he said I know very well, but this was ten years ago. I know very well the business I have many partners in China. Would you like to partner with me to try to sell? And at that time we made a mistake, I made a mistake, because my partner was not good as he thought in business and second one my idea was to introduce brands with no discounts in China which is impossible. Ok. So it was a mistake and we stopped it.

Ester: Ok, thank you. And so do you have any suggestion to integrate what is luxury and this new tool of social media?

(Silence)

FG: (What is luxury…) Again it depends where do you position your luxury. If your luxury is to buy a pair of socks it is ok. For me, me personally, I respond to social media offers when it is a unique product. I receive hundreds every morning but when

I see something unusual I will buy it. I am not the right target. Majority of people, they buy all the same things. For me, I am interested by social media if they, if I learn something, something which I have no idea before or if it is a product.

I will show you something which is the wrong example but I will show you something, it is not exactly the example but I will show you something. I receive, I am a good friend of the General Manager of the, of the Mandarin Oriental in Tokyo and he produces small leaflets, grading the image, ok, and one of the photo was because he opened a new corner with an oven selling pizza and at the same time he has an Italian guy, a real one, and he sells very expensive wine so the rich Japanese, they come, they buy pizza and they buy a bottle of very expensive wine. And he created a tool. You know, you have rollers to cut pies of pizza and he asked a sword master to create one for him. So I saw the photo (showing the picture).

Ester: Oh.

FG: I ordered one. It took me four months to get it. This is mine.

Ester: It really looks like luxury.

FG: Exactly. This is luxury. You understand. It is handmade by the guy who makes the sword for the Japanese, if you have, it is fantastically done, the weight of the wood balances the weight of the blade. Ok. So I found something on the internet I could not find in any shop in the world. So this is the way for me to, the luxury could use it but I ask my friend to go and to talk I did not order by the internet. So the internet is a way to teach the people, to send information, if you use the internet to sell you are not in luxury.

Ester: OK. So that was actually my last question. I wanted to ask you if you think in which way they can integrate the online and offline experience.

FG: If I give you the nightmare. Everybody is on the internet. Brand does not need shops. No real estates. You do not need to go out because you will stay in your home

because you will not buy. It is an infernal circle. So yes, you cannot stop the internet. The internet will be everywhere, we have new generations, we have no idea of the future. I saw, last week, I saw something which is replacing the phone which will be a small app in your ear so we are still at the middle age so it is millions of information. If you today read unfortunately I am registered in many, the same information has many trends, in Abu Dhabi I receive ten times in the day, you have to be careful with that. We are creating stupid people, when I am working with very important guy for business his Bible is Wikipedia and Wikipedia is not always right…

Ester: Unreliable…

FG: So I am not the old guy that. I am for the progress, yes, I have my i-phone, I have my computer, I am interested by everything in the world, well, but there is a joke I like to tell the people, it was a true story.

There was a movie maker Jules Dassin, you are too young to know who is he, he made a very famous black and white movie was the "Never on Sunday" with the girl called Melina Mercouri, it seems that the Bible of the movie and he said, it was on TV, I saw it twenty-thirty years ago, he passed away now, and he said: 'I was in New York' he said, it was in an interview, 'I was in New York, in Brooklyn and so it was thirty, thirty-five years ago, and', he said, 'I saw a very old Jewish guy, dressed, Jewish in Brooklyn, and he was looking at the sky, he talked to me', he said, 'they say in the sky there was a plane with the white smoke with an advertisement, can you believe it? Men now, they know how to write in the sky and the only they could write is *Coca Cola*'. And you have to be careful what kind of information you said.

It is good *Coca Cola* but it is a joke, ah. But too many information, brands, some brands will understand, some brands not, now. When I started in the business, luxury was not global now… *Dior* was selling only dresses, now they sell lipsticks, earrings, telephones, *Gucci*, *Dior*, *Burberry*, *Burberry* is a pure fake brand for me. When I was

a kid, my father, when I was sixteen years old took me to the only *Burberry* shop there was in Paris to buy me a raincoat and it was like my father was giving me the world. Now *Burberry* is selling everything you want: pen, watches, so there is people behind it, they are making a lot of money, there is very clever people, there is talented people but where is the essence of *Burberry*? *Burberry* is just a logo like *Gucci*, it is. I will never buy something from *Burberry* today. When I see someone in the street with the name of the brand on the T-shirt, they should pay me,   I should not pay them.

Ester: Thank you.

FG: We are in another world ok?

Ester: Thank you very much for your time.

FG: My pleasure. My pleasure. Let me know what you are doing, what you produce, it would be interesting to see.

Ester: Thank you very much.

Date 06/05/2015

Duration 35:26

Ester: Thank you Dr. Tommy Tse for your contribution to my research. And in the beginning I would like to ask you about your experience in luxury fashion industry and how did you match your research background in your work experience.

TT: I see. Well I would not say that I had a lot of work experience in the fashion luxury industry, but before I worked in academia studying seven years ago I was previously working in the marketing and advertising field. Of course, I worked on non-fashion brands, pharmaceutical brands, whatever few jeans brands but I also worked for some specific projects of fashion, Harrods, and luxury brands in my previous experience. Well, I am not here to name the brands but I worked for some of them for their advertising campaigns, for the customer relations campaign, direct marketing campaigns, etc. And through the process of course I made some connections with people who actually are working in the industry whether they are from the PR communication team, they are from the advertising team, whether they are from the more general marketing and communication team, so I met some of these people that also first gave me this idea of thinking about when I came back to the academia when I started teaching in the community college and then I started thinking why should I pursue a doctoral degree. Eventually I really want to come back to university to be researcher and full-time teacher so at the very beginning my idea was so I should do something of course related me and my studies, communication studies, this in general because my previous institution, the institution I previously affiliated with before Department of Communication Studies and also the culture and media domain. And on the other hand I also would like to do something new which… something that

people did not really do before, at least in Hong Kong context, of course in in the West there were so many people working in the fashion studies, fashion theory, or even the fashion marketing, practices. But it seems that in Hong Kong context I do not see I did not see a lot of people doing that, and especially because I had some of this access to the industry I thought why do not I, why I do not just combine the two and start doing some research on that. At the beginning of course I did know how it would be, become at the end but I just had this idea at the beginning and that's why I conduct research on this aspect.

But going back to the specific question how do I see…

Ester: So can you according to your experience you did not work in luxury industry but did you get any idea of the concept of luxury especially in fashion industry?

TT: Yeah. I would say before I met these people or before I even get in touch with this mysterious fashion luxury industry I of course in the mass media from the fashion magazines or from these daily conversations, discussions, of course I knew the most famous brands that should be from entertainment news, from the celebrity culture, what the celebrities, and social life and people from elite society what they wear what they talk about so these mostly these European, French, Italian fashion brands, from *LV*, *Gucci*, *Prada*, of course these brands I knew them since I was young not even after I finished my university, industry, working in the industry since   was in school I also mentioned this in my own thesis, in the preface, in the prologue, when I was young how did I perceive the notion of fashion, luxury, fashion, they were, the items, the products, that are mostly unaffordable, untouchable but only owned by these privileged elite people in the society. But when I actually get into the industry I finally realized that it is something more technically speaking well created, generated, within this larger structure or discourse in the society, especially being generated generated by, or being created by in a more complex way all these social agents in the market

including as I said the fashion marketer, as the journalists, as these people in the entertainment industry or people from the high society, elite groups and the media industry as well so now I would say my perception of luxury and fashion it was not like the notion you can find in text books, in reference books, or you can find I do not have that book here but you can find in this book called *Deluxe* if you have read *Deluxe* or some of these most famous books   on luxury brands, luxury industry where they talk about the traditional notion of luxury in ancient times within this royalty, this from the elite and royal classes they were only exclusively owned and used and shared, appreciated, by a very small group of people in the society and the most people in the society, even if you are one of these middle class people or professional people you do not have the chance to have or use whatever luxurious or luxury because luxury is exclusively for the very exclusive group so the royalty, the kings, the emperors, etc. Now this notion especially in after industrialization, modernization advanced capitalization in the modern society, all this, the notion of luxury has evolved I would say. It becomes not exactly oxymoronic it becomes kind of complex, ambiguous on the one hand it is exclusive the notion of luxury is exclusive but on the other hand it is a mass concept. This luxury can be owned by everyone by many more people in the society as long as you can afford that amount of money. Luxury becomes something mass nowadays.

Ester: So do you think that now luxury is facing a kind of identity crisis? Like are we having a kind of standardization of luxury nowadays?

TT: Well. Whether or not is a kind of crisis of the luxury industry I think it is difficult to say. Depending from what perspective you are approaching the issue because to some people to some, some fashion theorists for example they would say that this is democratization of fashion, luxury fashion, because in the past it was only exclusively owned by the elite, very small group of people but now no matter who you are

regardless of your gender or your class, your family, the origin of your family as long as you have money, as long as you work hard and earn money then you can buy luxury. This is the very notion and the very spirit of modern luxury. Of course this is also a strategy being used by many of these modern fashion luxury fashion brands, they put in a more positive way. On the other hand, yes, it also challenging the very traditional notion, cherish notion of luxury, is owned by the elite, the very privileged group and of course these people, we still have these people nowadays, they might be coming from the Middle East, they may also be coming from these royal families of course, they are not happy because in the past they were the only ones who can buy and afford and wear this luxury but now they, right on the streets, they see everybody no whether they have this privileged family background or whatever background as they do they can see everything that originally only to be worn by them so, maybe, not maybe, probably these people are not very happy about this democratization of the notion of luxury fashion.

