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**Indulging in luxury: the role of Art-Based Marketing techniques**

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# Indulging in luxury: the role of Art-based Marketing techniques

## Introduction

It is not necessary to be passionate about art to recognize the effects that it has, more or less consciously, on men's mind and spirit, having it also been a companion, a witness and a voice for the human kind since the dawn of time. Personally I define myself neither an expert connoisseur nor a refined cultured, but I certainly recognize myself as an art lover, in all its forms and manifestations, moved by pure curiosity about the different and amazing ways in which human imagination has expressed itself. It is, perhaps, a bit because of this more sensitive "filter" that I couldn't help but notice that in the recent years many of the most famous Italian brands have made use of many strategies involving different artistic forms in order to differentiate their production or even "just" to enhance and promote it. From Dolce & Gabbana and Fendi who respectively used the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento and the Trevi Fountain in Rome as the set for their fashion shows, to Gucci who realized several digital campaigns exclusively through graphic illustrations on line, to Prada who through its homonymous Foundation has created a space entirely dedicated to exhibitions. All the brands above mentioned have in common, in addition of course to this bond with art, the belonging to the luxury market sector. Historically, art and luxury have been considered as elements that draw mutual inspiration to the point that, for most luxury brands, the orientation towards art and culture has been considered a natural extension of their nature. The ancient patrons of the arts were people belonging to that highly bourgeois social class who, by virtue of their privileged perspective, dictated what today we will call the *trends* of good taste, style and the search for uniqueness.

These, and many others, examples have led me to ask myself what effects the combination of art and luxury had on people, consumers in relation to the business' language, having already decreed that the reasons for this approach were concentrated in a mutual devotion for beauty, meant as inspiration, passion and attention. In particular, I wondered if and to what extent the results of this union pushed individuals, as consumers, to act differently towards them: are they more welcome? Are they more desired? Are they more purchased? In other words, I asked myself, can art be the reason why beauty becomes more beautiful and we become more indulgent with ourselves in order to obtain a piece of this beauty? Among the many occasions that allow us to resort to indulgence, and among the many

justifications that we add to this car of ours "let it pass", can we consider the artistic dimension identified in what the market offers us, that quid capable of making us dream and amaze, one of them? In the following dissertation we will try to give some answers to these questions.

## Chapter 1

### 1. Indulgent Consumption

The definition that the vocabulary gives regarding the adjective "indulgent" says that it can be defined as such, one who's characterized by "the tendency to give into a wish or desire, lenient or tolerant" (Vocabulary.com). The adjective comes from the latin word *indulgere*, which means "to allow space or time for." Being indulgent, in fact, means you are allowing space and time for things you enjoy and is related to the verb "to indulge", which means "to allow or tolerate". Therefore, it is easy to deduce that when we speak of an indulgent consumer we are referring to a personality that often indulges in purchases of pleasure that are primarily aimed at satisfying a desire for voluptuousness. This category of consumer has emerged from the early post-crisis years of 2008, shaped by these challenging financial times, when for the first time marketers spoke about the "small indulgence customer" when talking about people who created small sanctuaries away from the pressures and fears through small and personal indulgences (Arussy, 2010).

From the companies' standpoint, indulgence is becoming more planned than ever as new technologies give consumers more control over their spending habits and create more regulated daily schedules. Across all industries today, brands are offering a wider range of products and consumers are becoming more conscious. This requires firms to take a deeper look at the product, experience and occasions the product offers. The rise of e-commerce is impacting how and where consumers shop, which is reducing the number of impulse purchases: only 23% of consumers "often" make impulse purchases, down from 28% in 2013 (Schaefer, 2019). More occasions need to be served by a wider variety of products, ingredients and delivery systems. This will lead to new partners, particularly as we become more mobile and consumers look for new ways to spend their time. In order to differentiate a product, we will see brands begin to innovate new products around specific outcomes and moods. For brands such as Airbnb and Uber Eats, there are opportunities to find consumers when they are most likely willing to indulge. As we head towards a new world for indulgence brands, companies must refresh their products to meet the needs of the evolving consumer. Brands will need to expand their product portfolio and vertical integration, real-time innovation and mastery of a much more fragmented channel. In conclusion, brands will need to do more to meet consumers where they are at (Schaefer, 2019).

Researchers have often emphasized the unnecessary quality or delight of indulgence (*Berry, 1994*) and presented it as an irrational act and, at this regard, two typical domains of indulgent consumption have been frequently examined which are luxury and hedonic eating.

This research will focus on indulgence in the luxury field, defined by Coco Chanel as “a need that begins where necessity ends” and that, for this reason, gives a great chance for leniency investigation. Luxury goods purchasing process, in fact, is driven by emotions and not by careful analysis. Therefore, customers ‘emotions are the fundamental in this type of consumption and are the object to which the brand must be able to appeal, bearing in mind this process is influenced by psychological, personal and socio-cultural factors.

## 1.1 The luxury sector

What are we talking about when speaking about luxury market? Popular opinion, this sector includes “all the products and services able to provide a status of prestige to those who enjoy them, and are distinguished by an excellent quality, a high price, an exclusive character and by the emotional component and the involvement feeling that accompany the act of purchase and possession of the good” (Brioschi, 2000). The effect of all those previous characteristics is mainly reflected in the distribution strategy adopted by luxury brands and –above all- in the marketing ones. In the first case, dealing with distribution, it’s crucial to choose few selling stores offering a narrow selection of products and featured by an interior trade dress extremely accurate in every detail. For what concerns the marketing perspective, it’s fundamental that the marketing and communication activities of luxury products and services leverage on their historical valence emphasizing their immutable value which is far from passing fads. The luxury industry encompasses both goods and experiences; it comprises nine *macro* segments, including cars, hospitality and personal goods, which together account for more than 80% of the total economic market.

The evidence is that despite the fragile geopolitical worldwide situation and the fear of an economical and financial recession, that have characterized the whole 2019, the luxury sector is globally growing (BCG-Altgamma, 2019). From the BCG-Altgamma report of 2019 emerged that the global market, including both luxury goods and experiences, grew by 5% in 2018, at constant exchange rates, reaching an estimated value of approximately €1,300 billion, registering an overall positive performance in all its segments. In the same year and throughout the whole 2019, personal luxury goods achieved excellent results: they grew by 4% at constant exchange rates to reach 281 billion



euros in 2018, confirming the positive trend expected in the *new normal* (1) period. Specifically, sales of luxury cars continued to dominate the market, growing by 7% at constant exchange rates to €550 billion, and luxury experiences remained attractive to consumers, as proved by sales growth of gourmet food and fine dining (up 6%) and sales of luxury cruises (up 9%). However, the luxury hospitality segment registered a lower growth than historically, up only 2%, compared with 5% last year. It is remarkable a consumption shift back to luxury products, with luxury experiences growing less than previously.

When it comes to categories within personal goods, shoes and jewellery stood out as the outperformers, both growing by 9% at c.e.r <sup>2</sup> in 2019, followed by leather goods (up to 7% at c.e.r) and beauty (up to 3% growth at c.e.r). Independent beauty players stand out for their remarkable performances in recent years, thanks to their unique customer-centric approach: between 2015 and 2019, the “indie” beauty segment grew at 25% per year on average, about six times faster than the overall luxury category. Apparel returned to modest growth (up to 1% at c.e.r), due to a slight improvement in the prêt-à-porter segment, for both men and women. Watches’ segment demonstrated a sluggish performance, declining by 2% at constant exchange rates (BCG-Altgamma, 2019).

Looking at the future, a positive growth trend is expected to continue in the range of up to 3-5 % per year to reach 320-365 billions of euros in 2025. While considering the current economic situation which is plagued by a declared pandemic status, which is affecting the economies of many countries across the world, the expected growth in 2020 is positive too, for what concerns each luxury product category’s performance, the number of distribution channels and buyers’ nationality, showing an overall well-being of the sector. Among the product categories, leather goods (+6%) and beauty care (+5,5%) lead the market (D’Arpizio & Levato, 2018).

Dealing with nationalities, Chinese people registered a +10% in their purchase amount and handling with sales channels, the performance of digital tools is remarkable both in retail (up to 13%) and in wholesale (up to 9%). In this climate of stability for the specific sector, the amount of investments in the market ensure a positive outlook, despite of the socio-political complexities. The past growth and the future positive trend is demonstrated by the performance of the *European luxury goods index*, the stock market index which brings together almost all the companies present in the luxury field.

The main causes of the last years’ success, analysing the growth factors, can be identified in three major: the introduction of the web marketing and the exponential growth of the online platforms, the

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<sup>1</sup> Is a term that refers to financial conditions following the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the aftermath of the 2008–2012 global recession. The term has since been used in a variety of other contexts to imply that something which was previously abnormal has become commonplace.

<sup>2</sup> Constant exchange rates

increase of international tourism and the Millennials' empowered domain of purchase. Almost the 90% of the luxury brands is currently active on the social media -especially Instagram- in order to reach better and more frequently the consumers, and their investments in online advertising are grown exponentially reaching the 23% of the total amount addressed to promotion and communication.

Another relevant source of revenues for the luxury sector is represented by tourism, with a particular attention to all the expenses made while travelling and in the tax free areas of the airports. In fact, in the first ten months of 2019, Europe has been one of the top destinations for the so called *elite shoppers* who have incremented their purchases by the 13% with respect to 2018. As regards the Italian market, the 28% of luxury purchases is made by Chinese people, who are now leading the sector growth: they accounted for 90% of the global market growth in 2019, reaching 35% of the value of luxury goods sold in the world. Chinese consumers are followed by Americans, whose consumption was boosted by domestic confidence but tempered by reduced tourist flows due to the strict governmental American policy. In third position there are Russians.

Europe experienced slow growth of 1% at c.e.r with the market reaching €88 billion in size. Spain and the UK were among the top performers, driven respectively by tourism and currency. In this context, Germany was impacted by a slowing country dynamism and France by social unrest earlier in the year. Other countries, which account for €12 billion, experienced a 5% decrease at constant exchange rates. The Middle East, aside from a hesitant recovery in Dubai, was a subdued market affected by lower consumer confidence and geopolitical uncertainties.

Italy still remains one of the favourite destination for foreign tourists and the increase in revenues gained by luxury brands related to tourisms was certainly facilitated by an adjustment of price differentials.

For what concerns the buyer figure itself, so the type of consumer, the luxury market is now facing a radical changing of its standard characteristics. In particular, the sector is dealing with a significant shift from the original archetype, embodied by the so called *baby boomers* (3) to a younger buyer persona. In 2018 the Y generation –or the so called *Millennials* (4)- together with the Z generation determined the 100% of growth in the global luxury market, showing an increase of 15% with respect to 2017. Taking into account this relevant matter of fact, the evolution of the luxury market is led by the needs of these younger generations, in terms of renewal of products, communication channels' choice and media mix involvement (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018).

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3 Baby boomers: the generation defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, during the post-World War II baby boom.

4 The generation defined as individuals born between 1981 to 1996

Regarding the Millennials, they appear to be very different consumers from the previous generation and with very specific characteristics. These people are showing a more individualistic consumer behaviour: what they want is a holistic and extremely appealing digital experience and their purchases are mostly driven by the resonance of the logo. They don't buy a product just because of the status symbol, but they seek higher values in the brand such as transparency and trust: behind a luxury good, in their opinion, there is the idea of sharing. According to them, luxury doesn't match anymore with the will to show loudly and prominently their richness but, on the contrary, with the desire to be involved in something special, something unique, whether it's a trip or a vacation or a purchase etc. Millennials choose the luxury brands for what they stand for and for how they make them feel. In other words, they aim to buy expensive products and services only if the brand is able to create an emotional bond between product and buyer. In this context, the current challenge for the luxury industry is to learn how to better communicate new values or renewed ones: this purpose implies a shift in the business strategy toward an increasing number of "rental and non-purchase", "use and non-ownership" options. It also means the duty to give an emotional value to products and services to turn them into an experience that goes beyond the economic exchange. The reason why is that if the alternatives are too many, the Millennials ask for more value than ever to be placed on their money and for luxury brands to take more care in packaging products and services that are highly personalized to the customer's demand. Millennials are the least passive consumers ever during the shopping and enjoyment experience: they tend to create their own personal world of personalized items, designed to be something memorable, unique, worth sharing.

The new demands, in addition, must be satisfied by the contents: user-generated content is perceived as more reliable, before companies ask unknown users for information online, and brands lose authority when they don't offer valuable content or when they can't break into the digital world. The latter point reminds us back to luxury brands: it is necessary, therefore, to redefine the offer on the basis of the concept of luxury itself. The real luxury is no longer choosing a brand because it is well-known and expensive, but investing money to obtain exclusive benefits and getting involved in a personalized experience in every detail (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018).

### 1.1.1 The market: macro trends and characteristics

#### Inclusivity

The luxury sector is becoming more and more aware about the impact that different cultures and minorities have on the business. The biggest revolution which is going on in the industry is

represented by the shift of a vision of luxury understood as exclusive power to an inclusive one. Mostly for what concerns the fashion sector, where brands are embracing diversity, the designers are becoming more oriented in offering clothes with different shapes and lines and to emphasize the diversity and unicity of each individual, in order to represent a wider slice of human beings-possible consumers. One of the main examples that dominated the latest scenes is represented by the Italian Gucci, whose administrative director, Marco Bizzarri, and creative director Alessandro Michele have managed to give a new identity to the brand by following the above mentioned vision. As Bizzarri said in an interview in 2019, the era of exclusive luxury, meant in the strict sense of the adjective, is officially over in favour to a focus on its inclusive function, able to perform an active social role in the education for a more updated and open-minded world. Therefore, Bizzarri suggested to start the change from the stores or showrooms which are the places where the consumer and the brand- through the sales assistants- interface: all the people welcoming the clients must be natural, empathic, smiling and motivated by true passion able to transmit positive emotions (Pambianco Magazine, 2018). What we are facing is a real cultural transformation in the luxury sector, followed by a “visual” one translated by the adoption of not too loud marketing strategies, more addressed to the emotive side of the consumers through narration and proper storytelling and able to be a presence in people’s life not only with the products but especially with contents and values. Briefly, to belong to a tribe full of unique individuals is the new luxury.

## Sustainability

Another relevant topic in the sector is sustainability, resulting from a greater industrial and economic awareness that traces in the respect of nature -as far as possible- the key to success and survival. The scope of a great number of companies, working in many different sectors, is to adopt practices aimed at the least possible exploitation of resources and their ever-increasing savings, increasingly choosing alternative materials or different processing methods. In this view, the luxury industry plays a relevant role: “innovation as a long-term objective, taking into account the special responsibilities that arise in this area”, for example, is the key adopted by the French groups Kering and LVMH. The sustainability issue influences the purchase behaviour of 60% of consumers who are driven by environmental and ethical manufacturing concerns: they are no longer just looking for heritage and *savoir faire*, but are also interested in ethical and production criteria, while maintaining the highest quality standards (BCG-Altgamma, 2019).

The whole luxury sector, from jewellery to cosmetic, including automotive and fashion, can't help to adapt itself to the new conditions. Ostentation and superficiality are now outdated attitudes which are incompatible with the widespread desire for eco-sustainability. Ostentation therefore leaves the floor to a more sustainable, accessible, ethical and environmentally friendly kind of luxury.

Lately, the sustainability issue is frequently discussed when comes out in the fashion field, where the launch of new special collections together with the use of new materials are seen every year. Italy, as fashion capital, hosts the Green Carpet Fashion Award, in conclusion to the annual Milan Fashion Week, born by the partnership between the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* and Eco-Age. The initiative wants to celebrate the achievements of fashion and luxury brands in terms of sustainability, reflecting the fashion houses' commitment to balance the need to trigger rapid change while preserving the heritage and authenticity of small producers.

On this prominent issue, also the Milano Fashion Global Summit is performed, which is a conference that brings together the most important exponents of several different business sectors and other over qualified personalities from all over the world to discuss and analyse the new opportunities and challenges that the fashion and luxury goods sector faces in a constantly changing market. The summit is addressed to Heads of Business and Senior Management and is conceived, unique in its kind, as a meeting point between the world of creation, industry, distribution and finance.

Even outside the fashion industry, there are an increasing number of prestigious brands that undertake initiatives related to eco-compatibility and the luxury automotive brand Lamborghini is one of them: in 2017 the Italian firm joined a partnership with Regenesi, a luxury lifestyle brand which creates accessories from post-production materials, giving birth to a special collection of luxury accessories made by materials coming from the Lamborghini's production lines. A collaboration that represents the fusion of two different worlds, united in the search for an excellent made in Italy, to give birth to the new philosophy: a co-branding project under the banner of eco-compatible innovation that has enriched both brands (Regenesi.com, 2017)

Commitment and interest in sustainability are also demonstrated by the growth of new sectors such as the second-hand market even for luxury goods, which reached to €26 billion in 2019, propelled by strong growth in Europe, as well as among specialized online platforms. The US and Europe are key geographies and Asia still lags behind, mainly due to stronger consumer scepticism caused by already-used items. Watches and jewellery are the primary categories in the second-hand market, accounting for over 75% of all purchases, but fashion and accessories continued to gain traction. The second-hand channel is becoming a new touchpoint to acquire younger customers, creating an opportunity to educate them and draw them into the luxury ecosystem. Many players are becoming increasingly interested in this market and are starting to integrate it into their strategies, in part to

address emerging sustainability concerns. The second-hand reached 7% of personal luxury market value and is growing 12% per year, 34% of consumers sell second-hand products, while the 26% of the actually buy them. The 80% of second-hand market participants use online channels to get informed and to trade (BCG-Altgamma, 2019).

