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From Heritage to Algorithms: Luxury Storytelling in the Age of Generative AI

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1.1 Understanding luxury: core elements and their role in brand identity

Luxury, as an intrinsic and enduring component of society, represents a remarkably flexible concept which has drastically changed over time, continuously assuming different shades of meanings, and adapting to diverse historical and cultural contexts (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2017).

Notably, the complexity of the concept itself lies in its multimodal nature, expressed not only as a societal construct, but deemed as a sensory experience, in which all five senses—visual, tactile, olfactory, auditory, and gustatory—play a pivotal role in shaping its narration and symbolic value (Dryl, 2014).

However, despite its cultural and historical resonance, previous literature has struggled to provide a single, universally accepted definition. Instead, scholars have approached luxury from multiple perspectives, attempting to capture its essence by studying the practices of brands, the perceptions of consumers, and the broader cultural frameworks in which the notion of luxury is embedded (Ko et al., 2019).

Firstly, to understand the profound meaning and essence of luxury, it is necessary to explore the linguistic origins and the etymology of the term itself.

Tracing back to the Latin term “*luxus*”, the word luxury originally denoted excess, extravagance, splendor and pomp (Berno, 2021, p.2-3), then followed by the old French term “*luxurie*” which meant lasciviousness and self-indulgence (Berthon et al., 2009).

Moreover, as the term lux was also associated to the negative concept of “*luxuria*”, the excessiveness, cynism and dark side of this concept was denoted (Cristini et al, 2016).

However, gathering from a more positivistic view and additionally sharing its root with the word “lux”, intended as light, a more profound and symbolic association has been revealed between luxury and illumination.

In Ancient Rome, where the term *luxus* emerged, light was not merely a physical element but a status symbol, found within architectural choices such as open courtyards and expansive windows that revealed wealth and intellectual clarity, expressing that luxury elements had to be seen by external people and then felt inside by the owner (Kapferer, 1997).

Therefore, within modern luxury branding, light continues to play a central role and a meaningful symbol, reflected within the sparkle of fine jewellery, the luminosity of precious materials, and the architectural design of flagship boutiques¹.

¹ <https://www.humbertownjewellers.com/hj-journal/the-etymology-of-luxury>

Thus, despite its deep cultural and historical roots, the concept of luxury nowadays lacks a universally accepted definition and has gained its positive meaning only in the 17th century (Berthon et al, 2009).

Remarkably, the American Marketing Association's official dictionary does not provide a clear or universally accepted definition for "luxury," "luxury brands," or "luxury marketing" (Ko et al., 2019), giving scholars the opportunity to range over and provide different perceptions on it.

Already during 470 B.C. Socrates and Plato expressed their thoughts on luxury, perceived and conceived as a necessity, that however needed to be controlled and moderated, since important things, such as the tranquility and peace of the city, had to be kept in mind, without flowing into excess and lust. (Cristini et al,2017)

Furthermore, Seneca and other Stoic philosophers echoed similar concerns, positioning luxury as a threat to inner peace and moral discipline, becoming one of the main topics of poets works, as in *Letters to Lucilius* Seneca criticized the degenerative effects of excessive wealth, arguing that true wealth lay in virtue and self-sufficiency rather than in material abundance (Seneca, Epistle 87).

Indeed, further associations have been made within the definition of luxury, studied and examined in a range of many disciplines.

One of the earliest economic perspectives derived indeed from Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics, who viewed luxury as a driver of economic progress, suggesting that the consumption of non-essential goods could stimulate innovation and wealth creation (Kapferer et al.,2017).

Moreover, Smith contributed to shaping a functional definition of luxury by classifying consumer goods into categories such as necessities, basic goods, affluence goods, and luxuries, thereby distinguishing them between what is essential and what exceeds mere utility (Wang,2022).

In line with this distinction, luxury has also been defined as "*anything that is desirable and more than necessary and ordinary*" (Heine et Phan ., 2011, p.109), emphasizing its role as an aspirational, rather than utilitarian form of consumption.