Ester: And since you worked more in Hong Kong context, can you define what is luxury in Hong Kong and maybe making a comparison with China if you have…

TT: Ok. The very… Now I can see it is changing. Even comparing with the time when I conducted my research a few years back because if you remember the title of my research *This is Not a LV Back* of course eventually, sarcastically, because I did not manage to interview anyone from *Louis Vuitton* Hong Kong. I did not do that. But because of that very move, very intention of getting into the luxury world, getting into the *LVMH* world I managed to interview some other fashion marketers, practitioners from other *LVMH* brands but not *LV*. But only until recently I managed to interview someone from *Louis Vuitton* but not in Hong Kong, in Korea, *LV* Korea, the fashion, the PR and marketing team members. But I realized that this notion of… is almost like taking this more technical perspective in seeing the notion of luxury. I would say even

the notion of luxury is socially, culturally, contingent concept is always in the process of making. Of course, I am not saying that every single day the notion of luxury has changed but well after certain period of time because of all these socio-cultural, economics, socio-historical issues well the notion of luxury will definitely change. And the example of course in the past in my thesis I also mentioned that in some of my previous papers I also mentioned about that.

The *LV* has had always been the number one icon of luxury around the world and of course for *Gucci* as well for *Prada* maybe also for certain period of time. But you can see that nowadays until recent years until maybe one or two years ago, especially people in Hong Kong, especially for people who are in the fashion industry and now it is not only about the fashion industry insiders but even the mass public would take *LV*, *Louis Vuitton* as a vulgar symbol instead of symbol of luxury because of the very the overconsumption of *LV* products, the overuse, the over demonstration of all these *LV* merchandise by these mainland Chinese travelers, tourists, mainland Chinese people, so culturally, social culturally speaking people start associating the notion of luxury, the notion, the idea, the brand identity of *LV* with the, well, it might be politically incorrect, it might be culturally problematic, but they associate with mainlanders, Mainland China, the vulgarity, the political term or issue and all these cultural issues affiliated with the Chinese and all these cultural conflicts between Hong Kong and Mainland China. So, in Hong Kong now when you go out there and ask people you ask them if they still like *LV*, do they still take *LV* as the ultimate symbol, emblem of luxury? "They would say: no, no, I am not a Mainland Chinese, I do not use *LV*, I do not use Monogram". Well, it has also been reinforced by the local media and social media as well how these people are talking about Mainland Chinese associating them with *LV* or vulgarity, etc.

Ester: I have been to some events organized by the industry and they were having this

debate about brands that nowadays they only focus on Chinese market and they are getting complaints by other…

TT: Yes.

Ester: … consumers coming from other countries. So do you think brands, do they have a way back to become exclusive and not focusing only on Chinese market or is it too late now?

TT: They have different thoughts. The most updated information which you can definitely get elsewhere, out there, they are talking about the gradual fall, or even the drastic fall of luxury market in China because of these new political issues, the policy they are banding all this bribing and gifting culture. Of course that was one of the most, the strongest stimulation for the luxury consumption industry in both Hong Kong and Mainland China but now it seems to be experiencing, the industry seems to be things down time not so prosperous time in Hong Kong so… On the one hand yes, they try to, not entirely moving back or refocusing in Hong Kong but for some reasons, they have to so*LV*e the way out because now in the past few years as long as they rely on focus on these Mainland Chinese tourists, they are doing pretty well but now the situation has changed, the socio-political situation has changed, even the consumption power of these Mainland Chinese has changed, so by all means, they need to change their marketing and promotion strategies back to Hong Kong or maybe they may explore the other opportunities the Russian tourists, the Indian tourists or whoever come in elsewhere.

Ester: What about Korea, you mentioned that you met one practitioner from *LV* Korea, is the situation different? Because I was reading about luxury brands a little bit worried about the emergence of Korean brands especially in cosmetics. Do you think they are really dangerous for Western luxury brands or in Korea or at least in the domestic market?

TT: No. I do not think so, according to my interviews. I did it in the past few months. I did the first round in December 2014, another round just last month in March 2015 in Korea with all these people from the fashion media, fashion marketing, or even some of them from the entertainment industry, they work with celebrities, they work with fashion stylists, they work with all these different media companies. But of course, let me explain it in more specific way. Yes, the fashion industry, broadly speaking, in South Korea has been booming and it has spread a great influence across Asia, and people even say across the world, even people in England, in Los Angeles, in L.A. of course there is a large population of Koreans and they have also been influenced by the K-pop culture, by the K-fashion, the K-style culture but in Asia it has been greatly influential. But on the other hand, the European brands, luxury fashion brands, they are really smart, they have already been actively making use of all these Korean fashion icons, Korean stars, in also soft collaborations, inviting all these K-pop groups, celebrities from Korea attend the Fashion Week, attending fashion events, doing some collaborations you know from YSL to *LV* to, well there are many brands I do not have to name each of them to you but let me show you one of the example that I collected. I got this from a marketing director of this entertainment company in Korea few months back, of course she has been an interviewee because she has been working with these celebrities and at the same time she is, her company, is also the middle man between celebrities and famous people in Korea and these luxury brands, fashion brands, or any brand. Many other brands want to make use of that connection to work with them and produce also promotional material, videos, etc. So this is a collaboration between YSL…

Ester: Ok. Yves Saint-Laurent .

TT: … between the brand, the French luxury house and this company and these two very famous stars, one is called G-Dragon, maybe you know him and another one is

Taeyang, but they are from this top famous boys-band called Big Bang.

Ester: Ok

TT: They are from Big Bang, so they have been doing all these photo shoots, attending the fashion show, that has already helped the company to generate a lot of media coverage, media buzz, social media buzz, but at the same time they are also producing this promotion material in the market and this is of course very image-oriented. I do not know whether these images and ideas of course they are not in the written forms, written textual fashion described by Roland Barthes in 1960 in this French magazine. The situation is changed, we are in this image society, we are talking about image impact and ideas, having these elements and images circulating in the society. Anyway this is one of the examples to show that European fashion brands, luxury brands or American brands, these Western brands, well, they are not, well on the one hand, they realize the social cultural significance of Korean culture in Asia and in the world. And they, quickly, immediately, made use of this cultural change, cultural shift, well, as always in the process of marketing communication and promotion but, maybe, they, to some extent is a kind of how to define it 'glocalization'. They are also maintaining their very consistent, when you take a look at the booklet, they are still very consistent in presenting their brand identity, the brand essence, personality but at the same time, they have changed the models, changed the endorses, they are blending Korean elements, of course this is not the very traditional Korean elements, but more the K-pop style, the modern style, the modern Korean style, and that's why it is attractive, trendy, fashionable, one of this emerging notion of fashionability in Asia. I would say maybe ten years before it was all about Japan but now it is all about Korea so when you say that fashion is all based on this Euro-American system, Western notion of fashion, maybe now it has changed a little bit because it is also blending some Asian elements and these Asian elements now are still led by the Koreans, the Korean style.

So this is one of the examples, yes, they have been influenced, but on the other hand, they have been quickly adapting. So whether it is a threat or an opportunity for these Western labels to make use of all this emerging popular culture in pushing the brands. That's the question and it is a very communicating question that I am also exploring whether this mechanism, the new system, but on the other hand, something to do with the local fashion brands I am working with the data I am also analyzing, codifying some of the data from my interviews as far as I can see, actually, from the insiders perspective or even from the outsider perspective, from my perspective or if I ask my students, well, everything is Korean. Still even, they check these websites, it is not just about the luxury brands. Luxury brands and street fashion brands or even the H&M style that is kind of mass clothing brand launched in Korea they will think it is fashionable.

Ester: But I think that in cosmetics they are becoming really powerful.

TT: Yes. Especially in cosmetics. They have been doing even better than these European brands.

Ester: And do you think that those, let's classify them as emerging economies right now, can they maybe establish themselves among luxury brands in the future? Or do you think that the 'Made in' label has still a powerful effect just because it is 'Made in Italy' or 'Made in France' because I was thinking about the new Chinese brands. Do you think they can really compete with the Western ones? Shanghai Tang or Vivienne Tam, would you classify them as luxury and do you see for them a future competing with luxury brands in both domestic market and global market?