## Experiential luxury

Above all, the greatest revolution in the luxury sector refers to the supremacy of the experiential luxury on the personal one. Among the Millennials the biggest desire is to live luxury experiences. Usually, companies working in the sector, have been considered as exclusively focused on products 'features, on setting higher prices and adopting marketing strategies to strengthen the power of determination deriving from a luxury good purchase. In our days, this custom remains and consolidates itself because of the over-performances of brands like Louis Vuitton (LVMH), Gucci e Cartier in their respective categories, always gaining higher margins and positive growing trends. Nevertheless, our society is living in an age of ubiquity, where classic luxury goods could be available to everyone via an app on the mobile phone; the prestige coming from having a luxury good has decreased concurrently with the wide diffusion of rental and resale models, especially in the clothing and accessories' sectors (GAM Investments, 2019). This phenomenon has pushed consumers to move from the mere possession of a luxury product to the research of luxurious experiences, exclusives and differentiated for each income level. In the last ten years the market has seen the supremacy of the so called *experiential luxury* above the personal consume of luxury goods, starting at the growth of new luxury categories including the hotellerie, food&beverage and the automotive ones. Until few years ago, the customer had only to be convinced to buy a product while now, instead, he must be involved in a particular atmosphere, a suggestion, a unique moment. This kind of experience requires companies and brands to develop a deep empathy with their audience and a good knowledge of what excites them. Nowadays, the experience passes through the personal relationship between the brand and the audience based on sharing and involving: designing unstable retail service environments, opening the doors of their artisan workshops to the public and showing their "behind the scenes" like *Les Journées Particulière* by the LVMH group, or inviting the public to contribute to the brand's image like what is done by Burberry through *The Art of the Trench* initiative, are all experiential initiatives. Experiences transforms people from consumers of goods to people who take an active part in the construction, through objects, of their sensory and cognitive world (Tanni, 2018).

It's easy to predict that this trend is going to grow considering that the new consumers are always more interested in building a special bond with the brands -without the mediation of the traditional analogic marketing tools- both directly on the social media and looking at influencers or exclusive events. From the brands' standpoint, these generation of consumers could become the most loyal supporters because of their tendency to create real communities. According to some marketing researches it is proved that consumers who give more value to customized experiences are more likely to become precious clients for the brand, becoming a sort of non-official ambassadors showing this experiential luxury lifestyle via social media. A brand creation strategy like this, based on the value of the experience, has been revitalized some years ago by sportswear brand which started to organize yoga and gym classes in their stores, building customer loyalty through the offer of these exclusive experiences. In the field of wines and liquors, for instance also the Johnnie Walker House in Madrid, has helped to introduce the world of Scotch whisky to younger consumers, pleasing even existing consumers who can now have direct contact with the brand. In the luxury sector, LVMH is the most *avant-garde* company on this subject, as demonstrated by the acquisition of luxury hotels *Belmond*: the firm is convinced that, over time, experiential luxury will become an extremely important category so that, when commenting on the acquisition, LVMH owner of such luxury fashion brands as Dior, Vuitton, Loro Piana and Fendi, said the company saw future growth in the luxury sector coming not only from goods, but also from high-end experiences and *Belmond's* holdings certainly provide this benefit (Sabino, 2018)

Collaboration with designers, for limited edition and limited quantity products can be an extremely effective way to engage consumers by making them feel part of an exclusive experience through the purchase from these categories. Physical stores, in particular, are trying to reinvent their business models on the wave of the digital revolution, focusing in particular on the trend of experiential luxury. Harrods, for example, has launched a perfume creation and personalization service, *Salon de Parfums*, which one year after opening already represents 25% of its business in this segment. The service also designs special wedding fragrances, completely personalized. Harrods' CEO, Michael Ward, explained that customers are trying to create that kind of memory.

### An Italian spotlight

In the constant research for uniqueness, many excellent Italian brands are creating collaborations between each other's, both of niche and generally prominent. Combining hospitality, design, dining, art and tourism, it is possible to provide holistic experiences, unique for consumers, able to make

them perceive the true luxury dimension. In Italy the above mentioned industries find a very fertile basin, noticing the biggest potential in the field of tourism. The definition *Experiential Tourism* best identifies the current trend in the area: to offer not only places to be seen, but experiences to be lived with a close contact with local realities, ensuring an active involvement able to enhance traditions. In this view, therefore, experience is still the fulcrum: the aim is to return home with new memories, strengthened by an inner enrichment and conscious of having learnt something. In the experiential tourism, each area involved represents a piece in itself which concurs to make a unique framework of luxury and exclusivity. Hotels, for instance, are not a mere detail anymore, but places filled with experiences, memories and emotions, considered as proper destinations themselves and able to embody the link between the structure and the intrinsic characteristics of the places where they are located (Anastasi, 2019).

Nationally, one of the best results deriving from this new era is represented by the partnership signed between *atCarmen*, a company that creates and brings around the world innovative catering and hospitality formats founded by Martino de Rosa e Carmen Moretti, and BMW Italia. The collaboration between these two visionary firms, born in 2018, has suddenly revealed its highly innovative nature, proving to be a great choral project between sustainability and high gastronomy, charm and hospitality. Two historic brands such *L'Albereta* and BMW Italia and an innovative company as *atCarmen* is, leader in the hospitality market, will stage real experiences tailored on the basis of customers' desires. As De Rosa said, the aim of the partnership was to build a cultural exchange between a niche company such *atCarmen*, an excellent point of reference in food and hospitality, and BMW Italia, synonymous of high quality and innovative technology, by combining their respective know-how and by customizing high quality services. This is not a mere commercial operation, but the beginning of a common path towards a new idea of welcome and sustainability, watchwords to meet the challenges of the coming years in the sector (Belloni, 2019).

In addition, considering the growing sense of responsibility towards the environment and since the experience of luxury is considered to have less impact on the environment, the new generation are more willing to invest their money this way.

## The arts

According to the *True-Luxury Global Consumer Insight 2019 Edition*, the first key trend in the sector result to be the artistic collaborations. Collaborations enabled a pick of awareness of 90% of consumers and drove the 50% of luxury purchases, led by Chinese (62%) and younger generations (67% of Z generation, 60% Millennials), including collaborations and special editions. The art luxury



industries are always getting closer. In the last years, great artists decided to collaborate with several fashion brands, but also many other luxury brands opened museums and foundations dedicated to the artistic experimentation. This phenomenon happens because of the tight connection between art and luxury and because both have developed over time following a common path. Historically, the great patrons, the Aristocrats and the economic *élite*, have pushed the cultural and artistic production of their time and at the same time played the role of “judges” for what concerns luxury: from fashion to interior decoration, including food trends and to lifestyle.

The works of art break into the corridors and offices of the most prestigious brands, accompany exhibitions and corporate events elevating art to an instrument of relationship and comparison between partners, employees, customers and territory. In an era of fluid values, the world of luxury can no longer appear simply exclusive, expensive or flashy but it must evolve and transform. In fact, it became minimal, ecological, ethical, to get in tune with a new feeling which is more akin to new generations and refined *connoisseurs* who don't just like to appear. The brands take on the important role of bearers of values and that is why they make choices addressed to the sensitive strings of sustainability, social responsibility and art, better if contemporary, close to the spirit of the times and today's consumers.

In this regard, Philippe Daverio<sup>5</sup> said, "art serves to stand out, but authenticity is necessary", and here relies the biggest challenge for luxury brands who chose to approach to art: showing coherence. It competes as sponsor of events, but there are differences between those who use art only to appear and those who promote it. Art and culture are indispensable assets, but only if they are able to generate value and positively influence the context where companies and foundations operate, which are created not only to give prestige to the image of the luxury brand, but also to develop initiatives of social and cultural interest.

The luxury market is, therefore, made up of an increasing number of relations with art, in order to make appropriate values and meanings be associated with products. Each brand represents a world built on precise meanings and aspirations expressed in every watch, table, dress or jewel that is offered on the market. "If you don't love the culture of a brand, you won't love its products either", this is the slogan of Ian Rogers, the head of the digital universe of LVMH group which includes 70 luxury brands, including Louis Vuitton. The latter, in particular, is famous for its tight creative bond between art and fashion, which is 160 years strong –and counting-. In 2019, to celebrate this historic combination, the French firm organized the *Louis Vuitton X* exhibition, a majestic journey into the heart of the creative exchange and of all the artistic collaborations that have marked the history of the

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<sup>5</sup> Italian art critic, teacher, writer, author, politician and television personality

*Maison*. Among the works, visitors are able to discover a precious collection of custom-made trunks from the early 20th century, perfume bottles and Art Deco showcases commissioned and designed by Gaston-Louis Vuitton, grandson of the House's founder, as well as the most iconic *monogram bags* revisited by famous artists and designers such as Karl Lagerfeld, Rei Kawakubo, Cindy Sherman or Frank Gehry. In the exhibitions is also possible to find models of bags made in collaboration with artists such as Yayoi Kusama, Richard Prince and Zaha Hadid. *Louis Vuitton X* is an exciting and engaging experience that shows the continuous dialogue between tradition and innovation, between the world of fashion and textile and design, architecture and graphic (Louis Vuitton.com, 2019).

A purely contemporary phenomenon is rather the presence of luxury brands with important function in the protection and promotion of the arts. Originally, in fact, the brands designated a particular manufacture or the quality of the product strictly functional to consumption; today, instead, luxury brands aspire to play a more active role in the social context of reference, proposing contents, sponsoring wide-ranging initiatives and stimulating political and economic debates. Through their relationship with art, luxury brands are becoming, in other words, cultural catalysts.

From the limited edition of commercial products to the sponsorship of artistic events, we are witnessing a race to artistic collaboration by brands. The successes of these initiatives, the interest they are able to arouse and their financial effectiveness, are directly linked to the sense of authenticity that these projects are able to suggest, beyond any marketing 'forcing'. Gucci of Alessandro Michele's era is an excellent example of a brand wise appreciation of artistic spontaneity. Gucci's collaborations with Unskilled Worker, Guccighost, Ignasi Monreal and Maurizio Cattelan seem to be born in an organic way, as a dialogue between Alessandro Michele and the artists on creative expression, which becomes a common element of inclusion and play. Inclusion and playfulness are two aspects that the brand cultivates as a stylistic feature in its collections, and this results in a naive coherence that the Millennial public has shown to appreciate.

Even if the fashion industry provides plenty of interesting realities, this field is not the only one involved in the process of “*artification*” of the brand. In the hospitality industry, the expression *Art Hotel* has born to identify those structures characterized by a high degree of customization of the areas, obtained by the application of chromatic insights or by the insertion of furnishing accessories inspired by works of artists or by their real creations. In these hotels, the common areas have a strong communicative power, at the point to become a main tool of strategic communication which helps in developing awareness and identification between the client and the hotel's concept. In fact, the incremented focus on the communicative function of the structure, represents the main feature of the *Art Hotels*, which aim to offer customized experiences filled by a strong emotional effect and a

fulfilling cultural involvement of the hosts, also thanks to the use of the structure itself as a temporary museum.

The fine dining sector, which in Italy proudly distinguishes itself for its dynamic and innovative character, has showed its connection with the arts through new and extremely appealing ways. In this context, the most fascinating and emblematic examples are represented by two prestigious Italian wineries: Ornellaia and Ca'del Bosco. Both of them have developed a new way to introduce themselves in the market, shifting their strategic approach from the promotion of the product itself, to the promotion of the whole winery environment. Since May 2009, Ornellaia promotes the project *Vendemmia d'Artista* which scope is to celebrate the exclusive and unique features of each new production of the Ornellaia wine. The initiative consists in the realization, by a contemporary artist, of a set of customized limited edition labels and a work of art drawing inspiration from the word selected by the oenologist that better describes the character of the production. The exclusive character of the program and the unicity of the works created, make the collectors "fight" for these bottles worldwide, some of which are auctioned off at an annual fundraising event in support of art. The *Vendemmia d'Artista* project culminates with a work of art, created specifically for the estate, which combines the character of the vineyard with the artist's inspiration at the birthplace of the Ornellaia.

Ca'del Bosco, similarly, wanted to make the entire environment of the company, located in the middle of the Franciacorta territory, an open-air museum: a place where art, understood as the artistic production of paintings and sculptures but also as the production of bottles of excellence, is breathed in every corner. The winery, which represents one of the main players in the fine wine sector, could not help but approaching this fascinating trend that combines business with the multiple facets of the human soul. To visit Ca' del Bosco means to get involved in harmony and intense joy. The vision of the enchanting nature blends with the intellectual provocation of art: surprising sculptures placed in the landscape, with the colours of bronze, marble, steel. It strikes the intimate resemblance between the creative act of sculpture, called to light and distilled in a pure form, and the creation of an excellent wine. It is the material that calls the artist: the stone waits for those who recognize its contained form and free it. A land awaits those who understand its vocation and with love, wisdom, clear vision and severe selection, transform a promise into a colour, a taste, a perfume that makes the whole world's eyes ajar with pleasure.

## 1.2 Marketing and Art

Art and business have always dialogued between each other and the interaction among creativity and design addressed to production, has always given results. When the arts have been encouraged and given the right value, thanks to the intervention of families, great patrons and firms, the economic aspect has also enjoyed an improvement. It's not easy to think about marketing without setting our mind on artistic disciplines like design, graphic, painting and many others. Starting from the assumption that marketing is made by the perfect fusion between strategy and creativity, there it is the relevance assumed by the arts in this field. Basing their relationship on an ongoing mutual exchange, art and marketing gave birth to many successful combinations, some of which are meant to remain iconic over times. In the luxury sector, where the purchase impulse comes from hedonistic and emotive reasons, the communication strategy adopted by the companies must be always more appealing.

One of the first companies that invested a lot in the potential of this combined action was the Italian liquor company Campari, futuristic for bold but fully rewarded choices. The Futurists were among the first to understand how revolutionary and productive the partnership between art and industry could have been, and began to donate their creativity to companies that welcomed their innovative ideas. Fortunato Depero began to collaborate constantly with Davide Campari in the '20s and '30s, creating the famous sketches for the advertising of his products. In 1932 the artist was asked to design the bottle for the first single-dose aperitif, which later took the name *Campari Soda*. The unmistakable conical bottle in the shape of an inverted goblet, which had already appeared in some of his posters, was immediately successful, becoming over time a true icon of Italian design and aperitif. The bottle represents a breaking point in the Italian industry and advertising conventions of the time, deprived of the label to highlight the intense red of the drink and the texture of the glass reminiscent of orange peel. Depero successfully managed the corporative communication, making it distinctive with its very own style. In 1931 the same artist launched the remarkable "*Futuristic Art and Advertising Manifesto*", published thanks to the partnership with Campari, where Depero stated that through the exaltation of their products, of their companies and everything that life is made of, the purest and truest art is done. Over the years, many creative personalities stood out in the business world for their innovative and iconic works. Another great example is provided by Bob Noorda, designer born in Amsterdam and located in Milan around the '50s whose name can be unknown to the majority of people but whose works are present in everybody's everyday life. Noorda created logos which are strongly imprinted in our mind and in our imagination, finding formal solutions with a strong personality and aesthetics: he's the creator of the *Feltrinelli* logo, the *Mondadori* one, the one of the

*Coop* and many others among which maybe the most iconic is represented by the “*M*” of Milano’s underground. Going back in time, Gabriele D’Annunzio himself was an active advertising producer. During the years following World War One, the poet became the symbol of an elegant and luxurious lifestyle and was one of the firsts *testimonials* for several different companies, but his best marketing work was surely the one made on himself. D’annunzio can be defined as the author of many companies’ success, by creating slogan and promotional communication strategies: *Rinascence* and *Saiwa* are only two examples of his marketing and communication activity ([Oltremeta](#) , 2017).

It is true that the advertising industry owes a huge debt to the work of poet, painters, photographers and other artists, as the whole marketing industry does too: an emblematic business case, where the success was due to the interaction between market development and artistic production, is the *Chupa Chups* case. From the beginning, this new product gained a great success because of the revolutions that brought with it: it was the first candy on a stick, it had tiny dimensions in order to don’t make children get dirty, and was the first candy placed just near the check and so easily reachable by babies. A really innovative marketing strategy to which an intense study of packaging and logo followed, obtaining the first actual case of food design. The link with art comes together with the study of the brand: in 1969 it was the surrealist painter Salvador Dalì who conceived the distinctive trait - which still accompanies *Chupa Chups* today. From his genius was born the yellow daisy, a cheerful, happy and original symbol that makes it one of the most long-lived branding projects in the history of marketing. Just as Dalì put himself at the service of a brand, on the contrary, a brand, 40 years later, used surrealist art, and in particular his style for an advertising campaign. Volkswagen, to launch the *Polo Blue Motion* on the market, created a campaign that has many surrealist references and elements: we can recognize the non-forms typical of Dalì's *soft watches*, the ants always present in his paintings, the bright colors, the fantastic and disturbing atmosphere. This is just one example of quoting in advertising, a widespread marketing strategy that has many advantages: on one hand it manages to "elevate" the sponsored product, which is associated with respect for the work of art; on the other hand, using an artistic language allows, as a result, to immediately recognize the brand or product in question. In turn, advertising can have an "educating" function by making the public aware of aspects of art they would have ignored. Art and marketing compensate each other, they are two sides of the same coin that, when put in relation, lead to new creative forms of great success (Cabiria, *comunicazione e arte*).

People are attracted by the "imaginary", by iconography, by everything they can identify with and this is why art combined with branding, understood as the strategic use of marketing techniques to create an identity and to increase the perceived value of a good or service or a brand, is increasingly becoming the key to innovative strategies. "Art encourages advertising not only to sell a product and

to pursue a certain quality; advertising does not allow art to delude itself into being pure, unique and without interests" (*Elio Grazioli*). This vision goes beyond advertising and extends to the most complex marketing strategies. Art is the combination of knowledge, technical skills and aesthetics able to tell a lot about the human nature.