Therefore, according to Wang (2022), this difference laid the foundation for the modern conceptualization of luxury, characterized by expensive and exclusive goods which distinguish brands through their exquisite design, refined craftsmanship, sensory richness, and distinct socio-cultural narratives.

As a matter of fact, within the process of describing luxury, different dimensions have been taken into consideration, making consumers capable of defining objective and common attributes which

they project into luxury brands, distinguishing them in the following ways (Ko et al.,2019; Keller, 2009):

- Luxury products/services are perceived to be as **high quality**
- Offer additional value through **emotional or functional benefits**
- Are based on a **prestigious meaning of craftsmanship, artisanship and quality**
- Are worthy and justify the payment of **a premium price**
- Can generate a **deep connection and meaning with consumers**

Moreover, as Kapferer argues, if viewed through an economic perspective, luxury can refer to goods characterized by superior price and quality , which are meticulously crafted , priced well beyond their functional utility, offered in exclusive settings by heritage brands , providing a personalized service and evoking a sense of exclusivity (Kapferer, 1997; Kapferer, 2012, pp.251-260).

Furthermore, based on scholars' developments on the term, there are different facets and small changes within the attributes classification which are taken into consideration, that can often include also the elements of aesthetics, uniqueness, extraordinariness and symbolism (Urkmez et Wagner, 2020; Dubois et al,2001).

However, even though the attributes that refer to luxury nowadays have been highly recognized and identified, with the acknowledgment of recurrent elements within its definition, they have undergone multiple classifications (Cristini et al,2017).

As noted by the authors, the definition of luxury, extending beyond the mere table of characteristics, can be understood through a breakdown of the multifaceted attributes, which can be split up and regrouped into broader thematic dimensions based on the various spheres of meaning it tackles, including place, quality, creativity, timespan and wellbeing (ibid):

- *Place*: within this dimension luxury has gained and achieved multiple meanings, historically changing from being something that could be expressed and shown in public, to something that had to be preserved and kept hidden (e.g. Aristotele theories VS Plato theories). This reflects a long-standing tension between luxury as a public symbol and as a private, discreet experience, shifting from a displayed being toward a more personal, private and exclusive one (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

- *Quality*: conceived as something which is characterized by high levels of excellence, craftsmanship, different and better than the ordinary, being unique and that can become also iconic.
- *Creativity*: as stated by Kapferer (1996), luxury brands are generated and created by an internal idea, which is developed through an individual creative project and which nowadays faces its revolution based on the rising and introduction of AI.
- *Timespan*: affected by philosophers' theories and the importance given to time, durability becomes an essential element within luxury, also correlated to the quality of products that are offered by brands. Additionally, durability in time is expressed through the optimal state of maintenance of goods, plus the relevance that the brand maintains within the passing of time (Aakko et al.,2021).
- *Wellbeing*: since luxury is not just about its material and tangible elements but can often be determined by the intangible and metaphysics aspects, wellbeing means that there are feelings within the intrinsic self that attribute a deeper meaning to luxury. As is, luxury becomes related to spirit fulfillment, joy and self-care, expressed through the need of feeding personal desires, objectives and expectations, depending on the individual unit (Batat,2023)

Moreover, luxury assumes multiple social signifiers which communicate different meanings and social status or expectations, based on consumers' behaviors and know-how, differing the connoisseurs from the outsiders, and which assumes a double meaning based on the subjects who is interpreting it (Holmqvist et al, 2020).

Hence, without people there would be no luxury (Berthon et al., 2009).

Thus, due to the complexity of the term, it becomes essential to adopt a holistic approach which delves deeper within the multidimensionality and depth of the concept itself, passing through time and space. As highlighted by Batat (2023), defining luxury requires the integration of multiple theoretical lenses—including sociological, cultural, psychological, and experiential dimensions—which reflect the evolving nature of luxury in contemporary consumption contexts.

Gathering from a social perspective, luxury can be seen as a double dimension, which shifts between two opposite poles: on one side it represents the willingness to be and feel part of something, on the other to be different and distinguish from the masses (Ürkmez & Wagner, 2015).