TT: Vivienne Tam probably no. Shanghai Tang. Well. Frankly speaking, well, being in the local context apparently I do not see them. Of course, I do not have the statistics, the sales, I do not have the marketing figures but I do not see they are doing very well. For example, they used to be occupying these fine positions in Central, Pedder Street,

the previous Abercrombie building that was Shanghai Tang for many many years and they gave it up for whatever reason and now it is Abercrombie. Of course, they have opened new stores here and there, in Causeway Bay. I have seen this new store, I do not know if it is new or not but I saw it few days ago in Times Square and I have realized that there is this new Shanghai Tang store in fifth and sixth floor but I did not know.   Well, why Shanghai Tang has a new store in Times Square? But because, because now in Times Square you have *LV*, you have everything. So I do not see those Chinese brands, even Shanghai Tang that has been launched for like many years and it has established its prestige and identity in global fashion stage but I do not see them doing very well. The influence are at least   how people perceive them and talk about them that is also very important in the process of creating fashion meanings in market, few people most of the time, when you talk about what they regard as luxury fashion and they are crazily desireful, it is based on this bags and clothes or design and phones, other research house, when they are collecting or conducting these yearly reports or annual consumer market researchers asking them the top three fashion labels, luxury labels you desire the most, it is still always *Chanel*, *Hermès*, *Dior*, *LV*, I do not know whether *LV* is still in these top five, but maybe they are emerging… more and more people pay close attention to the luxury brands. In Korea, for example, there is a brand now called Jinja   as they are some others, there is also a brand called Low Classic in Korea, a luxury brand but it resembles Céline style or Hermelin style very minimalistic and also very expensive different from these street fashion brands in Korea, so they have also been, they are also fashion designers, they have finished their undergraduate studies in Saint Mantins, in Parson's School, in these famous design house schools and they came back to their country and launched the brand and established the prestige and more and more people because of the cultural identity pay attention to them and also perish the talent, so they are emerging and more and more people know

about these brands. In China as well, but in China these designers, I could recall Mak, I could recal…

Ester: I was thinking, in China, maybe it is because of Xi Jinping's wife? She is using a lot of local brands so in this way she kind of promotes the local ones instead of Western and people just buy them because of that.

TT: Maybe people start paying attention to them because of that. A lot of ideas flowing in the head but of course I am going back to the very first discussion, on the one hand, this very notion, definition of luxury has been destabilized, has been evo*LV*ing I would say, so whether these brands are emerging luxury fashion brands? And then, there is a question mark, how do we define luxury, the notion of luxury fashion anymore? Some people even regard, of course, you can say this is not true, they are just being silly and something from H&M even if it is a cross-over with the high-fashion company, label is not exactly like those products available in Jimmy Choo, those products available in H&M is different from Jimmy Choo, Jimmy Choo is very different from Karl Lagerfeld, but people start changing their perception to his luxury brands, maybe people start changing the desire for luxury, of course, they still desire luxury brands but maybe I go too far away from your question.

Ester: Maybe they want the must products but they want to mix them with other new ones.

TT: Maybe they mix and match, maybe because also for different people the conception of luxury will be different. Luxury fashion, luxury, especially luxury fashion, let's say people in Hong Kong they do not longer regard *LV* as luxury fashion anymore or some people still regard it as luxury fashion but it is not something they prefer. You can still say, it is luxury fashion because it is expensive but maybe in China they are more than happy to have *LV* because of their social cultural conditions, because of their perception about luxury, the way they make use of luxury fashion, of

course, from produce perspective consuming luxury fashion as showing, show-casting the capital culture, the social *status* for their purpose, of course also making their most out of this consumption. But what does it happen in China and in Hong Kong is different. It is still luxury fashion and they are making use of these luxury signs, and symbols, for whatever purposes in the socio-cultural context, in the cultural context.

Ester: I have my very last question, it is about luxury and social media. Do you think the channel conflict is over or what do you think? Should luxury brands keep using social media or it is another way of democratize luxury?

TT: Social media you mean?

Ester: They were really late in going online, because they were suspicious.

TT: Ok.

TT: What do you mean by doing a bit late?

Ester: Because luxury has always regarded the internet as being completely different from them because if luxury is about exclusiveness the internet is about mass media, so there was this kind of channel conflict, should we go online or not? I think that the first webpage was Versace in 2001 and they were really late in using *Facebook* and they are still struggling to find out how to use them. So, do you think the channel conflict is over or they are still exploring how to manage the content online?

TT: I would say that, inevitably, they probably have no choice, some would still think that this conceptual conflict whether fashion is something exclusive like shopping in the store and being served by these stylists, salespersons, the store showing you all these exclusive items and products and then you buy them and use them, well, in our world even the luxury products' consumers they are using i-phones, they are using i-pads, they are going online. I am not saying they do not read magazines, but they do not consume the content through the traditional media anymore, so if you want to reach them they most use these communication channels and you need to make use of

them, for example, the three brands that you mentioned: *Burberry*, *LV* and *Gucci* as far as I know at least, *Burberry* has been a pioneer in digital marketing and you know it very well hopefully and they had a lot of social media campaigns, they got online persons and all this, well not only this Web 1.0 not only digital appearance and website, not just a static top down, one way communication, but they do a lot of engagement, social engagement, social media campaign collaboration with not just the traditional influencers and opinion leaders but also the social life, the bloggers.

Ester: They kind of rebranded themselves, they also opened the first digital store incorporating the digital experience but I do not know whether…

TT: This is also to me, because it is not only about the traditional definition of luxury, but it is the combination of two terms and fashion of course. Luxury maybe, it does not always have to deal with modern, newness, the most updated, I have not got that kind of notion. This cycle is called… changes. But for fashion of course, it also touches upon about the notion of newness. So, technology, somehow, also personifies and signifies this notion of newness you are not catching up with the trend you are catching up with what's going on in these days and will also associate you with the notion of old-fashion, your grandmother's fashion, luxury.

Ester: Since you talked about technology, do you think Apple Watch is luxury?

TT: I do not. I do not. I think it will do really well in the market and some people will regard it as fashionable, trendy, but that has nothing to do with luxury.

Ester: Thank you very much for your contribution. I will properly quote you in my research project. Thank you.

TT: I hope. Some of these are very brief ideas, they will probably be some guiding questions, guiding ideas for you but you can definitely explore further and see how they can help you for your research.

Ester: Thank you.

Language and image to construe luxury brands' image online:

A cross-cultural approach based on multimodality and corpus linguistics

analysis

Interview

Contact information

Name	Dr Annette Condello
Nationality	Australian
Current Location	Perth
Position	Lecturer in Architecture
Affiliation	Curtin University
Experience in Luxury Management	Authored a book called *The Architecture of Luxury* (Ashgate, 2014)
Specific industry	Architecture and urban studies
Additional information	Editor Advisory Board member of the *Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption* (Bloomsbury Journal)
Email	a.condello@

1) According to your experience, can you define the concept of 'luxury'?

Luxury is a multi-faceted concept and is useful in tracing the genealogy of architectural practices expressing indulgence in constructed form, such as private, public, ruinous, theatrical and tall spaces. At various times in the past - and the present - both small and large constructions that exceed necessity are thought of as luxurious. Luxurious constructions are generally thought to be those made up of rare and expensive materials, such as 'Lucullan' (black) marble or walnut timber. Different cultures; however, have different understandings of luxury that are not necessarily

identical to a Western one. In India, for instance, luxury was based on Eastern influences. In contrast to India, Singapore and Manila have their own understandings of luxury. In the West, no one period was particularly luxurious, but some have come to us through history as seeming more luxurious than others. Luxury has thus become commonplace in architecture in many places, but its meaning and value have changed and continue to change.

2) Does 'luxury' acquire any specific meaning in your industry of interest if any?

Luxury operates through the medium of building improvement to bolster forms of self-improvement or purposefully building dilapidation - through myths, entertainment venues, country or suburban houses, skyscrapers or palaces of consumption.

3) What does 'luxury' mean in your market of interest if any?

Interestingly, luxury is thought to have originated in an ancient Greek city, Sybaris - now it lies largely unexcavated in Calabria, Italy. The citizens of Sybaris were famously believed to live luxuriously in sumptuous buildings and surrounds. Today the place is entrenched in myth as well as a tourist destination. Numerous hotels, such in the US and Mexico have associated their names with this place. And in doing so these hotel owners are capitalizing on myths about Sybaris.

Today, sustainability is a luxury. Recycling buildings and urban spaces such as converting existing multi-storey car parks into upmarket apartments provide a new market of what constitutes 'architectural' luxury.

4) What are the features/values that make a brand internationally renowned as luxury brand?

Architecture has become a luxury object in itself. Frank Gehry's Fondation *Louis Vuitton* in Paris or flagship stores like Marc Simmons' *LV* boutique design in Singapore with its luminescent curtain-like façade are both characteristic of a luxury brand known internationally.

I think it's best to talk about 'home' brands by other architects or rather without a signature brand - those architects who don't repeat the same logo (that is, form) each time they design a building or public space – so that you don't recognize each time who designed it   - regardless of the type of space. This is specifically the case through the works and projects by Italian architect Francesco Venezia, who inadvertently values what true luxury is within architecture. This is particularly the case with his conversion of an abandoned building into a luxury hotel to be placed on top of Pompeii's ruins, unfortunately unrealized.

Annette Condello, 4.03.2015

Thank you for your contribution!