Over time, the marketing industry and all the marketers have been facing a radical transformation for what concerns creating and defining operational strategies. Because of the evolution of tools and platforms, the textual content -which was the basis of every marketing plan- is giving way to the visual dimension. Consequently, the main objective of the marketers is to create a marketing strategies full of original contents able to catch the entire customer's attention, pointing at his creative sphere. One of the main tasks of the companies' marketing department is to design impactful visual communication plans, able to attract immediately consumers 'interest and make them start their journey with the brand. Through the activity of visual marketing companies are able to capture the attention of people who are always in hurry, increasingly distracted by the avalanche of commitments they have in their everyday life. The image is the element able to catalyse the user's gaze and to push him to perform an action. Having in the marketing's team a web designer able to make a difference is becoming more and more necessary, but to be successful he should not only be a technician but to have a style borrowed from a great artistic passion. Visual arts like painting or photography, teach a lot: the taste for beauty, proportions, suggesting a style, give marketers that extra *quid* able to enrich communication. It is therefore no coincidence that in recent years the tendency of some brands to base their marketing strategy on the appeal of art, understood as graphic art, figurative art, conceptual art, is increasingly gaining ground. What is very pleasant to see, is how these techniques are embraced both by big international brands and by national realities that remain niche. In the first case, the most recent example is provided by the Louis Vuitton women's fashion show promotional video where the artistic director Nicolas Ghesquière turns to painted portraits of the past as inspiration for his women's show which, also, takes place at the Louvre museum in Paris.

For the digital and social media campaign, the artistic director, juxtaposes some of Louis Vuitton's most iconic *monogram bags* such as the *Keepall*, the *Petite Malle*, or the *Dauphine*, against painted portraits from the past. The reference to the figurative arts is prominent here, from the use of paintings as a setting for the presentation of the new collection, to the choice of the frame where to display it, represented by the Louvre, one of the most famous museums in the world and an emblem of the valorisation and adoration of art.

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<sup>6</sup> Italian writer, art critic and curator

It is therefore clear that multiple references and artistic elements have been the core of the marketing strategy adopted by the company, not intended as exploitation of the latter, but as an element that blends well with the company mission and its philosophy.

Art is also a powerful tool to communicate, innovate and link the brand to a specific place. Developing a brand through the investment in artistic initiative is becoming a very common trend: because of the combination between the artistic activity and the brand, companies manage to increase their brand awareness and positioning, distinguishing themselves in the wide marketplace.

Every marketing activity aims to create or to satisfy consumers 'demand and in order to do this is fundamental to know their preferences, their habits and lifestyles. The new marketing trends as the experiential, multisensory or relational ones, create real cultural products able to meet people's desires. The main objective of emotional marketing applied to the concept of art and business, is to educate the public's taste, providing more knowledge and awareness in order to make people more able to choose and solicit behavioural and sensory responses to the many proposals and companies. In the emotional marketing field is fundamental, by the way, to create special atmospheres, a targeted welcome and engaging projects able to involve multisensory. With the relationship between art and business, a company increases its national and international reputation, disseminates its values going beyond the product, obtains attention and acclaim not only from loyal customers but also from new segments of the public and can take advantage of a considerable media return that goes beyond any form of tabular advertising. Today, making communication and marketing through a cultural and artistic project is no longer an opportunity, but the answer.

To join artistic initiatives became fundamental for those activities based on the interaction between brand and territory, in terms of enhancement of local assets and their use. Is this the case of the Italian *Amastuola* winery, one of the best examples where, in the first place, an optimal marketing strategy has been the primary factor of success and where art, territory and marketing are indissolubly linked. When the winery opened, in Apulia in the 10th century, the entire Italian territory and in that specific area, the competition was very high and there were still no product-based differentiation strategies which only aimed at the excellence of the product. However, the owners wanted their winery to be famous well before tasting the products and so they began to design a marketing strategy that is unique today. they found their strength in the territory surrounding the winery, that is the vineyard, and to make it unique they called the Spanish architect, designer and landscape architect Fernando Caruncho who designed the winery as a group of waves. The espaliers of the grapes draw harmonic and parallel waves that follow each other for about 3 km. By the same author they have been defined "waves of time that have been crossing this place since ancient times". If intelligently cultivated, the mention to the arts becomes a fundamental factor for the marketing of the company, as well as a valid

public relations tool. By associating the corporate image with art, companies improve their positioning in the social and economic context in which they operate.

Furthermore, illustration in the field of fashion has common roots in visual art. For a long time, he anticipated photography as a form of narration of the dress implying, like any form of creative translation of another's work, great trust and esteem between the parties.

The history of fashion is full of superlative translators capable of exalting the style of the brand they illustrate. It all begins with Paul Poiret, the first communicator in the modern sense of the term who after some time appears very close to the spirit of Alessandro Michele of Gucci, a brand phenomenon of the present. was the first to call an artist, Paul Iribe, to represent his products in 1908: the first publication/campaign was born: *Les Robes de Paul Poiret*. Since then the strategies have not changed much, it is always necessary to maximize the potential of a product, but the media have changed, favouring those who know how to use all the tools with their own style and with the intelligence to collaborate with the most contemporary and transversal artistic forms. After some time, the spirit of Poiret appears very close to the one of Alessandro Michele of Gucci, the brand phenomenon of the present. Gucci, guided by the unlimited creative curiosity of the Italian designer, announced the Spring/Summer 2018 campaign in collaboration with Spanish artist Ignasi Monreal, "*Utopian Fantasy*". The images of the campaign that involves the artist Ignasi Monreal and resumes the practice of the advertising fresco. Entrusting a campaign to the images of an artist, however hyper realistic they may be, is another act of courageous superiority over standard marketing dynamics. Monreal has already created the Gucci Gift Catalogue with his illustrations, literally a catalogue of gifts, transforming it into a game, a work of video art, an animation that elevates the concept of application. The images of the campaign perfectly express that alchemical philosophy that combines a thousand references to represent a world inhabited by dreamlike figures, by memories that converge irrationally, altering the physiognomy of things to the anti-harmonic. Memories emerge of the works preserved at the Uffizi Gallery. Among these, in particular, an Adoration of Hugo van der Goes. But there is also a lot of contemporary mythology, such as Ophelia and the Little Mermaid, which opens other doors: those of cinema, photography à la Gregory Crewdson, in a large advertising fresco (Tosi Pamphili, 2017).

Lately, the *artification* of luxury products or the use of marketing strategies which refer to artistic disciplines, has been a tool commonly adopted in order to characterize limited or special edition, to emphasize their uniqueness and their iconic character. The reference to art as a business strategy, especially in the luxury sector, helps to create or amplify that dimension of prestige and exclusivity that would tempt to purchase. One of the last on the market, is the case of *Diptyque*, a Paris-based luxury goods company that produces a high-end line of scented perfumes and cosmetics, which who



decided to base his latest marketing campaign “*Impossible Bouquets*” on an artistic collaboration. Working with digital artist Bas Meeuws, who specializes in floral works, the brand reinterprets six of the maison's iconic floral fragrances in limited editions through the creation of modern “*nature morte*”. These are real small paintings that accompany the perfumes in the packaging: the digitally created flowers are the heart of the composition and through their bouquets aim to describe the narrative behind each different fragrance, to tell their story and to take the viewer into a dimension that is no longer linked to consumption, but that transcends it to become something higher and more meaningful than a purchase.

### 1.3 Between art and business

The relationship between art and money has always been a controversial subject, which divides the public between those who consider the artistic experience as something completely unrelated to economic value and those who think that art, money and the market are in constant communication with each other. During a promotional interview about the advanced training course called “*The Art of Luxury*” organized by the Sotheby’s institute of Art in London, Federica Carlotto, the project director, said that artistic gratuitousness and economic value are two sides of the same coin: if artistic gratuitousness is lacking, the commercial side becomes speculation, if commercial acumen is lacking, art and luxury become self-referential experiences (Carlotto, 2018). Art and luxury are so attractive and so connected to our eyes as human beings because they open a window of reflection on beauty, on our abilities, our limits, our condition, beyond any economic calculation. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that precisely because of the uniqueness and value of what they propose, art and luxury tend to generate a desire for exclusive enjoyment and possession. Hence the development of a market and a corollary of support activities such as logistics, communication, marketing, which end up assigning an economic value to the final product. Artistic gratuitousness and economic value are therefore two sides - although sometimes contradictory - of the same coin. If artistic gratuitousness is lacking, the commercial side becomes speculation, if commercial acumen is lacking, art and luxury become self-referential experiences. A good way of thinking about the question, from an intellectual and commercial point of view, is to understand how to accept and manage this contradiction, instead of resolving it.

Regarding this, Professor Carlotto added that it is important to explore all the possible synergies existing between art and luxury to turn them into strategic partnerships providing both cultural and economic growth. The course, in fact, wants to identify the common elements between these fields

such as excellence, originality and unicity, and encourages an analysis on how to generate additional value from the above mentioned interaction (Carlotto, 2018).

Using these promises, my research objective is to see if, and possibly how, an art-related element put into play by a brand influences consumer behaviours. My research question is therefore: Can an art-related element have an impact on indulgent consumption in luxury?

It is in my interest to analyse this phenomenon as a marketing tool "of the moment" and to see how effective it is in commercial terms and in terms of its impact on consumer behaviour.

## Chapter 2

### 2. About Indulgent Consumption

Consumers often have to make a series of shopping decisions in the face of temptations. In fact, if many products and services are necessary to meet basic needs, life is also made up of occasions where people are faced with purchases and consumption occasions that have a strong hedonic component and, therefore, mainly aim to trigger positive emotions. Temptations have been formally defined as “momentary allurements” that threaten a currently active goal (Fishbach, Friedman and Kruglanski, 2003). In a spending context, this implicates situations of impulse buying (Stern, 1962) where costumers do not have the goal of purchasing a specific product, but may well have an overarching goal of wealth maintenance (Hirschman, 1990; Wärneryd, 1999) and emotive wellbeing. In the area of consumption, previous literature has shown that the human mind tends to affix justifications when called upon to take a decision and has validated the importance of justification on people’s choice, proving that people are more likely to make a choice or draw a conclusion that can be easily justified. In the study developed by Shafir (1993) it has been demonstrated that the violations in rational choices cannot be dismissed as either random or trivial, nor can be attributed to experimenters’ misinterpretation of answers that are actually appropriate to alternative. In addition, he proposed that when faced with the need to choose, decision makers often seek and construct reasons in order to resolve internal conflicts and justify their choice to themselves and to the others (Shafir, 1993). The role of reasons in decision making is considered as it relates to uncertainty, conflict, context effects, and normative decision rules (Shafir et al., 1993). Indeed, discussing about indulgence, many observation and research on the ways in which people indulge and on the possible mental mechanisms that activate this process have been developed by academic research and practitioners, who have put forward several reasons that can explain, in a more comprehensive way, the tendencies to indulge by people. In this regard, a massive *corpus* of research has implicated a justification mechanism underlying consumers’ behaviours since when, in between with self-control (or self-regulation) and purchase’s temptation, people has been always struggling. Self-control, in fact, can be defined as the “overriding of a predominant response tendency in favour of a more controlled behavioral response” (Metcalf and Mischel, 1999, 106 (1), 3-19.) and is generally associated with a long list of positive life outcomes (Lowe and Haws, 2014). The above cited struggle is usually boosted when people are in the condition of choosing items that are perceived as hedonic, indulgences or luxuries, and that for this reason may use precommitments to indulgence, especially when the psychological cost of such

commitments is less concrete (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002). When comes to indulgence, self-regulation plays a significant role, acting as the opposite force against people's will, often fickle and attracted to temptations. Kivetz and Zheng's studies discussed about the habit of humans to find justifications to their consume-related actions when the latters are in contrast with self-control, even if the nature of these habits differs from individual to individual generating many different approaches to indulgent consumption. These spending habits are the result of the individual's own characteristics and if they are partly dictated by contingencies, they are also rooted in their essence: to illustrate, while high self-control consumers are happier when they have a reason to buy indulgent products - when they can justify the indulgence-, low self-control consumers are happier when they do not have a reason to indulge (Kivetz and Zheng 2006). Also later literature investigated more in detail these theories, focusing on better understanding this underlying mechanism of justification, identifying that the effect that indulging with a reason has on consumption happiness is also explained by the congruency between individuals' personality, high or low self-control, and the purchase context, indulging with or without a reason (Petersen, Dretsch and Loureiro, 2017). Self-regulation research, indeed, suggests that consumers experience such fit as a "feels right" intuition when indulging, deducing that this sense of feeling right mediates the post consumption status (Aaker and Lee, 2006). The main stream of literature considers that to make indulgent consumption it is necessary to find justifications that activate licensing mechanisms, thus avoiding contrasts with self-control. Previous literature used to propose a similar justification-based account for explaining and describing self-gifting actions, a typical kind of indulgence, consisting in the discovery that participants are more willing to self-gift when they have recently experienced success and attribute this success to themselves (Mick and Faure, 1998). In the light of the above statements, it can be assested that one of the predominant reasons, or justification, for indulgence is the idea of merit: people don't feel guilty about a lenient consuming behaviour if they feel having deserved it. In their studies Mick and DeMoss (1990) found out that people who rewarded themselves with an indulgence purchase did so because they really thought they deserved it as a reward. As it is possibile to see in their researches, consumers reported feeling "proud" and "satisfied" before the acquisition of the self-gift and reported feeling "*in contro*" with that. This suggests that the act of subsequently rewarding themselves with a gift, that was usually hedonic in nature, was a conscious process propelled by the ability to justify the indulgence (Mick and DeMoss 1990).

Furthermore, lay theories suggest that having a reason –or justification- to indulge may improve consumers' emotional experience of indulgences and mitigate the tension between pleasure and costs that is usually associated with indulging: people want to have fun, and they are more likely to do this if the situation allows them to justify it (Mukhopadhyay and Venkataramani Johar, 2008). Indulging

with a reason refers to a rational or justified indulgence that feels like it was earned or deserved. Consistently with this observation, previous researches' findings show that consumers expect to experience more negative effect when they indulge without a reason rather than when they do the same action with a reason and that they feel more negative emotions when they act to console themselves than when they indulge to reward themselves (Xu and Schwarz, 2009). For example, consumers may self-reward after having exerted effort (saving money), for having excelled in a performance, or for having received a windfall gain (Kivetz and Zheng, 2006). The notion that indulging with a reason is better than indulging without one is so pervasive that marketers often provide or remind consumers several reasons to indulge. The significance of the above statements is stressed in the context of non-utilitarian spending and offers an ample research space since it is more difficult to justify spending on hedonic goods while it is easier to justify the consume on utilitarian goods (Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998; Thaler, 1980). The reasons why this relative difficulty in justifying hedonic consumption shows up are that a sense of guilt is usually associated with this kind of purchase and its benefits are more difficult to quantify (Okada, 2005). As has emerged from numerous studies, hedonic consumption evokes a sense of guilt (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998) and it is often construed as wasteful (Lascu, 1991), which consideration may be due to the reflection of a culture that used to value hard work and parsimony and which heritage is still strong in our days, especially considering the fragility and precariousness of the balance between life and economy. So that, when the sense of guilt is mitigated, hedonic consumption increases (Okada, 2005).

## 2.1 Types of regret

Speaking of regret in general, there is a vast amount of previous literature that has dealt with this issue, being such a complex and interesting one. Among the most relevant discoveries, there is the conceptualization of two types of regret: regret of action vs. inaction. As can be easily guessed and as reported by the studies of Gilovich and Medvec (1995), the first type (second), manifests itself as a result of the completion (non-completion) of an action that was at odds with one's own self-control and generally makes its effect more felt in the short-run (long-run). Prior research has demonstrated that consumer choice can be systematically influenced by anticipatory regret: in the content of self-control, several studies have shown that the action of anticipating regret may reduce the tendency to engage in risky behaviors and a basic assumption underlying extant theories of self-control is that the anticipated regret of future lapses of control motivates the use of various precommitment devices. At

the same time, similar to the manner in which anticipating regrettable myopia leads to attempts to correct or prevent such behavior, it is proposed that regrets associated with overcontrol -or hyperopia- will relax self-control efforts. On these premises, it is proved that people are more inclined to choose indulgences or luxury when they consider in advance a possible long-term regret –hyperopia-, to which we also refer by using the name of *regret of righteousness*. The right of righteousness is clearly associable to the *inaction* regret, the one deriving from a too conscious behaviour that consequentially leads to inactivity. As a result, this implies that when people tend to adopt this attitude of hyperopia over a long period of time, the regret of not having acted prevails and for this consumers' tendency to indulge, purchase luxuries, and spend money is increased. (Keinan and Kivetz, 2008). At the same time, it is also true, as the studies of Rosenzweig and Gilovich have shown, that the type of remorse felt towards or following a purchase is closely related to the type of product in question and the benefits it brings. In their previous research, they investigated the possibility that material and experiential purchases differ not only in the satisfaction they provide but in the type of regrets they engender as well. More in detail, through their studies emerged that material goods are more likely to result in regrets of action coming from buyer's remorse, while experiential goods are more likely to result in regrets of inaction caused by the pain of a missed opportunity, since experiential purchases are perceived as more unique than material ones. This is the reason why has been tested several times, and successfully confirmed after, the hypothesis according to which material purchase decisions are more likely to lead to regrets of action and that regrets of inaction is more likely to occur for experiential purchases. The extent to which a purchase is seen as one of a broad set of substitutable items or as something more one of kind influences how easy it is to imagine a counterfactual world in which a different and perhaps better purchase was made and has been shown, this has implications for the types of regrets people tend to have over their purchase decisions (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2011).