Therefore, luxury operates as a dual mechanism of both social inclusion and exclusion, expressing the desire to belong to a certain group while simultaneously enabling differentiation and status signalling.

Culturally, luxury is shaped by symbolic systems and local traditions, as its perception is closely linked to the values, rituals, and aesthetic norms of a given society(ibid).

Lastly, psychologically, it addresses consumers' emotional needs for self-expression, reward, and escape, reinforcing the intimate role that luxury can play in individual lives, leveraging on the experiential dimension, and the realization of meaningful experiences(ibid).

This multifaceted framework emphasizes that luxury is far more than an economic category or a static label, though it is a socially and culturally relevant phenomenon that must be examined through diverse and intersecting perspectives.

For this reason, luxury cannot be reduced to a universal or objective definition.

Indeed, as McNeil and Riello (2016) suggest, luxury may be best understood as "*something that is beyond the expected*", highlighting its inherently comparative and subjective nature, in which consumers gain a pivotal role in shaping what is categorized and experienced as luxury (Holmqvist et al., 2020).

Therefore, to fully grasp the contemporary meanings of luxury, it is essential to consider how individuals interpret and internalize this concept based on their values, lifestyles, and socio-cultural environments, while assuming relevance in modern society.

1.2 The subjectivity and relativity of luxury – who defines it

Even though common elements rely behind the concept of luxury, significant levels of subjectivity can be found within its definition, since the meanings and associations vary based on consumers' individual perceptions, needs and expectations (Ko et al., 2019, Urkmez et Wagner, 2020).

Authors have indeed defined the multidimensional nature of luxury based on the extrinsic factors which influence consumers' choices and behaviors, such as regional, temporal, economic and cultural factors, affecting consumers' approach to luxury goods, brand's recognition and final products appreciation (Dryl,2014).

If Dryl (2014) on one side defines the ambiguity of the concept of luxury, which assumes multiple meanings based on the interpretation given across different cultures and individual experiences, on the other side, according to Kapferer (2009), there is a clear and well-defined distinction established by two types of luxury: absolute and relative luxury.

As a matter of fact, it is through Kapferer's definition that the relativity of luxury started to emerge, becoming one of its strongest and meaningful characteristics, showcasing how the concept can be intended nowadays (Kapferer, 2009; Kapferer, 1996).

Relative luxury, as stated by the author, can be defined by the subjective and internal associations provided by consumers, who personally experience and feel the luxurious atmosphere and attributes. *Absolute luxury* instead, is explained as the intrinsic characteristics and meanings of luxury which go beyond people's association with a brand, giving a novel and salient importance to time, which is the actual element that defines luxury.

Certainly, it is through this definition of relativity that the modern conception started to spread, introducing the idea that different spheres and dimensions are tackled and considered when talking about luxury (Berthon et al., 2009).

The authors, gathering from Popper's 3 worlds theory and Keller's benefits theory, have indeed defined the multi dimensionality which relies behind the construction of luxury plus the relationships and bonds that are established between people, products and brands.

According to Popper (1978), reality is structured across three interacting dimensions: the physical world (World 1), the psychological world (World 2), intended as the subjective world of experiences and perceptions, and ultimately World 3, perceived as the cultural world of shared meanings and knowledge resulting from "*human mind products*".

Hence, when applied to luxury, this framework emphasizes how products are not only material artifacts, yet they carry emotions, associations and cultural resonance.

Similarly, through the CBBE model (Customer based brand equity model) Keller (1993) explains how brand equity is constructed.

Structured in a hierarchical process, the model begins with brand salience (awareness), progresses to performance and imagery (the functional and symbolic associations formed by consumers), advances to judgements and feelings and ultimately culminates in brand resonance, where deep psychological connections and loyalty are established.

Hence, by leveraging on the functional, experiential and symbolic benefits, brands aim to generate enduring and active relationships with customers which go beyond the mere tangibility.

Therefore, in the case of luxury, brand equity and value derive not only from the functional qualities of the products, yet also from the emotional engagement and symbolic meanings conveyed to consumers.