Esterina Nervino
PhD Candidate
Department of English
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Interview

Contact information

Name	Dr Tim Lindgren
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Position	Convenor, Fashion
Affiliation	Griffith University
Experience in Luxury Management	Fashion Brand Owner
Specific industry	Fashion Industry
Additional information	
Email	t.lindgren@

1) According to your experience, can you define the concept of 'luxury'?

Luxury is an often aspirational state of consumption that has moved beyond the purchasing of a product or garment for its functional characteristics to a state where a product or garment is chosen for its ability to convey identity, or because it represents a level of craftsmanship not found in functional products.

2) Does 'luxury' acquire any specific meaning in your industry of interest if any?

In my industry, luxury fashion products are most often purchased because they convey a heightened sense of identity or social status for the consumer.

3) What does 'luxury' mean in your market of interest if any?

As Above

4) What are the features/values that make a brand internationally renowned as luxury brand?

Fashion brands that are known internationally typically spend much time and money on creating the mythology of the brand (Marketing). This will include processes of elaborate storytelling using various media such as print magazines (Vogue), and digital media (blogs, websites, online sales campaigns etc) to build a narrative that draws the consumer into the perceived lifestyle values, heritage and social benefits of the brand. Often this narrative is fictionalised.

Thank you for your contribution!

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analysis

Interview

Contact information

Name	Karen Shah
Nationality	British
Current Location	UK
Position	Senior Lecturer
Affiliation	University of Huddersfield
Experience in Luxury Management	Design and Manufacture
Specific industry	Ladies Leatherwear Design and Production
Additional information	
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1) According to your experience, can you define the concept of 'luxury'?

Luxury for me is that feeling you get when you know you are being pampered. That you don't have a care in the world and everything is at one. That sense that your needs are being fulfilled without you even knowing it and everything just feels right. You can get it from a beautifully crafted garment that wraps around your body just so or a perfume that lifts your mood and transports you. But the 'concept' of luxury also has a darker side. The one that preys on lust, envy and avarice and equates luxury to material gain and economic outlay.

2) Does 'luxury' acquire any specific meaning in your industry of interest if any?

Within the fashion industry it is argued that clothes cannot be 'luxury' since they are not quite expensive or exclusive enough (Kapfere, 2009); However, we now see this changing with garments becoming ever more expensive at the luxury end of the market. Within this context luxury takes on the meaning of exclusivity, bespoke manufacturing, branding and allegiance to a particular social and economic group. Luxury in fashion is often all about the image and how the 'luxury' narrative is embedded within advertising and lifestyle choices. Think celebrities on the red carpet – this is what the meaning of luxury has become for many people. An aspiration, a desire and a necessity to distinguish ourself from others.

3) What does 'luxury' mean in your market of interest if any?

'Luxury' per se in my market of interest is a difficult one. Involved primarily with recycling, social enterprise and notions of democratic design I have always shied away from the 'luxury' end of the market but this was more to do with not having any affinity with customers who were able to spend a month's rent on a pair of shoes and the nature of my material resources – relying on second hand garments and rummaging around in skips for my materials is not really conducive to producing luxuriously feeling garments; however, the nature of exclusivity and the sometimes bespoke nature of the work means that there may be a link after all. I'm currently looking into couture techniques and seeing if I may be able to expand my customer base and produce goods for a luxury market. In this context luxury I imagine will mean looking at design ideas, customer base and marketing.

4) What are the features/values that make a brand internationally renowned as luxury brand?

Unfortunately I think that when we communicate luxury brands on an international basis that quite often the values that get portrayed are often about greed, social status and one up manship. Embedded with advertising luxury becomes all about expense and a sense that luxury is for some but not for all. As de Botton (2004) in his discussion on status concluded we are presented with a sense that we are all equal but social divisions and the lives that some people lead show us that we are not. Similarly Berger (1979) discussed how advertising shows us people who have been transformed through the attainment of certain products and lifestyles and this becomes luxury.   Luxury on a global scale is often about a western aesthetic and the cash and prestige needed to afford it.

Thank you for your contribution!

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Interview

Contact information

Name	Zoltán Biedermann
Nationality	German / Hungarian
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Position	Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor)
Affiliation	University College London
Experience in Luxury Management	none
Specific industry	n/a
Additional information	
Email	zoltanbiedermann@

1) According to your experience, can you define the concept of 'luxury'?

"Luxury" to me is primarily about things I don't need. "Not needing", of course, implies that luxuries are superfluous. There is an added judgment in that what I don't need should not really be needed by anyone else. Note that, although I have lived for much of my life outside of Germany, a Protestant background on my father's side has certainly shaped my understanding and my judgment of many things (and also the fact that my mother's family lived behind the Iron Curtain, where hardly anything was available on the market at all). There used to be a time when, as a teenager and young adult, even a pair of Levi's jeans, or a sandwich in a bar, or a night in a proper hotel, were unnecessary luxuries. As time has gone by, the harshness of my judgment has

diminished. I don't consider those things luxurious anymore. Some "real" luxuries have also, in the meantime, become acceptable. "Luxury" is now often, in my own consumption practices, connected to an idea of "splashing out" which is overall acceptable, although I maintain that these moments only "punctuate" a lifestyle that remains overall low-key. For example, I tend to buy basic foodstuff and then occasionally buy something more luxurious like a good piece of French cheese or Italian ham. The same with clothing and accessories: most of it remains functional and good value (brands such as Gap or Zara, mostly purchased on discount) occasionally peppered up with some cologne or leather bag (Ca*LV*in Klein, Marc Jacobs, also purchased on discount). Note that in general anything beyond a certain level of price-for-value remains ridiculous in my eyes and entirely beyond my ambitions. Nor does anyone in my family consume such goods. In this sense, I remain a poor consumer and hence someone the luxury industry might not be very happy about. I also consider myself largely immune to luxuries advertisements, and even if I look at them for a second (in magazines such as the FT's outrageous "How to Spend it") the best they achieve is a visceral reaction against the social order that allows some people to indulge in such excesses, while the majority still lives on a few dollars a day.

2) Does 'luxury' acquire any specific meaning in your industry of interest if any?

I work in academia. My university – UCL – is in the top tier in most global rankings, but it also has a tradition of being secular and less elitist than, say, Oxbridge or the Ivy League. There is no real dress code, and generally no display of luxuries among colleagues. Students *may* at times be consumers of luxuries, but it's not something I have noticed on campus at all.

One funny thing academics do engage in is going on conference trips where, in practice, there is some consumption of a luxury character: hotels are often four-star,

flights expensive because long-haul, there may be receptions in shiny university buildings or embassies, nice canapés etc. I suppose we take these things as a kind of reward for what is generally a much more frugal existence in buildings that are not particularly well managed, dirtying our hands on low-quality whiteboards as we battle with highly-paid management personnel, and of course receiving salaries that, in a place like London, mean we do not have the material resources of what we still think of as the middle class: no house with a garden, no car, no skiing holiday or villa rentals in the Provence unless one goes to live in a (very) distant suburb or rural community. I myself, though working as a Senior Lecturer (roughly the equivalent of an Associate Professor) live in a two-bedroom flat in a former council tenement, and cannot afford any of those things that now, again, appear as luxuries to me (even though some, in my childhood, were pretty standard).

3) What does 'luxury' mean in your market of interest if any?

N/A

4) What are the features/values that make a brand internationally renowned as luxury brand?

I am hard pressed to tell. I'd say two things. Firstly, that the word "internationally" itself has changed its meaning over the past few decades. In my youth, "international brands" to us were brands that were present in various European countries. Our own horizons didn't really go much beyond the continent. Most luxury brands were self-evidently French and Italian, perhaps the odd English car brand. I can't recall thinking about luxuries from elsewhere as a child, not even the USA. More recently, we have witnessed that these French and Italian brands have gone global, into regions of the world that used to be considered poor and peripheral. We have also seen stuff from elsewhere pervade our marketplace, some of it coming from far away but now

affordable (Kusmi teas, American perfumes and clothes).

Secondly, in the older days French and Italian brands carried an aura connected to what we thought about French and Italy as quasi-exotic countries. I am wondering how that made its way into the global consciousness. Do people in China see *Gucci* or Vuitton primarily as Italian and French, or European, or Western? Is it connected with the West's "progressive values" or rather, to the contrary, with very conservative references to aesthetic values of the past. The glitz and glimmer of most luxury advertising, even when it is set in sober modern architecture (which is rarely the case), refers to a visual order of a distant non-democratic past that, in theory, we had hoped to overcome.

Overall, I am still struck by the apparent randomness of it all. Some brands seem to have been strong enough from the beginning to go global and survive; others (famously Bulgari) went global and became overstretched. God knows why. Overall, I am one of those people who, if you asked me about the benefits of a culture of luxury consumption, would be hard pressed to name any. Of course it creates jobs, but what jobs, invo*LV*ing what inequalities, and consolidating what social order at the end of the day?

Thank you for your contribution!