## 2.2 Why do people indulge in luxury?

People often engage in indulgent consumption to increase their sense of pleasure and happiness (Okada, 2005), which can be defined as an immediate emotional reaction to a stimulus and, in particular, they conceive luxury branded products as the most emotionally significant stimuli (Espinoza Petersen and Heine, 2013). For instance, consumers may buy luxury products, pamper themselves at a spa, or try an expensive wine to increase their pleasure and create a positive emotional experience (Pozharliev, Verbeke, Van Strien, and Bagozzi, 2015). As Kumar and Garg argued, luxury

branded products induce positive emotions, such as enjoyment, because of their aesthetic qualities among which the brand logo or design stand out (Kumar and Garg, 2010). Moreover, the intangible perception of luxury is strongly correlated with pleasure, happiness, and inspiration (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). When discussing their own relationship with luxury products, many consumers indicate that this type of goods make them dream of a better life (Dubois and Laurent, 1994) so, while most previous research has focused on the effect that reasons or justifications have on consumers' minds by reducing negative feelings associated with indulgence, as guilt and regret (Keinan, Kivetz, and Netzer, 2016; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Kivetz and Zheng, 2006), the work made by Xu and Schwarz represents a notable exception by providing a new point of view. The authors proposed and showed that consumers enjoyed their indulgences just as much as when they had a reason for indulging as well as when they did not, putting a spotlight on the sense of pleasure and enjoyment deriving which works as a behavioural driver (Xu and Schwarz, 2009). The sense of enjoyment is one of the most relevant dimensions involved during the consumption process, being the source of other positive consequences that keep the business machine standing. Besides consumption happiness, indeed, it is possible to examine a few uncovered downstream consequences of this effect: satisfaction with the purchase, likelihood of returning the product, and word-of-mouth determining important implications for consumer welfare and for marketing managers (Espinoza Petersen and Heine, 2013). For example, consumers' experience of immediate happiness can increase their overall wellbeing (Kivetz and Keinan, 2006) but also happiness elevates consumers' thinking (high mental construal), helping them to see the bigger picture (Labroo and Patrick, 2009). Moreover, happiness is believed to be fleeting and helps consumers decide whether and what to consume to regulate their emotions (Labroo and Mukhopadhyay, 2009). The above mentioned findings about happiness and emotions overall and their impact on consumer behaviour, provided a broad space for research and experimentation in the field of communication and marketing: while communication targeting based on personality variables might have been more challenging for marketers in the past, technology and innovation have made it possible to highly customize products, services and marketing communication techniques, especially online, based on customer online behavior data (Chung, Wedel and Rust, 2016). Understanding the conditions that improve customers' emotional response to indulgent purchases seems particularly important for consumer researchers since one of their purposes is to document more carefully how consumption contexts affect not only people's behaviours but also consumers' emotions in order to design marketing strategies that are more respectful of happiness (Mogilner and Norton, 2015). In the light of what has been said before, luxury brand managers might consider when and how to promote their products in order to generate a positive emotional response in consumers' mind and eventually they should promote reasons – or

justifications- able of making people to “evade” all their forms of self-control. Recent researches have revealed that the effectiveness of persuasive messages (advertisements) specifically aligned with consumers' personality traits is added to a body of work showing the benefits of congruence effects between messages tailored to an individuals' motivational orientation (Espinoza Petersen and Heine, 2013) and have uncovered the potential offered by personalizing advertising messages based on personality traits to maximize their impact (Hirsh et al., 2012). Indeed, personality features linked with self-control, such as agreeableness and conscientiousness, have been a central focus in the development of personality trait-based identification and targeting efforts in recent years (Back et al., 2010; Jensen Campbell, Knack, Waldrup and Campbell, 2006). New ways of making messages more effective, such as targeting through personality profiles, offers a practical way for marketing managers to tailor appropriate messages based on either a single measurement instrument (a personality scale) or correlating traits (Espinoza Petersen and Heine, 2013).

### 2.2.1 Marketing in the Luxury Sector

In the marketing field, many studies examined the relationship between the marketing messages' traits and the impact on consumers about the experience they lived. Previous investigations have analysed the impact that an experience promoted through customized marketing messages had on consumption and, in order to do this, it has been distinguished the nature of the experience in two categories: extraordinary and ordinary ones. In detail, prior work investigated whether the nature of an experience within marketing messaging influences actual consumption, showing a positive correlation between the two variables. In particular, it has been found out that extraordinary occasions increase indulgence behaviours. The Acedemia defines extraordinary experiences as “uncommon, infrequent, and going beyond the domain of everyday life” and ordinary ones as “common, frequent, and within the realm of everyday life” (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014, 2). The same terminology, *extraordinary experiences*, is used such that referring to uncommon, infrequent, and often one-time occasions whereas *ordinary experiences* refer to common, frequent, and often recurring experiences: in particular, the firsts can bring about happiness, excitement, and anticipation but at the same time leaving consumers with feelings of regret regarding the amount of money spent or overindulgence in general (Minton and Liu, 2018). On these premises, it is possible to attribute the pertinence of the purchase of luxury goods to the first category and, thus, to extend the above expressed considerations to this kind of products. Extraordinary experiences are considered exceptions to the general rules associated with routine, reoccurring daily behaviors associated with ordinary experiences. The



exceptional also contribute to a consumer's self definition, wellbeing, and satisfaction in life, whereas the latter are used more in navigating daily life (Zauberman, Ratner and Kim 2009). As such, the nature of an experience has influences on consumer wellbeing and, when in presence of an extraordinary one, consumer splurging occurs, in part, as a way to generate and savor memories for years to come (Goode, Hart and Thomson, 2016) and also to produce more happiness (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014). In relation with the concept of self-control, it is expected that self-regulation would be more frequent in ordinary experiences where routine and daily checkins help to maintain regulated behavior, and self-regulation would be less exercised in extraordinary experiences where consumers regularly classify them as exceptions to normal behaviors, thereby indicating less of a need to selfregulate actions (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014). In general, extraordinary experiences promoted through marketing message should produce more indulgence and acceptance of excess, while ordinary experiences within a message should produce more self-regulated behavior. In a sense, the nature of an experience within marketing messaging reflects situational self-regulation, where is confirmed that self-regulation is greatest with ordinary experiences in comparison to extraordinary ones. On this regard, researches findings showed that the nature of an experience within marketing messaging can be successfully primed by consumer advocacy groups, policymakers, or marketers. As such, these groups have the potential to enhance consumer well-being through positive self-regulation behaviors, while also allowing for the enjoyment of the positive affective attributes of extraordinary experiences (Minton and Liu, 2018).

When consumers indulge in luxury, the investigation of the reasons for and the manner in which this action takes place, puts into account the emotional state dimension and in particular the valence of the affective state. While some people may engage in "retail therapy" when they feel bad, others embark on a shopping spree the minute they feel good (Espinoza Petersen, 2012). Given that retail environments often induce different emotions on consumers via factors such as store atmosphere (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Matilla and Wirtz, 2001), product appeals (Kim, Park, and Schwarz, 2010), mall variety and environment (Wakefield and Baker, 1998), and more specifically in luxury retailing via art and magic (Dion and Arnould, 2011), triggering some emerging feelings and measuring how they affect consumers' preferences. Starting from the universal truth that people want to be happy, here it is that affect regulation relies on a hedonic goal pursuit assumption whereby positive affect represents the final goal (Morris and Reilly, 1987). Previous studies focus on engaging in indulgent behavior as a way to regulate affect: indulgent consumption is critical to affect regulation because of its concurrent positive hedonic consequences as the pleasure associated with purchasing a luxury product, and negative hedonic consequences (the guilt associated with spending so much money), which potentially lead people to experience positive and negative feelings at the same time

(Ramanathan and Williams, 2007). Before engaging in indulgent behavior, individuals will examine the hedonic consequences that this action would produce, given their current affective state and associated motivations (Wegener and Petty, 1994). For example, people who anticipate the experience of negative emotions such as guilt, regret and sadness are less likely to indulge in luxury (Bagozzi, Baumgartner and Pieters, 1998): if something threatens the current positive mood, people refrained from indulging to preserve their good mood (Andrade, 2005). At the same time is showed that consumers in positive affective states may engage in hedonic consumption when they are motivated to maintain their favorable state (Kemp and Kopp, 2011). People in a negative affective state tend to ask themselves “is this action going to help me feel better?”, whereas those in a positive affective state are more likely to question “is this action going to hurt my positive feeling?”. Thus, before engaging in indulgent consumption, individuals intuitively forecast the affective consequences likely to emerge from the behavioral activity in which they are about to engage (Andrade, 2005). Thereby, valence alone cannot predict whether people will consume luxury goods to regulate their affective state but this behavior will also depend on how people perceive the indulgence to influence their future affective state (Espinoza Petersen, 2012).

Another stream of researchers investigated the relationships between emotional states and luxury consumption, to better understand how the indulgence mechanism act in the luxury consumption field. The findings showed that to fully explain the reasons why people indulge in luxury, is not enough to consider the valence of the affective state, but it is useful to extend the investigation to other mental construals, considering whether indulging can improve a negative state or will not hurt a positive state (Espinoza Petersen and Heine, 2013). The certainty appraisal associated with the emotion will signal consumers whether their emotions can change, influencing their willingness to indulge in luxury consumption. In particular, consumers in a negative emotional state are more willing to indulge in luxury consumption when the emotion is associated with uncertainty because indulging can help repair the negative state, but people in a positive affective state are more willing to indulge in luxury consumption when the emotion is associated with certainty because this behaviour will not hurt their positive state. Therefore, the valence of an emotional experience on such “emotion regulation luxury consumption” is contingent on the certainty appraisal associated with the emotion, which signals consumers whether their emotional state can change or not. By consequence, the certainty appraisal of specific emotions is important in predicting luxury consumption to regulate one’s emotions.

Due to their exceptional character, people consider luxuries as indulgences and may consume them to pursue their emotion management motives (Xu and Schwarz, 2009). Before engaging in luxury

indulgent behaviour, consumers intuitively forecast the emotional consequences that this behaviour will produce given their current emotional state and associated motivations (Andrade, 2005). A number of studies have found that people in negative states tend to indulge in hedonic consumption to repair their emotional *status*: for example, sad consumers may regulate their emotion by shopping to alleviate sadness (Atalay and Meloy, 2011) and are willing to pay more for an item (Cryder, Lerner, Gross and Dahl, 2008) since, in general, emotion regulation relies on a hedonic goal pursuit assumption whereby positive emotions represent the final goal (Morris and Reilly, 1987). Similarly, people in a positive emotional state are generally inclined to refrain from indulgence to keep their positive setting. Consumers avoid buying luxury products when they feel good to avoid hurting a positive emotional state (Luce, 1998; Luomala, 2002) so, if consumers anticipate negative emotions such as guilt, they may avoid to indulge (Ramanathan and Williams, 2007). Previous studies found that if something threatens peoples' positive emotional state, they refrain from indulging to preserve this positive experience, but if the current positive state is not threatened -is unchangeable-, people in a positive emotional state tend to indulge more (Andrade, 2005). However, the value of emotional status is not sufficient to have a more complete picture of how emotions affect the tendency to indulge, but it must be considered the probability that this status is modifiable. If an emotion is negative and uncertain, the immediate pleasure of indulging, even at long-term costs, can help consumers to repair their negative state, so they would be more willing to consume luxury products. Conversely, if an emotion is positive and associated with certainty, indulging would not hurt one's positive state, which would make people more likely to consume luxury products.

Above all, these statements help brand managers in understanding more about the phenomenon of emotion regulation by luxury consumption and, more specifically, in recognizing some situations in which consumers are more likely to buy luxury products. Given that, retail environments can induce specific emotional states on consumers via factors such as store atmosphere (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982), product appeals (Kim, Park and Schwarz, 2010), mall variety and environment (Wakefield and Baker, 1998) and, more specifically, in luxury retailing via art and "magic" (Dion and Arnould, 2011) where any marketing action means to marketers both a chance and an obstacle to sell consumers a luxury product, depending on the emotion triggered. At this regard, many neuromarketing and consumer behaviour studies investigated how marketers can influence people's emotional states through their strategies concluding that, first of all, the manipulation of store atmosphere has a significant impact on consumer's emotion (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982): the type and behaviour of salespeople, visual factors such as layout and colour, and ambient factors such as lighting, music, and smell can impact consumers' emotional states. This is significantly relevant for luxury brands, which tend to invest substantial resources in their flagship stores: luxury retail strategy, in fact, differs from

other retail strategies not merely in distinctive formulations of product, price, distribution, and appeals to customer distinction but, instead, it increasingly stands or falls on the legitimacy of a charismatic creative director. The director offers an aesthetic brand ideology. Luxury retail draws on the principles of art and magic to assemble the charismatic persona of the creative director and to diffuse his aesthetic ideology to the brand. Moreover, luxury retail strategy enlists magical and aesthetic principles within and without the store to achieve these ends. Finally, retail luxury is producer rather than consumer oriented and seeks to generate awe rather than community. This strategy appears to be to some extent a response to legitimacy crises provoked by recent strategic extensions of luxury brands into mass marketing (Dion and Arnould, 2011). These findings can assist luxury brand managers in designing their brand communication and especially advertising campaigns with regards to emotion regulation luxury consumption. For example, as the results suggest that consumers in a positive emotional state associated with certainty (happiness) are more willing to indulge in luxury consumption than people in an emotional state associated with uncertainty (hope), a luxury brand may prefer an advertisement inducing happiness to one inducing hope. Luxury brands may develop competitive advantages by fine-tuning their emotional marketing techniques according to these results, which can increase consumer benefits, sales, and the return of investments in emotional advertising, product, and store design (Espinoza Petersen and Heine, 2013)

## 2.3 The Licensing Effect

Taking up what discussed above, it is possible to associate the various "justifications" that a consumer uses when in front of the possibility of indulging in a purchase opportunity to specific mental mechanisms that, for their role as a "pass" to the supremacy of temptation over control, are called "licensing effects". It's shown that when people are exposed to the opportunity to indulge, they often find reasons –different from the mere will to buy that specific item- able to give them the “green light” toward the expense. Usually, the more control a person believes that he, or she, has over behavior, the more conflicted the person feels if that behavior is problematic. Therefore, when consumers feel less responsible for their behavior, they are less likely to feel conflicted when deciding whether to indulge in the temptation (Hur, Koo and Hofmann, 2015). Consequently, we can deduce that people who make the most use of justification or licensing mechanisms when facing a purchase occasion are those who have the most self-control and that, because of this, feel more in conflict. Nevertheless what turned out was that the dilemma between maintaining self-control and giving up to temptations can be mitigate by some mental gimmicks and factors such as the anthropomorphization of the temptation which undermines self-control (Hur, Koo and Hofmann, 2015). When a tempting

product is imbued with humanlike qualities, the perception of another agent makes people less likely to attribute the cause of and the responsibility for their consumption purely to themselves, leading them to feel less conflicted because temptation indulgence is not perceived as solely their fault (Hur, Koo and Hofmann, 2015). Furthermore, has been found evidence of a general tendency for peers to ultimately match behaviors when facing a mutual temptation: people are more willing to indulge when together with peers or “partners in crime” according to a phenomenon that has been defined as *coindulgence* (Lowe and Haws, 2014). These gimmicks are put in place to inhibit conflict with self-control by trying to provide some sort of justification for indulgent consumer behaviors.

Previous studies on consumption investigated whether self-licensing, relying on reasons to justify subsequent gratification, can also be included as a significant contributor to hedonic purchase, deducing a positive correlation between the two factors (de Witt Hubers, Evers and De Ridder, 2011). Usually the most frequent licensing effect, used to justify not-strictly necessary purchases, is hard work which can license consumers to indulge, increasing their likelihood to buy especially hedonic products. Consumers who perceive they experienced hard work have a higher likelihood to purchase hedonic products even when they experience less desirable outcomes. These findings can be beneficial for firms and marketers to successfully develop marketing strategies especially in promoting hedonic products and services (Septianto, 2017). When dealing with luxury goods, another effective licensing effect occurring when a purchase decision comes out, is represented by altruism and self-concept. Specifically, people’s relative preference for a luxury option while indulging will be higher if people’s prior decisions helped boost their relevant self-concepts. It is useful to understand this phenomenon as a “licensing effect,” in which a prior intent to be virtuous boosts people’s self-concepts, thus reducing negative self-attributions associated with the purchase of relative luxuries (Khan and Dhar, 2006). The findings revealed that the preference for a relative luxury after expressions of an initial virtuous intent is attenuated if there is an external attribution for the virtuous behaviour: a prior virtuous decision boosts the relevant self-concept, which mediates the preference for a luxury option. It has been demonstrated that the licensing effect operates by providing a lever in the relevant self-concept, which increased the preferences for a luxury item by dampening the negative self-attributions associated with the consume of this kind of good. Since the choice of a more hedonic option increases after a prior virtuous act, the marketers of luxury products can increase consumption by emphasizing other consumer decisions able to boost their self-concept. Such a mechanism to increase preference for hedonic items does not require people to consciously link the source of enhanced self-concept with the choice of the luxury product being marketed, but a direct link might even prove counterproductive by making the motives of both the marketer and the consumer transparent.

On these premises, my research aims at investigating if and how the "art" dimension, intended as a clear reference or use of a figurative art used in the marketing strategies of companies operating in the luxury sector, can activate a certain licensing effect. In other words, can the element of art influence consumers' attitude toward indulgent consumption and how does it happens?