Esterina Nervino
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Language and image to construe luxury brands' image online:

A cross-cultural approach based on multimodality and corpus linguistics

analysis

Interview

Contact information

Name   Patrick Poon

Nationality

Current Location   Hong Kong

Position

Affiliation   Lingnan University

Experience in Luxury Management

Specific industry

Additional information

Email   patpoon@

1) According to your experience, can you define the concept of 'luxury'?

Core definition: Luxury is something rare and hedonic, difficult to acquire or use, that provides a perceived unique experience in combination with a perceived enhancement or reinforcement of the social position. It is an emotional social marker and differentiator.

Extended definition: A luxury is something rare that is able to signal status information. The signal can be received and processed by the owner and by others, depending on signal clarity, strength and consistency. The signal has the effect to trigger the perception of an enhancement or reinforcement of the social status. It results in a perceived consumer value, the added luxury value which can become the major value component of a luxury product's total value for a consumer. The

added luxury value is composed of enhanced self-esteem, self-perception and attractiveness, attribution of financial liquidity, social power and expertise, protection in public and the perception of new, unique and ultimate experiences by a hedonic good that functions as ultimate treat. Additionally, a luxury is a social marker, classifying people as members of distinct social groups. As a reflection of added luxury value, luxuries tend to be overly expensive, they are difficult to purchase or use.

2) Does 'luxury' acquire any specific meaning in your industry of interest if any?

In academic sector, normally we would not promote "luxury programs"; however, if we consider some very expensive programs such as Kellogg-HKUST EMBA program which has a tuition fee of HK$1.25 million, we may have luxurious academic programs in the industry!   Those luxurious programs should be unique, top of the category, and not for ordinary people.

3) What does 'luxury' mean in your market of interest if any?

"Luxury" may mean expensive, special, unique, networking with high status or successful people, a road to success.

4) What are the features/values that make a brand internationally renowned as luxury brand?

Added luxury value and luxury signaling of social status may be the key features.

High level of quality, image, design, reputation, price, service, mystery,

heritage, uniqueness, exclusivity, limited edition, scarcity are related to the success of an internationally luxury brand.

Thank you for your contribution!

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Department of English

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

APPENDIX II ANALYSIS OF THE HYPERLINKS

Embedded Hyperlinks	Function	Information	Destination
(Nielsen, 2000)	(Hammerich and Harrison, 2002)		
1. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2015_1 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
2. *on.Gucci.com/MFW15_1 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Look	Website
3. *http://on.Gucci.com/WFW15_1 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
4. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_10 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
5. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_10 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
6. *on.Gucci.com/MFW15_10 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
7. *http://on.Gucci.com/WFW15_10 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
8. *http://on.Gucci.com/GGWJ_10 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
9. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_100 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
10. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_12 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
11. *on.Gucci.com/WFW15_13 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Look	Website
12. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_130 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
13. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_14 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
14. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_147 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
15. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15-16 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
16. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15-16 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
17. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15-16 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website

18. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_16b (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
19. *https://youtu.be/16GvbiRq1Gg (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Campaign	YouTube
20. *https://youtu.be/16GvbiRq1Gg (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Campaign	YouTube
21. *http://on.Gucci.com/WF15_19 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
22. *http://vuitton.LV/1AFODjRZ (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
23. *http://vuitton.LV/1ArCjnt (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Collection	Website
24. *http://vuitton.LV/1BDHWBD (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
25. *http://vuitton.LV/1CxM53W (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
26. *http://vuitton.LV/1CxM6os (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
27. *http://vuitton.LV/1DEv8tv (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
28. *http://vuitton.LV/1DtiGwV (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Campaign	Website
29. *http://vuitton.LV/1Dv3hxtJ (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
30. *http://vuitton/LV/1Dv3hxU (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
31. *http://vuitton.LV/1E90Tw4 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
32. *http://vuitton.LV/1EcyhzY (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition reservation	Website
33. *http://vuitton.LV/1ekH0b8 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
34. *http://vuitton.LV/1Ev0i5z (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
35. *http://vuitton.LV/1Ezd7yd (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
36. *http://vuitton.LV/1F0rEUL (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
37. *http://vuitton.LV/1Fisr7S (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
38. *http://vuitton.LV/1FNgDC0 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
39. *http://vuitton.LV/1fo9FMz (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	How to follow the sport event	Website
40. *http://vuitton.LV/1HbhwbJ (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
41. *http://vuitton.LV/1Hhq1QO (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
42. *http://www.brby.co/1hv (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
43. *vuitton.LV/1I1qMky (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Selection of	Website

		products and creation wishlist	
44. vuitton.LV/1I1qMky (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Event information	Website
45. http://vuitton.LV/1J0e6G3 (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Film	Website
46. http://vuitton.LV/1JMctjW (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
47. http://vuitton.LV/1JMfHnD (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
48. http://vuitton.LV/1JskgBf (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
49. http://vuitton.LV/1JsSkeX (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
50. http://vuitton.LV/1JuegpN (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Event	Website
51. http://vuitton.LV/1K2pcM0 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
52. http://vuitton.LV/1k9ITW0 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Event	Website
53. http://vuitton.LV/1KAljxH (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
54. http://vuitton.LV/1KbGrbc (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
55. http://vuitton.LV/1KbGrbc (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
56. http://vuitton.LV/1KbGrbc (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
57. http://vuitton.LV/1KR9SFk.(hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
58. http://vuitton.LV/1KR9SFk (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
59. http://vuitton.LV/1KX3bwq (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
60. http://vuitton.LV/1LUZPhD (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
61. http://vuitton.LV/1M9Ei11 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
62. http://vuitton.LV/1M9EIKg (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
63. http://vuitton.LV/1MWHHIT (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Pop-up store information	Website
64. http://vuitton.LV/1Mz9Pig (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
65. http://vuitton.LV/1N1klHH (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
66. http://vuitton.LV/1N6St9u (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
67. http://vuitton.LV/1N6St9y (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
68. http://vuitton.LV/1NLHE0y (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Exhibition reservation	Website
69. vuitton.LV/1NLHE0y (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Exhibition reservation	Website
70. http://vuitton.LV/1NYGtL5 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
71. http://vuitton.LV/1OFIcoG (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of	Website

		products	
72. *http://luivoon.LV/1QZX3N (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
73. *http://vuitton.LV/1SzfrHW (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Products	Website
74. *http://vuitton.LV/1Tvg9vt (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
75. *http://vuitton.LV/1tyB7NP (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
76. *http://vuitton.LV/1tyH7pN (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Fashion show	Website
77. *http://vuitton.LV/1u6pJcF (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
78. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
79. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
80. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
81. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
82. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
83. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
84. *http://vuitton.LV/1XCA8Fm (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition reservation	Website
85. *http://vuitton.LV/1xFMIC2 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
86. *http://vuitton.LV/1YtA7pu (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Exhibition reservation	Website
87. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_20 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
88. *http://apple.co/20vu6KT (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	App download	Apple website
89. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_27 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
90. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_29 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
91. *http://brby.co/2jp (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
92. *http://brby.co/2m5 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign behind the	Website

		scenes	
93. *http://brby.co/310 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
94. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_32 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
95. *http://on.Gucci.com/FW15_35 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
96. *http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_35 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
97. *http://brby.co/37a (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
98. *http://brby.co/37m (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
99. *https://youtu.be/37Xkxd8ZzKM (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Product	YouTube
100. *http://brby.co/38g (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
101. *http://brby.co/38g (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
102. *http://brby.co/38g (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
103. *http://brby.co/38r (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
104. *http://brby.co/39k (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
105. *http://brby.co/39l (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
106. *http://brby.co/39w (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
107. *http://brby.co/3bt (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product scarf	Website
108. *http://brby.co/3bt (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product scarf	Website
109. *http://brby.co/3bt (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product scarf	Website
110. *http://brby.co/3cd (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product trench	Website
111. *http://brby.co/3cd (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product trench	Website
112. *http://brby.co/3cd (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product trench	Website
113. *http://brby.co/3cd (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Iconic product	Website

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		trench	
114. http://brby.co/3cd (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Iconic product trench	Website
115. http://brby.co/3e0 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Order from runway	Website
116. http://brby.co/3eo (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Order from runway	Website
117. http://brby.co/3hl (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
118. http://brby.co/3k8 (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Tutorial	Website
119. http://brby.co/3ss (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
120. http://brby.co/3ss (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
121. http://brby.co/3wl (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Product to personalize	Website
122. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
123. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
124. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
125. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
126. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
127. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
128. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
129. http://brby.co/3ws (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
130. http://brby.co/3xp (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
131. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
132. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website

133. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
134. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
135. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
136. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
137. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
138. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
139. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
140. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
141. http://brby.co/3xw (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
142. http://brby.co/3y9 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
143. brby.co/4ho (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
144. http://on.Gucci.com/MenSS2015_5 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
145. http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_52 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
146. http://on.Gucci.com/MenSS2015_6 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
147. http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_61 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
148. http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_63 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	product	Website
149. http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_67 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
150. on.Gucci.com/MFW15_7 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
151. HTTP://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_72 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
152. http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_78 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website

153. https://youtu.be/7rVLUd7WBAo (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	YouTube
154. http://on.Gucci.com/FW16_8 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
155. http://on.Gucci.com/Cruise2016_9 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
156. http://on.Gucci.com/AlternativeView (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Fashion show	Pinterest
157. http://on.Gucci.com/AlternativeView (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Fashion show	Pinterest
158. http://on.Gucci.com/AlternativeView2 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Fashion show	Pinterest
159. https://youtu.be/Ang94tyx2Uo (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Event	YouTube
160. https://youtu.be/Ang94tyx2Uo (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Event	YouTube
161. http://on.Gucci.com/Bamboo1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
162. http:///on.Gucci.com/BambooFragrance (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
163. http://on.Gucci.com/beauty10 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
164. on.Gucci.com/BeHerVoice1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Testimonial's story (CSR)	Website
165. http://on.Gucci.com/BeHerVoice2 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Testimonial's story (CSR)	Website
166. http://on.Gucci.com/BeHerVoice3 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Testimonial's story (CSR)	Website
167. youtu.be/BJ1RpkPLEPU (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Tutorial	YouTube
168. http://on.Gucci.com/Blooms1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
169. http://on.Gucci.com/Blooms4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
170. http://on.Gucci.com/Blooms4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
171. http://on.Gucci.com/Blooms4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website

172. http://on.Gucci.com/BluBags1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
173. http://on.Gucci.com/BoF500 (hyperlink)	Referencing/Citing	Media coverage (printed)	Website
174. hhtp://on.Gucci.com/boots1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
175. Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
176. facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
177. facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
178. Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
179. Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
180. Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
181. http://applemusic.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Referencing/Citing	Apple music	Apple Music
182. Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
183. Facebook.com/Burberry (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	*Facebook*
184. http://on.Gucci.com/women_coat1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
185. http://on.Gucci.com/Coats1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	product	Website
186. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
187. louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
188. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
189. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
190. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
191. http://www.louisvuitton.com.(hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website

192. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
193. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
194. www.americascup.com. (hyperlink)	Referencing/Citing	Sport event	America's Cup website
195. http://louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
196. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
197. Gucciconnect.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing (live)	Fashion show	Website
198. http://www.louisvuitton.com (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	Website
199. Burberry.com (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
200. Burberry.com (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
201. http://on.Gucci.comGucciGift469 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
202. http://on.Gucci.com/Men_Cruise1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
203. http://on.Gucci.com/denim1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
204. youtu.be/DfUBMkeojo9l (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Tutorial	YouTube
205. http://on.Gucci.com/DionysusBag1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
206. http://on.Gucci.com/DionysusBag1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
207. http://on.Gucci.com/Dive1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
208. hhtp://on.Gucci.com/EarnYourStripes (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
209. http://on.Gucci.com/Pint_Editorials (hyperlink)	Referencing/Citing	Media coverage (printed)	Pinterest
210. http://on.Gucci.com/FineJwl (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website

211. http://vuitton.LV/1XCA/Fm (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Exhibition information	Website
212. http://on.Gucci.com/FW15AD2 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
213. http://on.Gucci.com/GGInterlocking2 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
214. http://on.Gucci.com/GGInterlocking2 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
215. http://on.Gucci.com/GGInterlocking2 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
216. http://on.Gucci.com/GGInterlocking2 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
217. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGIFT17 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
218. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift456 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
219. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift461 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
220. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift469 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
221. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift48 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
222. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift48 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
223. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift480 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
224. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift50 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
225. on.Gucci.com/GucciGift624 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
226. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift633 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
227. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift660 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
228. on.Gucci.com/GucciGift677 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
229. http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift686 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website

230. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift69 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
231. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift695 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
232. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift699 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Looks	Website
233. *http://on.Gucci.com/GUCCIgift725 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
234. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift770 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
235. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift801 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
236. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift82 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
237. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift82 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
238. *on.Gucci.com/GucciGift850 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
239. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift861 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
240. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift864 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
241. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift865 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
242. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift94 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
243. *http://on.Gucci.com/GucciGift97 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
244. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
245. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
246. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
247. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
248. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
249. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
250. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
251. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
252. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website
253. *Gucci.com/GucciGram (hyperlink)*	Referencing/Citing	Art project	Website

254. http://on.Gucci.com/Gulty1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
255. http://on.Gucci.com/HarpersBazaarUS (hyperlink)	Referencing/Citing	Media coverage (printed)	Website
256. http://on.Gucci.com/Pint_Havana (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Pinterest
257. http://on.Gucci.com/Havana13 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
258. http://on.Gucci.com/Havana17 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
259. http://on.Gucci.com/Havana9 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
260. on.Gucci.com/infiniteEye (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
261. https://youtu.be/A-jzfpRVOg0 (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Tutorial	YouTube
262. http://on.Gucci.com/Kids102 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
263. http://on.Gucci.com/Flora_knight1 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
264. http://on.Gucci.com/Pint_LadyWeb (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Pinterest
265. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
266. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
267. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
268. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
269. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
270. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb4 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
271. http://on.Gucci.com/LadyWeb8 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Music project	Website
272. http://on.Gucci.com/women_loafer2 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website

273. http:instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
274. http:www.instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
275. http://instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
276. http://instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
277. http://www.instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
278. http://instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
279. http://instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
280. http://www.instagram.com/LouisVuitton (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Fashion show behind the scenes	Instagram
281. http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2dLV (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	YouTube
282. http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2dLV (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	YouTube
283. http://youtu.be/lY22Kt2dLV (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Fashion show	YouTube
284. http://on.Gucci.com/Mascara (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
285. http://on.Gucci.com/MenCruise11 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
286. http://on.Gucci.com/MenCruise8 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
287. http://on.Gucci.com/MenPF10 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website

288. *http://on.Gucci.com/MenPF4 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
289. *http://on.Gucci.com/Pint_MenTailoring (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Pinterest
290. *http://on.Gucci.com/MenTailroing1 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
291. *http://on.Gucci.com/MenTailroing1 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
292. *http://on.Gucci.com/MiniBamboo (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
293. *http://on.Gucci.com/Men_SS2915_moc (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
294. *https;//youtu.be/N9hPwCcVNkU (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Collection	YouTube
295. *http://on.Gucci.com/PFGeoPrints (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
296. *http://on.Gucci.com/MenSS2016_pint (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Fashion show	Website
297. *https://youtu.be/qaDHZCbktWs (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Campaign	YouTube
298. *http://on.Gucci.com/rambleuk (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
299. *http://youtu.be/RGeaTG1ewYQ (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion show	YouTube
300. *https://youtu.be/rteLUbNXJf4 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Tutorial	YouTube
301. *https://youtu.be/rteLUbNXJf4 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Tutorial	YouTube
302. *https://youtu.be/rteLUbNXJf4 (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Tutorial	YouTube
303. *hhtp://on.Gucci.com/women_rtw1 (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
304. *http://on.Gucci.com/Sandals1 (hyperlink)*	Exemplifying	Product	Website
305. *http://on.Gucci.com/Shibuya (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Campaign	Website
306. *http://on.Gucci.com/sohouk (hyperlink)*	Enhancing	Collection	Website
307. *on.Gucci.com/SS16show (hyperlink)*	Mode-changing	Fashion	Website

		show	
308. http://on.Gucci.com/Suede8 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Selection of products	Website
309. hhtp://on.Gucci.com/Swing3 (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
310. http://vuitton.LV/VLINE (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
311. http://on.Gucci.com/Watches (hyperlink)	Exemplifying	Product	Website
312. http://on.Gucci.com/WhiteRibbon (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Testimonial's story CSR	Website
313. on.Gucci.com/WhiteRibbon (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Testimonial's story CSR	Website
314. on.Gucci.com/BeHerVoice1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Testimonial's story CSR	Website
315. http://on.Gucci.com/Women1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
316. http://on.Gucci.com/WomenPF2015 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
317. http://on.Gucci.com/WomenRTW1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
318. http://on.Gucci.com/womensbrogues (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
319. https://youtu.be/wr4piCb9Gvc (hyperlink)	Mode-changing	Collection	YouTube
320. http://on.Gucci.com/Yellow1 (hyperlink)	Enhancing	Collection	Website
321. Burberry.tumblr.com (hyperlink)	Referencing/Citing	Tumblr UGC project	Tumblr