## 2.4 Art and Marketing

The interaction between art and marketing has always been spontaneous and dynamic but in the last decades –from the 50s’- it become so intense that the border between the two fields sometimes seemed to vanish. As Brown and Patterson (2000) declared, the two disciplines take benefits from each others since while art can provide significant insights to marketing matters and marketing has much to learn from the arts, broadly defined (Brown and Patterson, 2000). In 1999, in fact, Whitford defined “*art as a branch of marketing*” and this statement finds confirmation also in today's art scene, pervaded by the advent of market mindedness that has made the work of artists so well adapted to the increasingly innovative and original needs of the marketing industry and, similarly, the work of marketers increasingly indispensable to the commercialization of art, that a continuous flow of exchanges is created. In a certain way, art and marketing have always been paired each other or, better, both of them have been commonly thought as disciplines having in common creativity and imagination at the point that have been defined both as complementary elements to be matched and as similar disciplines seeing creativity, communication and exaltation as their mutual distinguishing features. Due to these reasons, the analysis of the relationship between art and marketing has represented the object of investigation of a huge section of the Academia, pushing the research to new and unexplored visions: “*Art is adventurous, marketing safe; art seeks the unexpected, marketing yearns for the predictable; art wants the amazing, marketing the comfortable [...]. Yet we need both, and we both want to make money; we both want the biggest audiences. We have no alternative but to live together in a constructive way, learning from and understanding one another*” (Tusa, 1999, 120.). Despite the current stream of thought which notices in the combination between the two areas a profitable and natural potential, traditionally, art, the quintessentially imaginative activity, has been positioned in opposition to the degraded and degrading values of the marketplace. This opinion started to crumbling down when recently, as said before, the market has been subject to periodic outpourings of artistic invective (Conrad, 1998; Edwards, 1999; Fineberg, 2000; Tusa, 1999), which main example can be seen in the work of Andy Warhol in the advertising industry through his Pop Art production. At the same time one of the most striking things about the contemporary artistic scene

is the advent of market mindedness having as proves the marketing background of many leading artists and critics such as Barbara Kruger Jeff Koons and many others (Haden-Guest, 1996; Hughes, 1997; Stallabrass, 1996), where artists increasingly employ the apparatus of marketing in their attempts to move the merchandise. As consequences, as mentioned above, today the distinction between art and marketing has all but dissolved so that words like marketing, advertising, commodification and capitalism are now epithets of approval in the artistic scenario (Brown and Patterson, 2000). The consequences are that, for example, artists like Komar & Melamid conduct detailed cross-cultural marketing research before painting their parodic ‘most wanted’ and ‘least wanted’ canvasses (Wypijewski, 1999), Jenny Holzer uses billboards, LED displays, till receipts and commercial breaks to broadcast her award-winning artistic aphorisms (Waldman, 1997; Joselit et al., 1998) and, vice versa, marketing artefacts frequently turn up in, or form the focus of, cutting edge artworks. Despite what is going on, it is important to consider that the word *marketing* means different things in the artistic and corporate spheres: for marketers it means careful consumer research, segmentation, targeting, positioning, marketing plans, product portfolios and life cycles; the word also implies concepts as break-even point, brand management and meaningful relationships. In the artistic sphere, by contrast, marketing means promotional gimmicks, stunts, affronts and stand-out-from-the-crowd hyperbole. It means excessive, exaggerated, eye-catching activities, the more outrageous the better and, above all, it means to live forever and many different lives, a vision followed and embodied by Jeff Koons’ works, Damien Hirst and Andy Warhol ones (Brown and Patterson, 2000). The works of these artists, in fact, represented the first significant examples of art-based marketing tools since their production is positioned in the exact middle of the two fields: art became a way of communication, a proper marketing tool. Warhol, in particular, working as an illustrator perfectly understood the strategies of consumerism and the fundamental role of the media in the collective imagination. He transformed that awareness into an art form, into a Pop work, as consumable as any other commercial product, transposed from supermarket shelves into museums and galleries. He disseminated aesthetic inputs of strong impact from the often desecrating nature. A striking example in this sense is provided by “*The Souper Dress*” (1967), a concentrate of fashion, art and industrial logic consisting in a paper, cellulose and cotton dress produced in the 1960s with the motif of the famous Campbell’s Soup, an image repeated in sequence, silkscreen printed from the soup can. An approach to the editorial and advertising image that transcends mere utility, highlighting how and how much an artistic interpretation, more than an objective representation, can synthesize and spread a fashion trend, a sophisticated concept of glamour and elegance turning into what we can absolutely define luxury. Starting from these successful cases, marketers started to be more and more aware about the enormous potential represented by the use of artistic productions for creating

their marketing strategies. Others opinion, indeed, stated that a whole new cultural dispensation has started to spread where marketing has subsumed art (Seabrook, 2000): marketing, in other words, hasn't so much merged with art but actually it acquired it as an ongoing concern. One of the motivations that can explain this circumstance is also to be found in the management and investments that the states have made in the art sector where reduced government subsidies, rather, increased the artistic sector reliance on corporate sponsorship and fundings, as if to say "justifying" the use of art related initiatives by companies' managements. Whereas fifty years ago marketing research was based on scientific principles, as the twenty-first century, however, the artworld has clutched marketing to its bosom. This return of the marketing repressed may be embarrassing for those who hardly sustained 'the scientific method', but one suspects that the majority of marketers will consider sees this interaction more as an opportunity than a threat. After all, it endless opportunities to explain how to do it 'properly'; it gives us a chance to steer those irresponsible artistic types onto the marketing straight-and-narrow; and it allows marketers to challenge their sadly mistaken misconceptions, misrepresentations, miscalculations, misinterpretations (Brown and Patterson, 2000). According to this perspective, it might be useful to consider *the Arts for Marketing*, so basically working on the assumption that marketing has much to learn and take benefits from the arts, not the other way around. Indeed, it is recognized opinion that the arts, as the principal repository of humankind's imaginative prowess, can help us posit future possibilities, future prospects, future perfects, future pasts (Brown, 2000), asking not what marketing can do for art, but what art can do for marketing. The *Arts for Marketing* movement can be divided into three broad schools pertaining to *Art*, *Aesthetics* and *the Avant-Garde*. The *Art* school, in essence, engages with the marketing content of artistic artefacts; that is to say, it culls the canon for representations of marketing and consumption-related phenomena. To this end, studies of films, television programmes, novels, poems, songs, dance, drama, comic books, the fine arts—in short, the entire spectrum of artistic endeavour—have been undertaken by marketing academics, with varying degrees of success (Belk, 1986; Belk and Bryce, 1993; Brown, 1995c, 1997; Hirschman, 1998; Holbrook, 1995; Holbrook and Grayson, 1989; Stern and Schroeder, 1994; Thompson, 1998. Via Brown and Patterson, 2000). The *Aesthetics* school applies the tools and techniques of artistic appreciation to marketing institutions and ephemera—advertising campaigns, shopping centres, products and brands, service encounters and so forth. Barbara Stern, a consumer researcher trained in literary criticism, has been especially active in this area and where she has led several others have followed (Heilbrunn, 1996, 1998; Maclaran and Stevens, 1998; McQuarrie and Mick, 1996; Mick and Politi, 1989; Scott, 1990, 1994; Stern, 1989, 1995, 1996. Via Brown and Patterson, 2000). The *Avant-Garde* school, on the other hand, argues for radically different forms of marketing discourse and representation. The standardised



research report or formulaic academic paper—introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, conclusion—could and should make way for poetry, photography, painting, performance and all manner of ‘unconventional’ modes of marketing discourse (Belk, 1998; Brown, 1998b, 1999c; Holbrook, 1995, 1998; Mead, 1994; Sherry, 1991, 1998; Stern, 1998. Via Brown and Patterson, 2000). Shapiro has created a brand new phenomenon called «artification» to describe situations characterized by the fact that the creator takes places about the crafter to realize unique items without a pure utilitarian purpose (Shapiro, 2004).

### 2.4.1 Art Marketing and Luxury

It is evident, therefore, how today the art world increasingly interfaces with the corporate one and in particular in the luxury industry, both as an advertising tool and as a reference in the production itself, as well as a collateral but integrated initiative according to the company mission. With regard to this last point, in Italy is significant in this sense, the growth of foundations which, according to the latest census made by *Instat* in 2011, have increased by 102% in ten years where the relative 81.9% of is represented by private foundations. A moving sector, therefore, which marks the company's transition from a logic of intervention to a logic of presence, giving shape to an institution. In this regard, the most successful examples are provided by Fondazione Prada and Fondazione Trussardi, both properties of the homonymous luxury fashion brand, but also Hangar Bicocca of which the Pirelli Group is a founding member (Bertoletti, 2015). In all the three cases, we are in front of real marketing tools applied to strengthen brand reputation and brand awareness. This activity involves first of all all the exponents of the fashion, design and food industry, three pillars of the Italian luxury competitive advantage, and then extends to all the others. The world of culture has in fact an ontological contiguity with the industries operating in the creative sectors, precisely because the latter are based on our identity of excellence. The distinctive term in this case is *consistency*, in the sense of the link, with the industrial activity carried out, which becomes a source of affirmation of the brand. Many companies have realised this, showing themselves capable of crystallising the myth through art, interpreting beauty from a broader perspective and returning it to society (Miglietta and Quaglia, 2014). As Chiara Bertoletti in 2015 affirmed: “*it's not just about resonance at the level of media and image enhancement, which are often superior or equivalent to those of a traditional campaign, in the face of a lower outlay, but a new entrepreneurial vision beyond the traditional advertising aspect, integrated activities that can also lead to a new productive inspiration*”.

Based on this literature review, the aim of my research is to verify if and how the dimension of art when used in the marketing strategies of luxury brands such as in forms of partnership with artists, sponsorship of artistic related initiatives, artistic reminder in the product creation, is able to foster indulgent consumption, and specifically which mental mechanism is triggered by which this art variable can take on the function of licensing effect.

## Chapter 3

### 3. Abstract

In this study, my objective is to test my main hypothesis according to which an art-based marketing technique, more specifically a partnership between brand and artist, affects positively an indulgent consumption, making people more willingness to purchase, through the mediating effect played by the sense of regret. Consequentially:

H1: *“A product presented with an artistic partnership incentives indulgent consumption through an increase in the perceived regret of inaction (vs. action).”*

According to my prediction, in fact, an artistic dimension noticed in the way a luxury product is marketed is able to positively affect the likelihood that an indulgent consumption will occur thanks to the mediating action played by the sense of regret. The type of regret we are considering for this dissertation is associated to the regret of inaction (vs action) that is properly perceived in case of experiential purchases, referring to what expressed by Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2011). Through their works, the authors demonstrated that when an experiential (material) purchase is considered, the sense of regret felt for inaction (vs action) is higher. By associating this theoretical background to my study, action is represented by “buying the product” while inaction by “not-buying the product” and my idea is that because of the presence of the art dimension, goods are elevated to have more an experiential function than a material one.

### 3.1 Methodology

As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, my main research question wonders whether the artistic dimension noticed in a marketing activity plays a significant role in the boost of the indulgent consumption of luxury products. In particular, I decided to focus my investigation by considering only one specific type of art-based marketing strategy, which is the “partnership” generated between brands and artists, in order to analyse better and in a clearer way the above mentioned expected effect. To test my hypothesis, I started by the designing of what would have later become the final experiment, consisting in a survey and distributed on-line. The decision to collect the data through performing the experiment on-line finds its motivations first of all in the larger and more differentiated pool of sample able to be reached through the web: this way, the data gathered would have made me more comfortable in making inferences since they would have come from people of

different ages and so more representative of the population. In addition, the use of an on line questionnaire would have provided a greater quickness and easiness to the procedure performance. With regard to the language to be used, the choice fell on *Italian* both to ensure a better text comprehension and to avoid, as far as possible, any misunderstanding about the experiment itself, able to make the data collected more reliable. In order to create the questionnaire, I served myself of *Qualtrics*, an on-line survey maker program through which an anonymous link was generated and then distributed. The sampling technique I decided to use belongs to the non-probabilistic sampling technique category and, specifically, consists in a virtual snowball sampling method. The latter's mechanism relies on a chain manner involving all the people who successfully completed the questionnaire and recruits other respondents from their pool of influence (personal and non-personal contacts). This way, a significant pool of responding subjects is generated and all the potential biases are reduced to a minimum number, which for this kind of research represents a well appreciated advantage. Nevertheless, as a drawback, the use of a non-probabilistic sampling technique implies that the results obtained do not allow making inferences so the study's conclusions are valid only referring to the sample. In any case, these implications will be deeply discussed later in the section dedicated to the analysis of all limitations inherent to the study.

The first action made in order to realize the survey was to choose/ design the stimuli: what I needed was to show to the respondents an indulgent luxury product commercialized both through "normal" marketing activities and by a partnership with an artist. Thanks to the availability in the real world market of a situation like this, I decided to benefit from the case of the *Diptyque* perfumes, just by providing few adaptations, which will be explained later, in order to make it more suitable for the study. As previously mentioned in the first chapter, the French luxury brand launched his most recent marketing campaign called "*Impossible Bouquets*" on an artistic collaboration with the digital artist Bas Meeuws, who is specialized in floral works and who re-designed the packaging –the boxes- of some *maison's* iconic floral fragrances.

Later, I thought about the realization of the two different scenarios to present to the respondents, pairing each stimulus with a specific circumstance to image, trying to be the most clear, unbiased and specific possible in order to help the subject at answering but without affecting his answers at the same time.

The questions that make up the rest of the questionnaire are taken from the previous literature in order to gather validated scales of reference. All these steps will be deeper analysed in the following discussion.

### 3.1.1 The realization of the scenarios

As hinted before, for the realization of the two different scenarios I needed to show one single product, falling into the category of luxury, which was promoted both by a normal condition, meaning without any marketing strategy involving the partnership with an artist and through this kind of art-based marketing technique. Taking benefit from the huge number of real examples like this provided by the market, I decided to use one of them instead of creating a brand new one. The choice fell on the perfumes' brand *Diptyque* because of its match of the above mentioned criteria: the Paris-based company positions itself in the luxury segment of the whole category, scented perfumes and cosmetic, and recently has given birth to an artistic partnership. In particular, this collaboration, was signed with Bas Meeuws, a Dutch digital artist who reinterpreted in a special limited edition six of the most famous fragrances of the brand, works that created the digital campaign named "Impossible Bouquets". The selection of the perfume to be used, among the six of them, fell on "*L'ombre dans l'eau*" and it was made absolutely in a casual way, only trying to pick the one whose graphic representation reminded a little bit more to the Flemish's *nature morte*. The flowers represented are the ones of which the fragrance is made and are realized through a graphic drawing.



**Table 3.1:** Box used as packaging of "*L'ombre dans l'eau*" realized in partnership with Bas Meews.

The partnership, actually, involves only the outer packaging of the perfume while the label on the glass bottle in which it is contained is the same used in the "non-artistic" line of product. However, in order to enable the respondents to be better identified in a situation where the packaging could be enjoyed more and for a longer time, we thought it would be more effective to modify in the scenario also the label itself with the same graphics: if the packaging can be thrown away in a short time, the

bottle will remain indefinitely, eventually, even after the perfume is finished. In reality, instead, the glass bottle of the perfume of the special edition is only coloured using the theme colour of the graphic design, pink in this case.



**Table 3.2:** Bottle of glass of the special edition line realized in partnership with the artist, commercialized in the market

For generating the experiment, however, we decided to create the two scenarios with different packaging obviously, in partnership and without, but to use the same glass bottle, the black one of the original line, but modifying the label of the one in the "art" condition through the same graphics of the box. We thought that this way the two conditions would have been identical except for the manipulation, clearly, and so more appropriated to perform the study.



**Table 3.3:** Bottle of glass edited by me for generating the adapted stimulus.

After the stimuli have been realized, two different scenarios were designed. As previously mentioned, the scenarios 'messages were generated in Italian since it's the native language of the population I

wanted to be interviewed. In both scenarios the self-control goal was made salient by emphasizing the fact that the perfume was a product that attracts a lot and people like it strongly, but is very expensive. The text of the initial message follows:

*"Imagine trying a perfume that you like very much, but that is very expensive. Read the information below carefully"*

Right below the randomized perfume packaging and label are showed, in addition to the –always randomized- information about the product: in the artistic condition the message has been formed by one bullet point with general information about the fragrance characteristics, describing briefly its ingredients and scent, while the other reporting and highlighting the artistic collaboration with Bas Meews. In the “non-artistic” condition, instead the informative sentence about the scent remains but about the packaging and the label wasn’t said anything. The purpose was to introduce the same situation and to generate the same emotions inside the respondents’ minds and to show them, randomly, the same product but or in its the art-based marketed version, enhancing the partnership with the artist, or in its primal version, commercialized with no evident artistic influence. The bold and underlined words have been selected considering the only purpose to catch better people’s attention and focus more on this relevant information for the study’s scope.

The message created for the artistic scenario is the following:

*“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. **Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito***

- ***Il packaging e l’etichetta sono stati realizzati in collaborazione con l’artista digitale Bas Meeuws specializzato in opere floreali***
- *L’essenza, a base di rose e bacche di ribes nero, è fortemente intrigante”*

The message created for the non-artistic scenario is the following:

*“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. **Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito***

- *Come puoi vedere **il packaging e l’etichetta sono quelle rappresentate***
- *L’essenza, a base di rose e bacche di ribes nero, è fortemente intrigante”*

By combining the two different stimuli with two messages, two scenarios were born and therefore two versions of the same display, one "with art" and one "without art". The two scenarios have been showed to the subjects through the randomization option applied with Qualtrics. The questions are taken from validated scales, taken from academic papers, which have the task of measuring the variables of the study and the mediator. The final results generated are the following, respectively for the non-artistic condition and for the artistic one.

**Scenario 1:** Non-artistic scenario

“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. **Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito:**”



**Table 3.4:** Scenario 1 as presented to the respondents.

**Scenario 2:** With art-based marketing technique

“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. **Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito:**”



**Table 3.5:** Scenario 2 as presented to the respondents.



### 3.1.2 The survey

Once the scenarios have been generated, the following step was to define well the variables of the study and, later on, to find in the literature the appropriate scales in order to measure them. The conceptual model of the study is a model of mediation, which, basically, tries to identify and explain the mechanism underlying an indirect effect of an independent variable (i.v.) and a dependent variable (d.v.) through the consideration of another variable, defined as a mediating variable. For the realization of the study, the d.v.<sup>7</sup> selected is represented by “*willingness to purchase*”, the i.v. is the dichotomous condition of “*partnership*” which can be present or not, and the mediating variable is “*type of regret*”, defined as the regret of action (*buying the product*) vs inaction (*not buying the product*). To sum up, the relation between the d.v. and the i.v. should be explained by the influence, whatever it is, of *regret*. In order to investigate on the dependent variable, “*willingness to purchase*”, a three items 7 point Likert scale has been employed from Hsu et al. (2016), developed properly for measuring propensity to purchase:

- I intend to purchase
- I would purchase
- I’m inclined to purchase

To measure the mediator, a single item 7 point Likert scale was used, adapted from Rosenweig & Gilovich (2011) going from 1 (I would regret more to buy) to 7 (I would regret more not to buy)

At last, a control variable named “*art interest*” was added into the questionnaire and to measure it a two items 7 point Likert scale was used adapted from Specker et al. (2018):

- I’m interested in art
- I’m always looking for new artistic impressions and experiences.