APPENDIX III CORPUS TOOLS AND ANNOTATION SCHEMES

UAM Corpus Tools
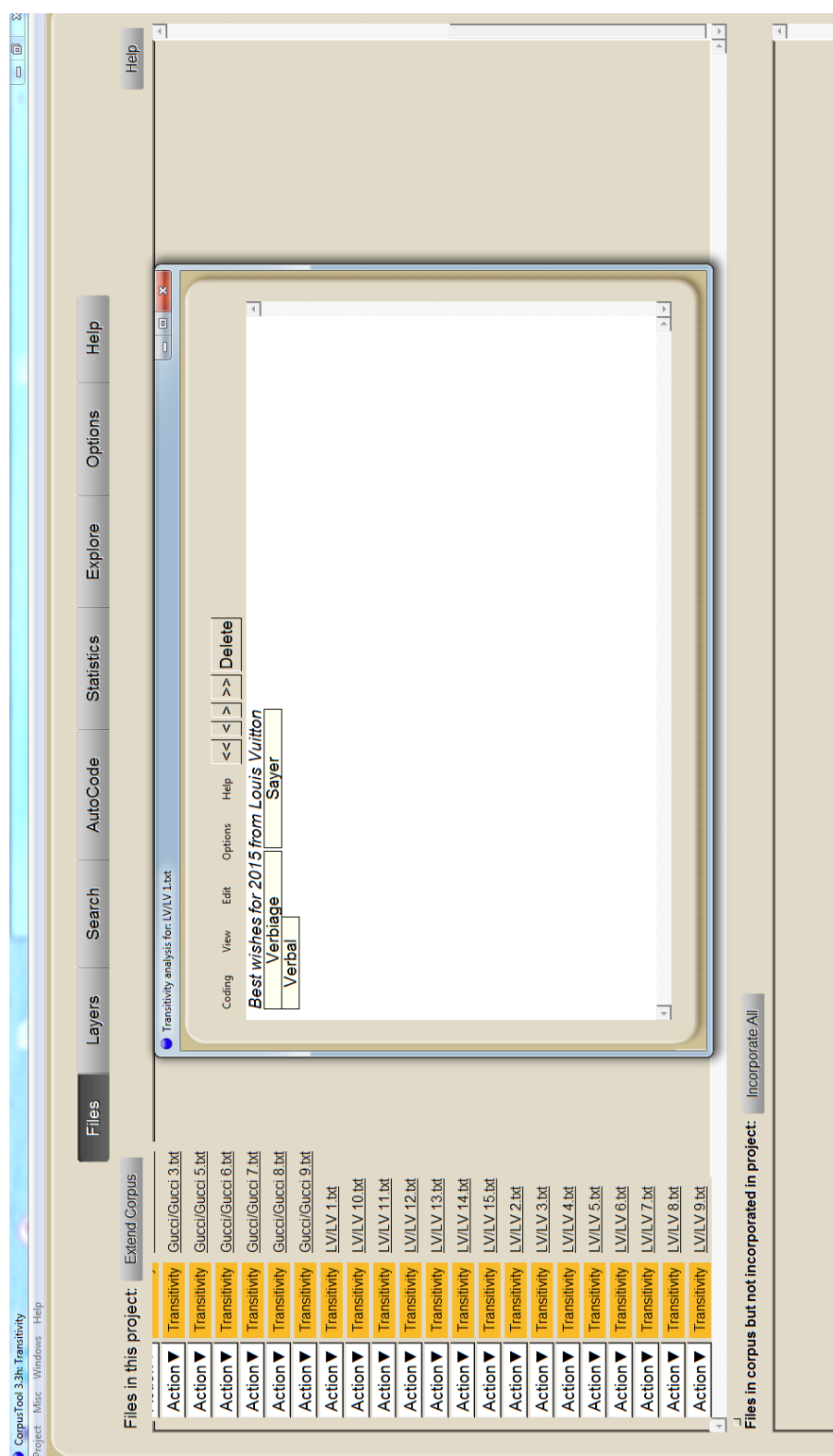
UAM ImageTool
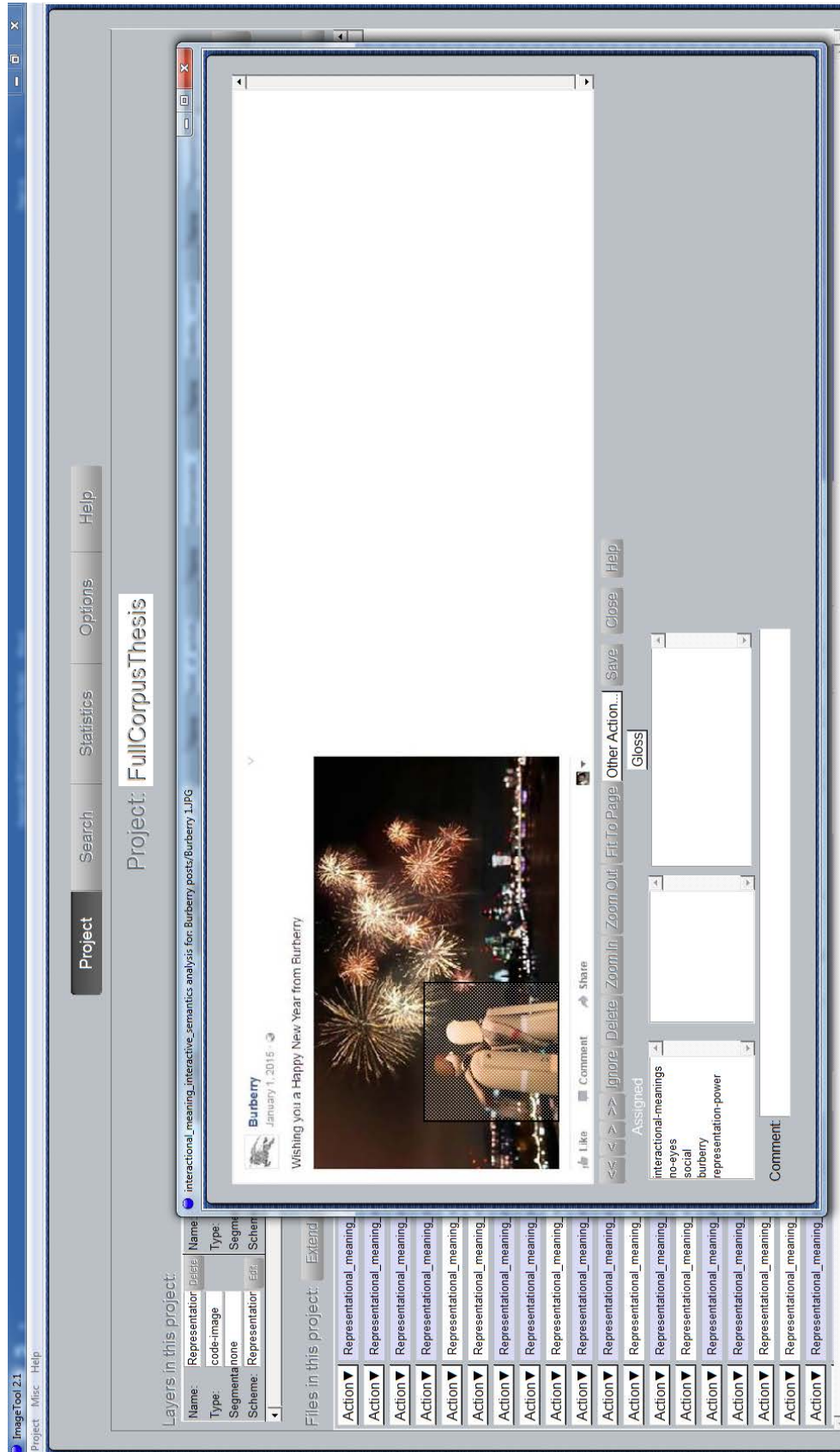
Examples of quantitative results

Feature	N	Percent
Total Units	702	
BRAND	N=700	
- burberry	230	32.86%
- gucci	312	44.57%
- lv	158	22.57%
TEXT	N=700	
- expounding	211	30.14%
- reporting	218	31.14%
- recreating	35	5.00%
- sharing	33	4.71%
- doing	0	0.00%
- enabling	6	0.86%
- recommending	183	26.14%
- exploring	0	0.00%
- no-text	14	2.00%
EXPOUNDING-TYPE	N=211	
- explaining	169	80.09%
- categorizing	42	19.91%
REPORTING-TYPE	N=218	
- inventorying	0	0.00%
- surveying	1	0.46%
- chronicling	217	99.54%
RECREATING-TYPE	N=35	
- narrating	35	100.00%
- drammatizing	0	0.00%
SHARING-TYPE	N=33	
- experiences	4	12.12%
- values	29	87.88%
DOING-TYPE	N=0	
- directing	0	0.00%

Examples of multimodal concordances

Identity construction and marketing strategies

```
                                  ┌ burberry
                      ┌ BRAND─────┼ gucci
                      │            └ lv
                      │
                      │           ┌ brand
                      │           │                    ┌ iconic
                      │           │                    ├ seasonal
                      │ IDENTITY ─┼ product ─ PRODUCT- ┼ iconic-revised
                      │           │           TYPE     ├ pattern-focused
                      │           │                    └ mixed
                      │           │
                      │           └ corporate
                      │
                      │                                                      ┌ history-of-the-brand
                      │                                      BRAND-          ├ country-of-origin
                      │                       ┌ brand-heritage ─ HERITAGE-TYPE ┤
                      │                       │                   founder
                      │                       │                    └ global-presence
                      │                       │
 identity-construction-and-marketing-strategies ┤                       │                                                   STAR-         ┌ celebrity-endorsement
                      │                       │                       ┌ star-system ─ SYSTEM-TYPE ┤
                      │              ┌ ethos ─ ETHOS- ┤                 │                             └ events
                      │              │         TYPE   │                 │                                      ┌ designers
                      │              │                │                 │                       FASHION-       ├ models
                      │              │                └ external- ─ EXTERNAL- ┤ fashion-system ─ SYSTEM-TYPE ┤              ┌ new
                      │              │                  resources  RESOURCES-TYPE ┤                              └ media ─ MEDIA- ┤
                      │              │                                   │                                       TYPE   └ printed
                      │              │                                   ├ collaborations
                      │              │                                   ├ csr
                      │              │                                   │                              ┌ art
                      │              │                                   └ intertextual-references ─ INTERTEXTUAL- ┼ music
                      │ STRATEGY ────┤                                                                 REFERENCES-TYPE └ cinema
                      │              │
                      │              │                                                    ┌ artist
                      │              │                         ┌ production-process ─ PRODUCTION- ┼ craftsmanship
                      │              │                         │                        PROCESS-TYPE └ source-of-inspiration
                      │              │         RATIONAL- ┤
                      │              ├ rational-claim ─ CLAIM ┼ use
                      │              │                         │                      ┌ quality
                      │              │                         └ features ─ FEATURES- ┼ details
                      │              │                                      TYPE      └ coo
                      │              │
                      │              │                                               ┌ festive-related-posts
                      │              └ holiday-marketing-campaigns ─ HOLIDAY- ───────┼ sharing-values
                                                                    MARKETING-CAMPAIGNS └ other
```

Transitivity system

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transitivity

- BRAND
  - burberry
  - gucci
  - lv

- PROCESS
  - elliptical_process — ELLIPTICAL_PROCESS-TYPE
    - relational_process — RELATIONAL_PROCESS-TYPE
      - attributive_process
      - identifying_process
    - other_process
    - not_clear_process
    - mental_process
  - material
  - behavioural
  - mental
  - verbal
  - relational — RELATIONAL-TYPE
    - attributive
    - identifying
  - existential

- PARTICIPANT
  - elliptical — ELLIPTICAL-TYPE
    - you
    - brand_it
    - brand_we
    - other
    - not_clear
  - medium — MEDIUM-TYPE
    - actor
    - behaver
    - goal
    - senser
    - sayer
    - target
    - carrier
    - token
    - existent
  - agent — AGENT-TYPE
    - initiator/actor
    - inducer_of_a_phenomenon
    - sayer2
    - attributor2
    - assigner
  - beneficiary — BENEFICIARY-TYPE
    - recipient
    - client
    - receiver
    - beneficiary2
  - range — RANGE-TYPE
    - scope
    - behaviour
    - phenomenon
    - verbiage
    - attribute
    - value

- CIRCUMSTANCE
  - extent — EXTENT-TYPE
    - duration
    - frequency_temporal
    - distance__spatial
  - location — LOCATION-TYPE
    - time — TIME-TYPE
      - now
      - date
      - season
      - festive
    - place — PLACE-TYPE
      - venue — VENUE-TYPE
        - virtual — VIRTUAL-TYPE
          - website
          - dedicated_channel
          - other_social_media_
          - self-reference_to_fb
          - campaign/collection/show
        - real — REAL-TYPE
          - coo
          - flagship_store
          - iconic_store
          - around_the_world
          - fashion_city
          - behind_the_scenes
          - target_market
          - set
          - runway
          - specific_place
      - provenance — PROVENANCE-TYPE
        - campaign
        - collection
        - fashion_system_expressions
        - fashion_show
        - other_place
  - manner — MANNER-TYPE
    - means
    - quality
    - comparison
    - degree
    - details
  - cause — CAUSE-TYPE
    - reason
    - purpose
    - behalf
  - contingency — CONTINGENCY-TYPE
    - condiction
    - concession
    - default
  - accompaniment — ACCOMPANIMENT-TYPE
    - comitation
    - addition
  - role — ROLE-TYPE
    - guise
    - product
  - matter
  - angle — ANGLE-TYPE
    - source
    - viewpoint

Representational meanings

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representational-meanings

- BRAND
  - burberry
  - gucci
  - lv
- PROCESS-TYPE
  - narrative — NARRATIVE-TYPE
    - doing — DOING-TYPE
      - actional
      - reactional
    - happening
    - saying
    - posing
    - sequencing
  - conceptual — CONCEPTUAL-TYPE
    - classificational
    - analytical-(part-of-whole)
    - symbolism
- PARTICIPANTS
  - human — HUMAN-TYPE
    - group >1 — GROUP-TYPE
      - generic — GENERIC-TYPE
        - models
        - audience
        - customers
        - others
      - specific — SPECIFIC-TYPE
        - named-models
        - named-celebrities
        - staff
    - individual — INDIVIDUAL-TYPE
      - founder-of-the-brand
      - designer
      - celebrity/testimonial
      - artisan
      - model
      - staff-member
  - non-human — NON-HUMAN-TYPE
    - brand
    - product — PRODUCT-TYPE
      - iconic
      - seasonal-item
      - brand-stretching
      - exclusive-item
    - connotative-elements
    - other-elements
  - resembling-human
- CIRCUMSTANCES
  - setting — SETTING-TYPE
    - time — TIME-TYPE
      - past
      - fashion-season
      - festive-season
      - contemporary
      - live
    - space — SPACE-TYPE
      - country-of-origin
      - abroad — ABROAD-TYPE
        - target-market
        - supplier
      - set
      - visual-merchandising-display
      - runway
      - flagship-store
      - event-venue
      - behind-the-scenes
      - behind-the-camera
  - means — MEANS-TYPE
    - meta-representation
    - other
  - accompaniment
- COLOUR-FUNCTION
  - extradiegetic — EXTRADIEGETIC-TYPE
    - branding-(iconic)
    - location-in-time — LOCATION-IN-TIME-TYPE
      - past-(black&white)
      - festive-season-(linking)
    - other-effects
  - real — REAL-TYPE
    - location-in-time-(background) — LOCATION-IN-TIME-(BACKGROUND)-TYPE
      - fashion-season-(linking)
      - festive-season-(packaging-or-merchandising-display)
    - additional-meanings — ADDITIONAL-MEANINGS-TYPE
      - connotation-(values)
      - other-meanings
    - representation-of-reality

Interactional meanings

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```
                      ┌ burberry
              BRAND  ─┤ gucci
              ┌        └ lv
              │
              │                                    ┌ demand
              │                                    │ ⎡ gaze ⎤
              │                      EYE-           │
              │       ┌ eye-contact ─CONTACT-TYPE ─┤ offer
              │       │                             │ ⎡ absence of gaze ⎤
              │ CONTACT-                            │
              │ TYPE ─┤                             └ no-eye-contact
              │       │
              │       └ inanimate-objects
              │
              │                                           ┌ intimate/personal-relationship
              │                      INTIMATE/PERSONAL-  │
              │       ┌ intimate/personal ─TYPE ─────────┤ detail
              │       │  ⎡ close shot ⎤                   │ ⎡ i.e. showing a small detail ⎤
              │       │                                   └
interactional-│       │
  meanings   ┤ SOCIAL-│ social
              │ DISTANCE┤ ⎡ medium shot ⎤
              │       │
              │       │                                  ┌ impersonal-relationship
              │       │                    IMPERSONAL-  │ far-in-time
              │       └ impersonal ────────TYPE ────────┤ panoramic-view
              │          ⎡ long shot ⎤                   └ runway-shot
              │
              │                                  ┌ discovery-process
              │                    VIEWER-       │
              │       ┌ viewer-power ─POWER-TYPE ┤ purchase-power
              │       │  ⎡ high angle ⎤           └
              │ POWER-│
              └ RELATION ┤ equality
                      │  ⎡ eye-level angle ⎤
                      │
                      └ representation-power
                         ⎡ low angle ⎤
```

Intersemiotic relations

```
                                ┌ burberry
                     ┌ BRAND ────┼ lv
                     │           └ gucci
                     │
intersemiotic-relations ┤
                     │                                    ┌ exposition-(i&t-same-generality)
                     │           ┌ elaboration ─ ELABORATION-
                     │           │                GATE    │                                   ┌ text-more-general
                     │           │                        └ exemplification ─ EXEMPLIFICATION-┤
                     │           │                                             TYPE           └ image-more-general
                     │           │
                     └ LOG-      ┤               EXTENSION-┌ text-(more-information)
                       SEM-TYPE  ├ extension ──── TYPE     └ image-(more-information)
                                 │
                                 │                        ┌ time ─ TIME- ┌ time-(t)
                                 │                        │       TYPE   └ time-(i)
                                 │                        │
                                 └ enhancement ─ ENHANCEMENT-┤ place ─ PLACE-┌ place-(t)
                                                 TYPE      │       TYPE   └ place-(i)
                                                           │
                                                           └ reason/purpose ─ REASON/PURPOSE-┌ reason/purpose-(t)
                                                                              TYPE           └ reason/purpose-(i)
```

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