Also some other variables such as manipulation check of the stimuli and control variables were included in the questionnaire to verify that the setting of the stimulus was correct and, fortunately, they confirmed this. The questions were conceived always according to a 7 point Likert scale.

- Manipulation question: “evaluate how much you think this perfume has an artistic collaboration” (*valuta quanto pensi che questo profumo abbia una collaborazione artistica*)
- Control question: “how creative do you perceive this product?” (*quanto percepisci questo prodotto come creativo?*)

---

<sup>7</sup> Dependend variable

### 3.2 Data extraction and dataset cleaning

The first step in order to run properly the analysis of the answers gathered was the cleansing of the data collected from the online survey. The questionnaire was made up by the scales mentioned above in the previous paragraphs' and sent via anonymous link among my personal contacts who were then asked to send it to other people of their acquaintance, generating what I referred earlier as the snowball effect. I kept the survey active for one week aiming to achieve consistent total number of respondents and, at the end of the week, the number of subjects was equal to 186, both female and male. Before performing the analysis, a dataset screening and cleaning has been done to delate the not reliable observations which implied a slightly reduction of this number. First of all, all the surveys left uncompleted have been removed by checking the column V10 on SPSS and by consequence 5 data were delated for this reason. Later on, I checked that no questionnaire was filled out with the same value for each question, which is a sign of carelessness, but, luckily, no one case presented this evidence. At last, I screened the dataset according to the time criteria, checking for the minutes taken to complete the questionnaire by each respondent and, since Qualtrics indicated 4 minutes as average time needed to finalize it, I removed all the cases recording more than 20 minutes: 6 observations have been delated due to this reason. In conclusion, a total amount of 12 answers were removed bringing down the total number of responses that would have been possible to use for analysis from 186 to 175.

Once the dataset has been cleaned, I performed some preliminarily analysis starting from the demographics asked in the survey. The gender and age analysis showed a clear majority of female respondents over male (120 women vs 55 men) with a mean age of 32 years old, and a standard deviation on 13,40. This consistent gender dominance, however, is in line with the type of product presented in the scenarios, a clearly feminine fragrance, and consequently any result will have to be contextualized in this perspective. Eventual implications of this feature will be discussed later on once the main analysis will be carried out.

The samples of respondents obtained for each scenario were similar in demographics: 84 participants were exposed to the "art" condition while 91 of them saw the non-artistic scenario. This evidence, even if barely consistent, could may have implications in the results, but we will investigate on it later.

### 3.3 Manipulations of the variables

The following step before performing the main analysis of the study was to modify some variables to make them suitable for the type of investigation chosen. First of all, I had to verify the reliability of all the multi-items scales involved in the survey. I had two multi-items scaled involved in the questionnaire: the one aiming to measure the “willingness to purchase” composed by three items and the two-items scale used to measure the control variable “art interest”. In order to check the reliability of the mentioned scales, a Cronbach Alpha coefficient test has been performed on SPSS grouping all the items. As a result, all the scales resulted internally reliable registering values greater than 0,6 which is the minimum threshold. Going a little bit more in depth, the reliability coefficient related to “willingness to purchase” was of 0,922 and the one for the “art interest” scale was equal to 0,831. The tables below show the reliability coefficients of each the multi-items scale involved in the questionnaire.

Statistiche di affidabilità	
Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,922	3

**Figure 3.1:** Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the 3-items new variable “Willingness to purchase” . Source: personal elaboration on SPSS

Statistiche di affidabilità	
Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,831	2

**Figure 3.2:** Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the 2-items new variable “art interest” Source: personal elaboration on SPSS

When the validity of the multi-item ladders was assured, I grouped all the items of the same scale in order to compute a single new variable on SPSS containing all of them respectively, a necessary step to later conduct the analysis. By consequence, the three items of the willingness to purchase scale were computed into the new variable *“Willingnesstopurchase”* and the same process was applied for the two items related to “art interest” by computing the new variable named *“Artinterest”*. The

mediating variable involved in the model, and so used to conduct the study, was the one named "*Type of regret*" associated to the actions of "buying" and "not buying" as opposed.

The following step it was to reduce to a single variable the four columns of variables corresponding to the two randomized scenarios presented in the questionnaire and the respective statements, corresponding to the two conditions "art" and "non-art". This variable, to which the name of "*partnership*" was given, is in a dichotomous form assuming value "1" when the condition includes the dimension art and "0" when the scenario is without the partnership.

Last step performed before carrying out the study consisted of checking the control/manipulation questions to see if the stimuli were perceived differently and consistently with the condition they presented. What was expected was that through the descriptive analysis carried out on these questions it would emerge that the average values recorded by the cases with the art dimension were higher than those without the artistic featuring. The results, fortunately, confirmed this prediction showing that respondents understood where the partnership was present and where it was not. This condition was necessary for the study to proceed otherwise it would have meant that there was a problem in the stimuli and that they were not valid to conduct the analysis.

After the reliability of the scales has been assured, the new variables have been generated, and the control check was successfully run, it was possible to proceed with the analysis.

### 3.4 Results

Once the variables have been transformed and codified in order to better suitable for the purpose of the analysis, and after having performed all the previous preliminarily investigations as the demographics ones, the main study was run. First of all, I went to investigate the existence of a main effect between the independent variable "partnership" and the dependent variable "willingness to purchase". To conduct this type of analysis, I run a one-way ANOVA on SPSS checking whether a main effect arises or not. What has emerged is that, since a statistically insignificant value came up ( $p=.695$ ), it is not possible to make any inference on the effect that "partnership" has on the dependent variable.

ANOVA						willpurc			
willpurc	Somma dei quadrati	gl	Media quadratica	F	Sign.	N	Media	Deviazione std.	
Tra gruppi	,510	1	,510	,154	,695	no arte	91	3,9414	1,76774
Entro i gruppi	573,576	173	3,315			arte	84	3,8333	1,87672
Totale	574,086	174				Totale	175	3,8895	1,81641

**Figure 3.3:** One-way ANOVA between the i.v. “partnership” on the d.v. “willingness to purchase”. Source: personal elaboration on SPSS

Later on, after having observed the unexpected values of the means that emerged from the displayed above descriptive analysis ( $M$  “no arte” = 3,94 vs  $M$  “arte” = 3,83), I tried to test again the main effect between "partnership" and the dependent variable “willingness to purchase”, but inserting in the system the covariate "art interest". Precisely, I thought that, since an was confirmed by the control checks, an artistic presence in the appropriate condition was perceived, by inserting this variable that measures the artistic interest detected as covariate, any changes would arise. In order to carry out these analysis, a univariate linear model was performed on SPSS and what emerged was that the model’s output was significant recording a p-value corresponding at 0,000. This result indicates that for people with a high interest in art the main effect between the independent variable "partnership" and the dependent occurs. The presence of an artistic interest in art is, therefore, a necessary condition to make this relationship effective. Possible explanations on why this happens will be discussed later.

Variabile dipendente: willpurc						
Origine	Somma dei quadrati di tipo III	gl	Media quadratica	F	Sign.	
Modello corretto	52,335 <sup>a</sup>	2	26,168	8,626	,000	
Intercetta	44,696	1	44,696	14,735	,000	
artint	51,825	1	51,825	17,085	,000	
WithArt	,714	1	,714	,235	,628	

**Figure 3.4:** Univariate linear model between the i.v. “partnership” on the d.v. “willingness to purchase” with covariate “art interest”. Source: personal elaboration on SPSS

Subsequently, the overall mediating analysis was carried out. Since the conceptual model adopted is a mediating one where, once again, the mediator is represented by “type of regret”, in order to carry out the analysis has been necessary to download the system PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) on SPSS because of its specificity in making this kind of analysis. Through the use of PROCESS, the hypothesis test has been done, that is whether or not there is a relationship of dependence between the i.v. "partnership" on the d.v. "willingness to purchase" and if this relationship exists through the

action of one of the three above mentioned mediators. To carry out this analysis was selected on PROCESS the model number 4 of mediation, which is made up by a dependent variable Y, an independent one X and a mediator M. The results showed that while the independent variable "partnership" significantly preaches the mediator "type of regret" for a  $p=.03$ , there can be no inference on its ability to predict the dependent variable "willingness to purchase" for a  $p=.10$ . Looking at the model summary we can therefore say that although there is no direct effect of X on Y, there is an indirect effect between the two variables that passes through the mediation of the "type of regret" variable, since the value 0 falls out of the range of the values indicated as BootLLCI (.0235) and BootULCI (.5798).

On the basis of these results, the only thing that we can say is that the presence of an artistic collaboration in the scenario acts by increasing the type of inaction regret (not to buy regret) and consequentially reverses its indirect effect on the dependent variable. An overall significance of the mediated model, for a  $p=.000$ , confirms that even if is not possible to make any inferences about the direct effect that "partnership" has on "willingness to purchase" for a  $p=.102$ , it is noticeable the role played on it by the mediator "type of regret", for a  $p=.000$ . Once again, this evidence means that it means that an indirect effect of the power of art on the will to purchase indulgently there is because art acts on the sense of remorse felt by the consumer which is greater in the hypothesis of inaction (*not purchase*).

```

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
REGRET_1

Model Summary
  R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
,1556  ,0242      3,1536  4,2938  1,0000  173,0000  ,0397

Model
  coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant  3,3956  ,1862  18,2405  ,0000  3,0282  3,7630
WithArt   ,5568  ,2687  2,0721  ,0397  ,0264  1,0871

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
willpurc

Model Summary
  R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
,5062  ,2562      2,4826  29,6216  2,0000  172,0000  ,0000

Model
  coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant  2,1814  ,2824  7,7245  ,0000  1,6240  2,7388
WithArt   -,3966  ,2413  -1,6435  ,1021  -,8730  ,0797
REGRET_1  ,5183  ,0675  7,6836  ,0000  ,3852  ,6515

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Direct effect of X on Y
  Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
-,3966  ,2413  -1,6435  ,1021  -,8730  ,0797

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
REGRET_1  Effect  BootSE  BootLLCI  BootULCI
,2886    ,1436  ,0235    ,5798
  
```

**Figure 3.5:** PROCESS output of the relation between "partnership" and "willingness to purchase" mediated by "type of regret". Source: personal elaboration on SPSS

At last, in the light of what emerged, I decided to bring back the test of my main research question which, once again, wants to see if there is an effect of the i.v. "partnership" on the d.v. "willingness to purchase" through the mediated action of "regret", but adding the covariate "art interest". The results of this analysis, run on PROCESS again, showed that the model remains significant, comparing it with the previous one without the covariate, since the indirect effect between variables through a mediating action is still present even when I control considering "art interest".

```

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
REGRET
Model Summary
  R      R-sq    MSE      F      df1      df2      p
,2642  ,0698    3,0237    6,4536    2,0000    172,0000    ,0020

Model
  coeff    se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant  2,0139  ,5096    3,9518  ,0001    1,0080    3,0198
partners  ,5429   ,2631    2,0631  ,0406    ,0235    1,0623
artint    ,2658   ,0916    2,9033  ,0042    ,0851    ,4465

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
willpurc
Model Summary
  R      R-sq    MSE      F      df1      df2      p
,5427  ,2946    2,3683    23,8009    3,0000    171,0000    ,0000

Model
  coeff    se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant  1,0169  ,4711    2,1587  ,0333    ,0870    1,9467
partners  -,3851   ,2358   -1,6334  ,1042   -,8505    ,0803
REGRET    ,4738   ,0675    7,0217  ,0000    ,3406    ,6070
artint    ,2531   ,0830    3,0497  ,0027    ,0893    ,4169

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****
Direct effect of X on Y
  Effect    se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
-,3851   ,2358   -1,6334  ,1042   -,8505    ,0803

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
  Effect    BootSE    BootLLCI    BootULCI
REGRET    ,2572     ,1301     ,0116     ,5245

```

**Figure 3.6:** PROCESS output of the relation between “partnership” and “willingness to purchase” mediated by “type of regret” with “art interest” as covariate. Source: personal elaboration on SPSS

As a preliminary conclusion coming from the analysis, they highlight the fact that, although the average values in relation to dependent variables are higher when the condition shown includes artistic collaboration, no main effect between “partnership” and “willingness to purchase” is significant. What clearly emerges is how the interest in art is a necessary condition for the manifestation of a significant effect between the presence of an artistic partnership on the will to consume.

Furthermore, as far as the mediated model is concerned, it is possible to see how a significant indirect effect is detected when the mediator "type of regret" is included in the relationship between the above mentioned i.v. and the d.v. The partnership variable, represented by the presence of an artistic collaboration in itself does not have a statistically significant effect on the will to purchase, but

indirectly has an effect on it because it acts on the type of remorse felt by a consumer leading him to feel a greater regret for not having purchased (vs. having bought) the product when it presents the art dimension (vs. not presenting it).

Consistently with what was showed before, this effect between the variables exists both when the art interest is included in the system, so when the relationship is controlled by the level of art interest registered by the participants, and also when this factor is not taken into account.

### 3.5 General Discussion

About the discussion of the results, I would start by noting that the female gender dominance in the sample of respondents is so strong that it can be said that what the results show is certainly true for women rather than men. This fact, if on the one hand prevents the possibility of large scale inferences of subjects, on the other hand makes the results very much in line and adequate with the type of product shown. In fact, in the stimuli presented there were two versions of the same perfume, one of which showed the product promoted and marketed with a packaging made not through an artistic collaboration and the other one where the box and the bottle are contaminated by the art dimension. First of all, as I said before, I wanted to check through the outputs of the control and manipulation variables if this different degree of artistic contamination had been perceived and actually it was, since it is possible to notice from the descriptive values: the control variable check (“*Quanto percepisci questo prodotto come creativo?*”) registered  $M= 3,46$  (no art) vs  $4,48$  (art) and the manipulation one (“*Valuta quanto questo profumo abbia una collaborazione artistica*”)  $M=3,38$  (no art) vs  $4,81$  (art). Once this requirement has been established, it is possible to say that although the results of the analysis show that nothing can be said about the direct effect that a partnership between brand and artist, in this case that occurs in the creation of a packaging, has on consumers' willingness to buy, there is a direct effect between the artistic dimension and the sense of regret. In this case, in fact, the sense of regret is greater when the contaminated product is not purchased than when it is bought, as demonstrated by the values  $M=3,40$  (no art) and  $M=3,95$  (art) according to a scale going from 1 (*to buy*) to 7 (*not to buy*). This evidence then has an indirect effect on the willingness to buy when a greater regret in not acting, i.e. in not buying, translates into a greater tendency to give in to this type of indulgence in consumption, finding confirmation as it was already expressed in the theoretical background where it was stated that the regret of inaction is greater when material purchases occurs. In this regard, in fact, it could be said that the presence of the artistic element shifts the consumer's perception of a product, even if it is a consumer good (e.g. perfume), into an object capable of giving satisfaction and satisfaction also and above all from an aesthetic and emotional



point of view precisely because of its characteristics. The element of art "elevates" the perfume from a pure consumer good to a good which, in addition to its technical qualities, is surrounded by a uniqueness and a greater refinement that determines its shift from a material purchase to an experiential one, for which one feels more regret not to buy it. Another confirmation of the huge relevance of the role played by "art" in this study is represented by the fact that when inserting the covariate "art interest" in the models, both the direct effect of the presence of a partnership on the willingness to purchase became significant and the mediated indirect effect still exists. This evidence highlights the fact that when the art interest of a subject is high, the overall effect made by the presence of a partnership between the brand and the artist affects significantly people's willingness to purchase, confirming the fact that especially for art lovers, this dimension gives a deeper meaning to everything he comes in contact with. In particular, when art is combined with the luxury sector, two areas which, as stated previously and in the literature, have always been united and mutually influenced, they value each other and boost the desire to catch a bit of this enchant.

### 3.5.1 Theoretical Implications

Previous literature has discussed about the fact that it is a human tendency for people to find justifications for their choices (Shafir, 1993) and that this habit is also valid when dealing with consume-related decisions, especially when they are in contrast with self-control, as reported by Kivetz and Zheng (2006). It has been shown that individuals have over time elaborated mental mechanisms to overcome this inner contrast, a sort of multiple patterns that justify their self-indulgence. This has happened because often indulgent actions, especially those related to purchases, have been followed by unpleasant feelings such as guilt and remorse, especially with regard to hedonic purchases (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002). It can therefore be deduced that indulgent consumption would bring with it a sense of remorse for having acted by purchasing the desired product, especially if the latter has hedonic characteristics. The results of the present study, however, seem to propose a slightly different version of this mechanism, showing, instead, that what is most perceived is a regret for not having acted when purchasing the perfume. Although the perfume has a large hedonic dimension, conferred by the presence of art, respondents expressed more regret at not buying it (vs. buying it). The artistic partnership through which the perfume is marketed, taking up the floral themes of still life, makes the perfume a small "work of art" and its purchase an extraordinary action that is perceived more as experiential than material.

By confirming the main hypothesis, the present work provides evidences that the element of art has the effectiveness to incentivise an indulgent consumption shifting consumers 'approach more toward

a regret for not having bought such a product instead of having purchased it. As emerged from this study, this mechanism reflects itself in the indirect effect that an artistic partnership adopted by a luxury brand has on people's willingness to purchase products marketed through this kind of techniques. The latter relationship, in fact, is generated thanks to the mediating action performed by the sense of regret which, as said just before, is greater when the action of purchase is not carried out. A relevant theoretical implication is precisely represented by the fact that, as happens for non-materialistic kind of purchases reported by Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2011), the regret due to inaction perceived is higher when the perfume is packaged and promoted in collaboration with the artist Bas Meews: this evidence could mean that, as anticipated before in the discussion, the presence of an artistic element in the way it is marketed has the ability to make a product being associated as closer to the experiential sphere. It can be said that the art dimension triggers a licensing effect in consumers' minds, working on the inaction regret perceived, which incentives indulgent luxury consumption.

### 3.5.2 Managerial Implications

What emerged from this study has possibly meaningful cues for marketers and policy makers in general for what regards the use of artistic partnerships in the way their products/services are commercialised. In particular, the main insight that came out is that the "art" dimension has the ability to make a product more perceived as an experiential occasion of purchase instead of a mere material one. This assumption can be confirmed by the fact that when it comes an indulgent consumption chance, subjects who were exposed to the "artistic version" of the product (its packaging, precisely) showed more regret of inaction, taking up the theory of Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2011), which in this case reflected itself in a higher regret about not-buying the perfume (vs buying). This evidence may suggest to managers of luxury brands that art increases the metaphysical perception of the product or service they offer by consumers and that they could therefore successfully use it more or, if they already do, they could well emphasize this presence on the market. Marketers, specifically, are good at making commercial partnerships with artists, even emerging ones as in this case, because the increased creative effort is perceived by people, as shown by the results, and it encourages their self-indulgence making them more regretful in letting the article slip through their fingers. In line with the results, this is especially true for those products and their marketing strategies aimed at women since they represented the absolute majority of respondents in this study. In order to encourage indulgence towards luxury purchases, it could be optimal to carry out marketing campaigns on an artistic basis aimed at presenting products as more than mere consumer goods, but as multi-

sensorial experiences capable of satisfying the consumer from several points of view (aesthetic, sentimental, emotional) and, through these actions, pushing his sense of remorse more towards a missed purchase.

### 3.5.3 Limitations and Future Researches

Although this study has brought to light very interesting insights by revealing, in a small part, how a consumer's mentality when in the circumstance of an indulgent buying opportunity is influenced by being exposed to an artistic stimulus, there are nevertheless many limitations inherent in the work that leave a large margin for improvement and investigation for the future. First of all, as previously mentioned, the sampling method used, a non-probabilistic sampling technique, does not allow to generalize when it emerged from the study to a larger population than the one represented by the sample itself, so the results can only be extended to 175 respondents. Another limitation in being able to make inferences about when it emerged is represented by the gender dominance found in the participants who, being more than half women, may have filtered the results according to their characteristics (e.g. an average and general greater interest in aesthetics). Repeating the study with a greater gender balance would certainly be more valid in order to extend the results. Another limit inherent to the type of sample used can be found in the nationality. In fact, all the respondents are Italian but, if the study were to extend to more different nationalities, there could be some socio-cultural differences to highlight. The repetition of this research on a more heterogeneous sample of respondents would certainly be very useful to better generalize the effects on an international scale. Furthermore, more repetitions of the study should be made both with other products belonging to the luxury category, since the study aimed to extend the results obtained to the whole sector, and by considering more different types of indulgent products in general -the food sector, for instance, represents a huge pool of research-. In this case only one product was used (the perfume) which, among other things, was characterized by a greater closeness to women's taste, being clearly a woman's perfume. Consequently, repeating other studies using other products would bring both the benefit of being able to generalize the results by sector and by gender, as far as the effect of this specific type of art-base marketing technique is concerned.

In the same way, the study could be replicated considering another type of art-based marketing initiatives, such as sponsoring by a brand of art/museum foundations or hosting or co-organizing exhibitions, in order to investigate in a wider and deeper way the effect of art under other facets: although the participants found the difference between the scenario that presented the art condition

and the one in which it was missing, perhaps an art-based initiative more loud or making more reference to better known art/artists would have been more effective.

Another element that, when I thought about the experiment and reflected on the results, came to mind as a possible limitation of the study and in particular as a possible cause of the lack of direct effect between the independent variable "partnership" and the dependent "willingness to purchase" is the income. Indeed, considering the average age of the respondents and the fact that no screening by social class or income levels was carried out, there is also the fact that, although it was appreciated, artistic contamination was not effective in these terms because the product was indicated as very expensive. Probably a study carried out only on older people, and therefore with greater economic independence, or belonging exclusively to a very wealthy economic group might be more appropriate to circumscribe the above mentioned relationships. It is no coincidence, moreover, that the element of income is well associated with the artistic interest: generally speaking, people who have grown up in wealthy or average wealthy environments from an economic point of view are also those who have had more opportunity to develop a passion and a knowledge toward the arts. Obviously, such a discourse, which closely links the interest in art with economic possibilities, is only valid when the willingness to purchase in indulgent purchase occasions are taken into account, as in this case.

Future researches aiming to investigate more on the above mentioned points are absolutely necessary in order to gather conclusions on this topic that can be broadly generalised.

## Conclusions

To conclude this dissertation, I think it is useful to reiterate what are the salient features that emerged from the results of the study and try to give an interpretation of what is the contribution that, though this work, we tried to provide to the existing literature in the fields of indulgence. What we have tried to demonstrate is how marketing has a fertile pool of tools that can skilfully and virtuously use to influence the propensity to buy even those products that make us feel (as consumers) in conflict with ourselves and whose purchase we tend to justify with mental mechanisms of self-indulgence. The analysis carried out focuses on a very specific market segment, the one of luxury, which, as Okada (2005) showed, is the most suitable to indulgent purchases because of the sense of satisfaction and pleasure it is able to arise, but which, precisely because of the involvement of a large expenditure of money, determines more self-justification to be conceived. However, a parallel stream of research has brought to light the fact that when consisting in an experiential kind of purchase, even if it falls in the luxury area, consumers tend to feel less regret for their expenses or, better, the type of regret perceived is higher when they give up toward the action of purchase since the loss of a unique bundle of material and emotional features takes advantage on them. By consequence, what luxury brands should better do is to highlight the uniqueness and the emotional value of what they are selling by a marketing strategy which strategically and properly takes inspiration from the most meaningful and universal fields. The arts, being a universal language and the main providers of aesthetic fulfilment, are definitely the best “tool” to be used. This essay proves that when a luxury product, a perfume in this case, is marketed through an artistic partnership, the higher type of regret perceived by people is the inaction one, meaning that the idea buying it is generally preferred even if economically consistent. The extent to which “art” shows its power is not the one to make our willingness to buy to increase, not in a direct way at least, but it makes us feeling with more remorse at the idea of giving up the purchase. This happens because the artistic dimension perceived shifts the attention from the material function of the perfume to its experiential one, to the satisfaction deriving from having a piece of art in our houses and from having been involved, even for just the time of a purchase, in a process where two extraordinary forms of arts, the luxury and the visual ones, melted each other’s, providing us the best reason to indulge.

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## Indulging in luxury: the role of Art-Based Marketing techniques

### Introduction of the topic and Relevance

In the recent years many of the most famous Italian brands have made use of several strategies involving different artistic forms in order to differentiate their production or even "just" to enhance and promote it. From Dolce & Gabbana and Fendi who respectively used the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento and the Trevi Fountain in Rome as the set for their fashion shows, to Gucci who realized several digital campaigns exclusively through graphic illustrations on line, to Prada who, through its homonymous Foundation, has created a space entirely dedicated to exhibitions. All the brands above mentioned have in common, in addition of course to this bond with art, the belonging to the luxury market sector. Historically, art and luxury have been considered as elements that draw mutual inspiration to the point that, for most luxury brands, the orientation towards art and culture has been considered a natural extension of their nature. These, and many others, examples have led me to ask myself what effects the combination of art and luxury had on people so I asked myself: "can art be the reason why beauty becomes more beautiful and we become more indulgent with ourselves in order to obtain a piece of this beauty? Can we consider the artistic dimension identified in what the market offers us, that *quid* capable of making us dream and amaze, one of them?"

Speaking about indulgence, we refer to an attitude that often "falls" in purchases of pleasure that are primarily aimed at satisfying a desire for voluptuousness. From the companies' standpoint, indulgence is becoming more planned than ever as new technologies give consumers more control over their spending habits and create more regulated daily schedules. Researchers have often emphasized the unnecessary quality or delight of indulgence (*Berry, 1994*) and presented it as an irrational act and, at this regard, two typical domains of indulgent consumption have been frequently examined which are luxury and hedonic eating. This research will focus on the first of these since the luxury goods purchasing process is driven by emotions and not by careful analysis providing a great opportunity for leniency investigation.

The luxury market is formed by "all the products and services able to provide a status of prestige to those who enjoy them, and are distinguished by an excellent quality, a high price, an exclusive character and by the emotional component and the involvement feeling that accompany the act of purchase and possession of the good" (*Brioschi, 2000*). The luxury industry encompasses both goods and experiences including nine *macro* segments between cars, hospitality and personal goods, which together account for more than 80% of the total economic market.

The evidence is that despite the fragile geopolitical worldwide situation and the fear of an economical and financial recession, that have characterized the whole 2019, the luxury sector is globally growing (BCG-Altgamma, 2019). From the BCG-Altgamma report of 2019 emerged that the global market, including both luxury goods and experiences, grew by 5% in 2018, at constant exchange rates, reaching an estimated value of approximately €1,300 billion, registering an overall positive performance in all its segments but noticing a remarkable consumption shift back to luxury products, with luxury experiences growing less than previously. The main causes of the last years' success, analysing the growth factors, can be identified in three major: the introduction of the web marketing and the exponential growth of the online platforms, the increase of international tourism and the Millennials' empowered domain of purchase: the high presence on luxury brands on social media, the great contribution in purchases of the Chinese tourism and the shifting of the buyer persona to a young people's segment, have determined the salvation of the sector. Therefore, for companies it is necessary to redefine the offer on the basis of the new concept of luxury itself. The real luxury is no longer choosing a brand because it is well-known and expensive, but investing money to obtain exclusive benefits and getting involved in a personalized experience in every detail (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018).

Making a close up on the sector, are clearly noticeable some main macro trends and characteristics defining the market including: *inclusivity*, since the luxury sector is becoming more and more aware about the impact that different cultures and minorities have on the business. The biggest revolution which is going on in the industry is represented by the shift of a vision of luxury understood as exclusive power to an inclusive one. Mostly for what concerns the fashion sector, where brands are embracing diversity, the designers are becoming more oriented in offering clothes with different shapes and lines and to emphasize the diversity and unicity of each individual, in order to represent a wider slice of human beings-possible consumers. *Sustainability*, considering that the luxury industry plays a relevant role on it: "innovation as a long-term objective, taking into account the special responsibilities that arise in this area", for example, is the key adopted by the French groups Kering and LVMH. The sustainability issue influences the purchase behaviour of 60% of consumers who are driven by environmental and ethical manufacturing concerns: they are no longer just looking for heritage and *savoir faire*, but are also interested in ethical and production criteria, while maintaining the highest quality standards (BCG-Altgamma, 2019). Ostentation therefore leaves the floor to a more sustainable, accessible, ethical and environmentally friendly kind of luxury. Commitment and interest in sustainability are also demonstrated by the growth of new sectors such as the second-hand market even for luxury goods, which reached to €26 billion in 2019, propelled by strong growth in Europe, as well as among specialized online platforms. *Experiential luxury* considering that, above



all, the greatest revolution in the luxury sector refers to the supremacy of the experiential luxury on the personal one. Among the Millennials the biggest desire is to live luxury experiences. Consumers trends have been moving from the mere possession of a luxury product to the research of luxurious experiences, exclusives and differentiated for each income level. In the last ten years the market has seen the supremacy of the so called *experiential luxury* above the personal consume of luxury goods, starting at the growth of new luxury categories including the hotellerie, food&beverage and the automotive ones. Until few years ago, the customer had only to be convinced to buy a product while now, instead, he must be involved in a particular atmosphere, a suggestion, a unique moment. Collaboration with designers, for limited edition and limited quantity products can be an extremely effective way to engage consumers by making them feel part of an exclusive experience through the purchase from these categories. Last, but not least, *the arts*. According to the *True-Luxury Global Consumer Insight 2019 Edition*, the first key trend in the sector result to be the artistic collaborations. Collaborations enabled a pick of awareness of 90% of consumers and drove the 50% of luxury purchases, led by Chinese (62%) and younger generations (67% of Z generation, 60% Millennials), including collaborations and special editions. The art luxury industries are always getting closer. In the last years, great artists decided to collaborate with several fashion brands, but also many other luxury brands opened museums and foundations dedicated to the artistic experimentation. This phenomenon happens because of the tight connection between art and luxury and because both have developed over time following a common path. Historically, the great patrons, the Aristocrats and the economic *élite*, have pushed the cultural and artistic production of their time and at the same time played the role of “judges” for what concerns luxury: from fashion to interior decoration, including food trends and to lifestyle. Art and culture are indispensable assets, but only if they are able to generate value and positively influence the context where companies and foundations operate, which are created not only to give prestige to the image of the luxury brand, but also to develop initiatives of social and cultural interest. The luxury market is, therefore, made up of an increasing number of relations with art, in order to make appropriate values and meanings be associated with products. Each brand represents a world built on precise meanings and aspirations expressed in every watch, table, dress or jewel that is offered on the market. Through their relationship with art, luxury brands are becoming, in other words, cultural catalysts. From the limited edition through which products are commercialized to the sponsorship of artistic events, we are witnessing a race to artistic collaboration by brands. The successes of these initiatives, the interest they are able to arouse and their financial effectiveness, are directly linked to the sense of authenticity that these projects are able to suggest, beyond any marketing 'forcing'.

About these issues, and their mutual relationship, we can say that art and business have always dialogued between each other and the interaction among creativity and design addressed to production has always given results. It's not easy to think about marketing without setting our mind on artistic disciplines like design, graphic, painting and many others and especially in the luxury sector, where the purchase impulse comes from hedonistic and emotive reasons, the communication strategy adopted by the companies must be always more appealing. Over time, the marketing industry and all the marketers have been facing a radical transformation for what concerns creating and defining operational strategies. Because of the evolution of tools and platforms, the textual content - which was the basis of every marketing plan- is giving way to the visual dimension. Consequently, the main objective of the marketers is to create a marketing strategies full of original contents able to catch the entire customer's attention, pointing at his creative sphere. One of the main tasks of the companies' marketing department is to design impactful visual communication plans, able to attract immediately consumers 'interest and make them start their journey with the brand. Consequentially, the image is the element able to catalyse the user's gaze and to push him to perform an action.

## Teorethical framework

Previous literature has shown that the human mind tends to affix justifications when called upon to take a decision struggling with their self-control and has validated the importance of justification on people's choice by proving that people are more likely to make a choice or draw a conclusion that can be easily justified. When faced with the need to choose, decision makers often seek and construct reasons in order to resolve internal conflicts and justify their choice to themselves and to the others (Shafir, 1993). The role of reasons in decision making is considered as it relates to uncertainty, conflict, context effects, and normative decision rules (Shafir et al., 1993). Indeed, discussing about indulgence, many observations on the ways people indulge and on the possible mental mechanisms that activate this process, have been developed by academic research and practitioners who have put forward several reasons that can explain, in a more comprehensive way, the tendencies to indulge by people. In this regard, a massive *corpus* of research has implicated a justification mechanism underlying consumers' behaviours since when, in between with self-control (or self-regulation) and purchase's temptation, people have been always struggling. Self-control, in fact, can be defined as the "overriding of a predominant response tendency in favour of a more controlled behavioural response" (Metcalf and Mischel, 1999, 106 (1), 3-19.) and is generally associated with a long list of positive life outcomes (Lowe and Haws, 2014). The above cited struggle is usually boosted when people are in the condition of choosing items that are perceived as hedonic, indulgences or luxuries, and that for this reason may use precommitments to indulgence, especially when the psychological

cost of such commitments is less concrete (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002). When comes to indulgence, self-regulation plays a significant role acting as the opposite force against people's will, often fickle and attracted to temptations. The main stream of literature considers that to make indulgent consumption it is necessary to find justifications that activate licensing mechanisms, thus avoiding contrasts with self-control: the predominant theory is that it is always better perceived to indulge with a reason, which is almost always the idea of merit. The significance of the above statements is stressed in the context of non-utilitarian spending and offers an ample research space since it is more difficult to justify spending on hedonic goods while it is easier to justify the consume on utilitarian goods (Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998; Thaler, 1980). The reasons why this relative difficulty in justifying hedonic consumption shows up are that a sense of guilt is usually associated with this kind of purchase and its benefits are more difficult to quantify (Okada, 2005) but, when the sense of guilt is mitigated, hedonic consumption increases.

Therefore, dealing with regret, the Academia conceptualized two main types: the regret of action vs. inaction. As can be easily guessed and as reported by the studies of Gilovich and Medvec (1995), the first type (second), manifests itself as a result of the completion (non-completion) of an action that was at odds with one's own self-control and generally makes its effect more felt in the short-run (long-run). Prior research has also demonstrated that consumer choice can be systematically influenced by anticipatory regret which reduces the tendency to engage in risky behaviors. A basic assumption underlying extant theories of self-control asserts that the anticipated regret of future lapses of control motivates the use of various precommitment devices. However, at the same time this *hyperopia* (anticipated regret) turns in the so called *regret of righteousness* which is associated with the the *inaction* regret (Keinan and Kivetz, 2008). It is also true, as the studies of Rosenzweig and Gilovich have shown, that the type of remorse felt towards or following a purchase is closely related to the type of product: through their studies emerged that material goods are more likely to result in regrets of action coming from buyer's remorse, while experiential goods are more likely to result in regrets of inaction caused by the pain of a missed opportunity, since experiential purchases are perceived as more unique than material ones. This is the reason why has been tested several times, and successfully confirmed after, the hypothesis according to which material purchase decisions are more likely to lead to regrets of action and that regrets of inaction is more likely to occur for experiential purchases (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2011).

People often engage in indulgent consumption to increase their sense of pleasure and happiness (Okada, 2005) and since the intangible perception of luxury is strongly correlated with pleasure, happiness, and inspiration (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001), it turns out that one of the most appropriate ways to indulge is to buy luxury products. Understanding the conditions that improve customers'

emotional response to indulgent purchases seems particularly important for consumer researchers since one of their purposes is to document more carefully how consumption contexts affect not only people's behaviours but also consumers' emotions, in order to design marketing strategies that are more respectful of happiness (Mogilner and Norton, 2015). In the light of what has been said before, luxury brand managers might consider when and how to promote their products in order to generate a positive emotional response in consumers' mind and eventually they should promote reasons – or justifications- able of making people to “evade” all their forms of self-control. In the marketing field, many studies examined the relationship between the marketing messages ‘traits and the impact on consumers about the experience they lived: in detail, prior work investigated whether the nature of an experience within marketing messaging influences actual consumption, showing a positive correlation between the two variables. It has been found out that extraordinary occasions increase indulgence behaviours. The Acedemia defines extraordinary experiences as “uncommon, infrequent, and going beyond the domain of everyday life” and ordinary ones as “common, frequent, and within the realm of everyday life” (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014, 2). When consumers indulge in luxury, the investigation of the reasons for and the manner in which this action takes place, puts into account the emotional statement dimension and in particular the valence of the affective state. While some people may engage in “retail therapy” when they feel bad, others embark on a shopping spree the minute they feel good (Espinoza Petersen, 2012). Given that retail environments often induce different emotions on consumers via factors such as store atmosphere (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Matilla and Wirtz, 2001), product appeals (Kim, Park, and Schwarz, 2010), mall variety and environment (Wakefield and Baker, 1998), and more specifically in luxury retailing via art and magic (Dion and Arnould, 2011), triggering some emerging feelings and measuring how they affect consumers' preferences. Starting from the universal truth that people want to be happy, here it is that affect regulation relies on a hedonic goal pursuit assumption whereby positive affect represents the final goal (Morris and Reilly, 1987). Previous studies focus on engaging in indulgent behavior as a way to regulate affect: indulgent consumption is critical to affect regulation because of its concurrent positive hedonic consequences as the pleasure associated with purchasing a luxury product, and negative hedonic consequences (the guilt associated with spending so much money), which potentially lead people to experience positive and negative feelings at the same time (Ramanathan and Williams, 2007). Thus, before engaging in indulgent consumption, individuals intuitively forecast the affective consequences likely to emerge from the behavioral activity in which they are about to engage (Andrade, 2005). Thereby, valence alone cannot predict whether people will consume luxury goods to regulate their affective state but this behavior will also depend on how people perceive the indulgence to influence their future affective state (Espinoza Petersen, 2012). Taking up

what discussed above, it is possible to associate the various "justifications" that a consumer uses when in front of the possibility of indulging in a purchase opportunity to specific mental mechanisms that, for their role as a "pass" to the supremacy of temptation over control, are called "licensing effects". It's shown that when people are exposed to the opportunity to indulge, they often find reasons – different from the mere will to buy that specific item- able to give them the “green light” toward the expense. In particular, people who make the most use of justification or licensing mechanisms when facing a purchase occasion are those who have the most self-control and that, because of this, feel more in conflict. Nevertheless what turned out was that the dilemma between maintaining self-control and giving up to temptations can be mitigate by some mental gimmicks and factors such as the anthropomorphization of the temptation which undermines self-control (Hur, Koo and Hofmann, 2015). On these premises, my research aims at investigating if and how the "art" dimension, intended as a clear reference or use of a figurative art used in the marketing strategies of companies operating in the luxury sector, can activate a certain licensing effect. In other words, can the element of art influence consumers' attitude toward indulgent consumption and how does it happens?

## Experiment and Discussion

In this study, my objective is to test my main hypothesis according to which an art-based marketing technique, more specifically a partnership between brand and artist, affects positively an indulgent consumption, making people more willingness to purchase, through the mediating effect played by the sense of regret. Consequentially:

H1: *“A product presented with an artistic partnership incentives indulgent consumption through an increase in the perceived regret of inaction (vs. action).”*

According to my prediction, in fact, an artistic dimension noticed in the way a luxury product is marketed is able to positively affect the likelihood that an indulgent consumption will occur thanks to the mediating action played by the sense of regret. The type of regret we are considering for this dissertation is associated to the regret of inaction (vs action) that is properly perceived in case of experiential purchases, referring to what expressed by Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2011). Through their works, the authors demonstrated that when an experiential (material) purchase is considered, the sense of regret felt for inaction (vs action) is higher. By associating this theoretical background to my study, action is represented by “buying the product” while inaction by “not-buying the product” and my idea is that because of the presence of the art dimension, goods are elevated to have more an experiential function than a material one.

I decided to focus my investigation by considering only one specific type of art-based marketing strategy, which is the “partnership” generated between brands and artists, in order to analyse better and in a clearer way the above mentioned expected effect. To test my hypothesis, I started by the designing of what would have later become the final experiment, consisting in a survey and distributed on-line. The decision to collect the data through performing the experiment on-line finds its motivations first of all in the larger and more differentiated pool of sample able to be reached through the web: this way, the data gathered would have made me more comfortable in making inferences since they would have come from people of different ages and so more representative of the population. In addition, the use of an on line questionnaire would have provided a greater quickness and easiness to the procedure performance. With regard to the language to be used, the choice fell on *Italian* both to ensure a better text comprehension and to avoid, as far as possible, any misunderstanding about the experiment itself, able to make the data collected more reliable. In order to create the questionnaire, I served myself of *Qualtrics*, an on-line survey maker program through which an anonymous link was generated and then distributed. The sampling technique I decided to use belongs to the non-probabilistic sampling technique category and, specifically, consists in a virtual snowball sampling method. The first step was to create the stimuli: thanks to the availability in the real world market of a situation like this, I decided to benefit from the case of the *Diptyque* perfumes, just by providing few adaptations in order to make it more suitable for the study. The French luxury launched his most recent marketing campaign called “*Impossible Bouquets*” on an artistic collaboration with the digital artist Bas Meeuws, who is specialized in floral works and who re-designed the packaging –the boxes- of some *maison's* iconic floral fragrances. I thought about the realization of the two different scenarios to present to the respondents, pairing each stimulus with a specific circumstance to image, trying to be the most clear, unbiased and specific possible in order to help the subject at answering but without affecting his answers at the same time.

The questions that make up the rest of the questionnaire are taken from the previous literature in order to gather validated scales of reference. The selection of the perfume to be used, among the six of them, fell on “*L'ombre dans l'eau*” and it was made absolutely in a casual way, only trying to pick the one whose graphic representation reminded a little bit more to the Flemish's *nature morte*. The flowers represented are the ones of which the fragrance is made and are realized through a graphic drawing.



**Table 3.1:** Box used as packaging of “*L’ombre dans l’eau*” realized in partnership with Bas Meews.

The partnership involves only the outer packaging of the perfume but, in order to enable the respondents to be better identified in a situation where the packaging could be enjoyed more and for a longer time, we thought it would be more effective to modify in the scenario also the label itself with the same graphics. In reality, instead, the glass bottle of the perfume of the special edition is only coloured using the theme colour of the graphic design, pink in this case.



**Table 3.2:** Bottle of glass of the special edition line realized in partnership with the artist, commercialized in the market

For generating the experiment we decided to create the two scenarios with different packaging but to use the same glass bottle, the black one of the original line, but modifying the label of the one in the "art" condition through the same graphics of the box. We thought that this way the two conditions would have been identical except for the manipulation, clearly, and so more appropriated to perform the study.



**Table 3.3:** Bottle of glass edited by me for generating the adapted stimulus.

After, two different scenarios were designed: the messages were generated in Italian since it's the native language of the population I wanted to be interviewed. The messages realized respectively for the non-artistic version and the artistic one are the following:

*“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito*

- *Come puoi vedere **il packaging e l’etichetta sono quelle rappresentate***
- *L’essenza, a base di rose e bacche di ribes nero, è **fortemente intrigante**”*

*“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito*

- ***Il packaging e l’etichetta sono stati realizzati in collaborazione con l’artista digitale Bas Meeuws specializzato in opere floreali***
- *L’essenza, a base di rose e bacche di ribes nero, è **fortemente intrigante**”*

The two scenarios have been showed to the subjects through the randomization option applied with Qualtrics. The questions are taken from validated scales, taken from academic papers, which have the task of measuring the variables of the study and the mediator. The final results generated are the following:

**Scenario 1:** Non-artistic scenario

*“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito:”*





- Come puoi vedere il **packaging** e l'**etichetta** sono quelle **rappresentate**
- L'essenza, a base di rose e bacche di ribes nero, è fortemente **intrigante**.

**Table 3.4:** Scenario 1 as presented to the respondents.

**Scenario 2:** With art-based marketing technique

“Immagina di provare un profumo che ti piace moltissimo, ma che è **molto costoso**. **Leggi con attenzione le informazioni di seguito:**”



- Il **packaging** e l'**etichetta** sono stati realizzati in collaborazione con l'**artista digitale Bas Meeuws** specializzato in opere floreali
- L'essenza, a base di rose e bacche di ribes nero, è fortemente **intrigante**.

**Table 3.5:** Scenario 2 as presented to the respondents.

Once the scenarios have been generated, the following step was to define well the variables of the study and, later on, to find in the literature the appropriate scales in order to measure them. The conceptual model of the study is a model of mediation, which, basically, tries to identify and explain the mechanism underlying an indirect effect of an independent variable (i.v.) and a dependent variable (d.v.) through the consideration of another variable, defined as a mediating variable. For the realization of the study, the d.v.<sup>8</sup> selected is represented by “*willingness to purchase*”, the i.v. is the dichotomous condition of “*partnership*” which can be present or not, and the mediating variable is “*type of regret*”, defined as the regret of action (*buying the product*) vs inaction (*not buying the product*). to investigate on the dependent variable, “*willingness to purchase*”, a three items 7 point Likert scale has been employed from Hsu et al. (2016), developed properly for measuring propensity to purchase: “I intend to purchase”/ “I would purchase” / “I’m inclined to purchase”. To measure the mediator, a single item 7 point Likert scale was used, adapted from Rosenweig & Gilovich (2011)

<sup>8</sup> Dependent variable

going from 1 (I would regret more to buy) to 7 (I would regret more not to buy). The control variable “*art interest*” was added into the questionnaire and to measure a two items 7 point Likert scale was used adapted from Specker et al. (2018): “I’m interested in art”/ “I’m always looking for new artistic impressions and experiences”. Some other variables such as manipulation check of the stimuli and control variables were included in the questionnaire to verify that the setting of the stimulus was correct and are the following:

- Manipulation question: “evaluate how much you think this perfume has an artistic collaboration” (*valuta quanto pensi che questo profumo abbia una collaborazione artistica*)
- Control question: “how creative do you perceive this product?” (*quanto percepisci questo prodotto come creativo?*)

First, I cleaned the data collected from the online survey: all the surveys left uncompleted have been removed by checking the column V10 on SPSS and by consequence 5 data were deleted for this reason, after I screened the dataset according to the time criteria, checking for the minutes taken to complete the questionnaire by each respondent and 6 observations have been deleted due to this reason; the final sample number was equal to 175. Then, I performed some preliminary analysis starting from the demographics asked in the survey: the gender and age analysis showed a clear majority of female respondents over male (120 women vs 55 men) with a mean age of 32 years old, and a standard deviation on 13,40 and 84 participants were exposed to the “art” condition while 91 of them saw the non-artistic scenario. Later on I verified the reliability of the two multi-items scales involved in the survey which both revealed internal consistency through a Cronbach Alpha of 0,922 for “willingness to purchase” and of 0,831 for “art interest” and only then I computed the new variables “*Willingnesstopurchase*” and “*Artinterest*” by grouping the items. The mediating variable was “*Type of regret*” (buying vs not to buy) and the independent variable “*partnership*” was created as a dummy. Since the control and manipulation checks run successfully, I proceeded with the test. First, I investigated the existence of a main effect between the independent variable “partnership” and the dependent variable “willingness to purchase”. To conduct this type of analysis, I run a one-way ANOVA on SPSS checking whether a main effect arises or not. What has emerged is that, since a statistically insignificant value came up ( $p=.695$ ), it is not possible to make any inference on the effect that “partnership” has on the dependent variable. Later, by looking at the descriptive means ( $M$  “no arte” = 3,94 vs  $M$  “arte” = 3,83), I tested again the main effect but inserting the covariate “art interest”: a univariate linear model was performed on SPSS and what emerged was that the model’s output was significant recording a p-value corresponding at 0,000. This result indicates that for people with a high interest in art the main effect between the independent variable “partnership” and the dependent occurs. The presence of an artistic interest in art is, therefore, a necessary condition to make this

relationship effective. Then, the overall mediating analysis was carried out. Since the conceptual model adopted is a mediating one, the download of the system PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) on SPSS was necessary: the results of the model number 4 of mediation between the i.v. "partnership" and the d.v. "willingness to purchase" through the effect of "type of regret" showed that for a  $p=.03$  "partnership" significantly preaches the mediator but not the dependent variable for a  $p=.10$ . We can summarize that there is an indirect effect between the two variables that passes through the mediation of the "type of regret" variable, since the value 0 falls out of the range of the values indicated as BootLLCI (.0235) and BootULCI (.5798). An overall significance of the mediated model, for a  $p=.000$ , confirms that even if it is not possible to make any inferences about the direct effect that "partnership" has on "willingness to purchase" for a  $p=.102$ , it is noticeable the role played on it by the mediator "type of regret", for a  $p=.000$ . Discussing on the results, it could be said that the presence of the artistic element shifts the consumer's perception of a product, even if it is a consumer good (e.g. perfume), into an object capable of giving satisfaction and satisfaction also and above all from an aesthetic and emotional point of view precisely because of its characteristics. The element of art "elevates" the perfume from a pure consumer good to a good which, in addition to its technical qualities, is surrounded by a uniqueness and a greater refinement that determines its shift from a material purchase to an experiential one, for which one feels more regret not to buy it. Another confirmation of the huge relevance of the role played by "art" in this study is represented by the fact that when inserting the covariate "art interest" in the models, both the direct effect of the presence of a partnership on the willingness to purchase became significant and the mediated indirect effect still exists. This evidence highlights the fact that when the art interest of a subject is high, the overall effect made by the presence of a partnership between the brand and the artist affects significantly people's willingness to purchase, confirming the fact that especially for art lovers, this dimension gives a deeper meaning to everything he comes in contact with. The theoretical contribution of this study provides evidences that the element of art has the effectiveness to incentivise an indulgent consumption shifting consumers' approach more toward a regret for not having bought such a product instead of having purchased it. A relevant theoretical implication is precisely represented by the fact that, as happens for non-materialistic kind of purchases reported by Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2011), the regret due to inaction perceived is higher when the perfume is packaged and promoted in collaboration with the artist Bas Meews: this evidence could mean that, as anticipated before in the discussion, the presence of an artistic element in the way it is marketed has the ability to make a product being associated as closer to the experiential sphere. It can be said that the art dimension triggers a licensing effect in consumers' minds, working on the inaction regret perceived, which incentivises indulgent luxury consumption. Considering the political implications, however, results

suggest to managers of luxury brands that art increases the metaphysical perception of the product or service they offer and it encourages their self-indulgence making them more regretful in letting the article slip through their fingers. In line with the results, this is especially true for those products and their marketing strategies aimed at women since they represented the absolute majority of respondents in this study. In order to encourage indulgence towards luxury purchases, it could be optimal to carry out marketing campaigns on an artistic basis aimed at presenting products as more than mere consumer goods, but as multi-sensorial experiences capable of satisfying the consumer from several points of view (aesthetic, sentimental, emotional) and, through these actions, pushing his sense of remorse more towards a missed purchase. Despite the insights which it brought to light, this study has many limitations inherent in the work that leave a large margin for improvement and investigation for the future. First of all, the non-probabilistic sampling technique used does not allow to generalize when it emerged from the study to a larger population than the one represented by the sample itself, so the results can only be extended to 175 respondents. Then, the gender dominance and the totality of only Italian respondents are elements of bias for the broader extension of the findings. Furthermore, more repetitions of the study should be made both with other products belonging to the luxury category and with other types of art-based marketing techniques. Another useful future study can be based on considering the respondents' level of income since maybe people with a greater economic independence, or belonging exclusively to a very wealthy economic group might be more appropriate to circumscribe the above mentioned relationships. It is no coincidence that the element of income is well associated with the artistic interest: generally speaking, people who have grown up in wealthy or average wealthy environments from an economic point of view are also those who have had more opportunity to develop a passion and a knowledge toward the arts.

## Conclusions

To conclude this dissertation, I think it is useful to reiterate what are the salient features that emerged from the results of the study and try to give an interpretation of what is the contribution that, though this work, we tried to provide to the existing literature in the fields of indulgence. What we have tried to demonstrate is how marketing has a fertile pool of tools that can skilfully and virtuously use to influence the propensity to buy even those products that make us feel (as consumers) in conflict with ourselves and whose purchase we tend to justify with mental mechanisms of self-indulgence. The analysis carried out focuses on a very specific market segment, the one of luxury, which, as Okada (2005) showed, is the most suitable to indulgent purchases because of the sense of satisfaction and pleasure it is able to arise, but which, precisely because of the involvement of a large expenditure of money, determines more self-justification to be conceived. However, a parallel stream of research has brought to light the fact that when consisting in an experiential kind of purchase, even if it falls in the luxury area, consumers tend to feel less regret for their expenses or, better, the type of regret perceived is higher when they give up toward the action of purchase since the loss of a unique bundle of material and emotional features takes advantage on them. By consequence, what luxury brands should better do is to highlight the uniqueness and the emotional value of what they are selling by a marketing strategy which strategically and properly takes inspiration from the most meaningful and universal fields. The arts, being a universal language and the main providers of aesthetic fulfilment, are definitely the best “tool” to be used. This essay proves that when a luxury product, a perfume in this case, is marketed through an artistic partnership, the higher type of regret perceived by people is the inaction one, meaning that the idea buying it is generally preferred even if economically consistent. The extent to which “art” shows its power is not the one to make our willingness to buy to increase, not in a direct way at least, but it makes us feeling with more remorse at the idea of giving up the purchase. This happens because the artistic dimension perceived shifts the attention from the material function of the perfume to its experiential one, to the satisfaction deriving from having a piece of art in our houses and from having been involved, even for just the time of a purchase, in a process where two extraordinary forms of arts, the luxury and the visual ones, melted each other’s, providing us the best reason to indulge.

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