Thus, since luxury cannot be associated just to the material and tangible elements which constitute the final good, Berthon et al. (2009) define it as the combination of 3 spheres: *the objective, the subjective and collective sphere*, each one intertwined to generate the overall concept of luxury.

Building on this multidimensional view, it becomes clear that the meaning of luxury is not fixed but emerges from the interplay between these spheres and the individual's role as an interpreter of value, meaning, and experience (Dryl, 2014).

These dimensions are indeed contextual and dynamic, reflecting the continuous evolution of consumers' perceptions over time, where the individual assumes a central role as the active interpreter of luxury, whose personal values and worldview shape the meaning attributed to products, experiences, and symbols (ibid).

Drawing on Kantian philosophy and his "Critique of Judgement", the concept of luxury can be understood through two fundamental dimensions: aesthetics and ontology.

Aesthetics, deeply connected to luxury, denotes the ability to discern and appreciate value, quality, and beauty through lived experiences, while ontology involves the deeper notion of "being", as the personal and existential resonance it has for the individual.

In this sense, this dual perspective moves beyond the static evaluation of goods, emphasizing instead how consumers internalize, reinterpret, and refine their own understanding of the term, whereas the observer becomes a crucial actor, whose personal lens shapes and refines the meaning of luxury.

Ultimately, luxury exists not merely as a physical or tangible product but as a complex, evolving interpretative process, a synthesis of perception, experiences, identity and ontological depth that combined together are the essence of what luxury truly represents.

In line with this approach, Banister et al. (2017) reinforced the centrality of the individual dimension by analysing luxury through a consumer culture perspective, emphasizing its subjective and context-dependent nature, defining the bond which exists between practical and mental activities of individuals.

According to the authors, luxury cannot be synthetised into fixed characteristics or objective criteria, but instead it assumes the meanings and values consumers attach to it through personal experiences, emotional associations, and cultural interpretations, actively shaping what it means to them, integrating it into their everyday lives through practices, rituals, and self-expression, and not being mere products (ibid).

It is through this perspective that the existence of "*an everyday luxury*" is highlighted, developing the theory that consumers integrate elements of luxury into daily life, not searching for status and social positioning, but becoming a mean of self-expression and emotional fulfillment.

Hence, consumers obtain their central role as "practitioners", combining different behaviors pursued to make sense of and understand the outside world (Banister et al.,2017).

Additionally, this interpretative view of luxury is further reinforced by Seo et al. study (2015), which proposes a critical evaluation that highlights the personal and multidimensional nature of luxury experiences and choices made by consumers.

According to the authors, luxury is not defined by the object itself, yet by the ways in which individuals *engage* with it, through practices such as self-transformation, escapism, and distinction. Rather than being tied to traditional indicators such as price, rarity, or heritage, luxury becomes a fluid concept shaped by personal narratives and situational contexts in which consumers assign meanings to luxury based on personal aspirations, emotional needs, and social positioning, thereby detaching it from a purely product-centric definition (Seo et al.,2015).

Furthermore, Urkmez et Wagner (2020), discussed *the subjectivity of luxury*, which assumes different meanings and perceptions based on the subject that is interpreting it.

The two authors have indeed been able to identify five categories which explained the relativity of the concept itself, depending on the dimensions which are tackled (*ibid*):

- **Regional relativity**, linked to local availability, it builds up on the concept of rarity and scarcity
- **Temporal relativity**, refers to the changing perception and consideration of goods due to the passing of time, which deeply affects consumers' beliefs and choices
- **Economic relativity**, considered as the level of accessibility which people have to obtain the resources
- **Cultural relativity**, meaning that each culture has its own meanings, definitions and attributions of luxury, which make the term highly interpretative and interpersonal. This sums up the idea that in each country, luxury can be associated to multiple goods and services, which differ in value and meaning.
- **Situational relativity**, it depends on the situation in which people are when they are evaluating the luxury element and how it can be perceived in that moment.

Although the five spheres of luxury are inherently interconnected and coexist within all perceptions, the meanings attributed to luxury are subject to regional relativity and temporal evolution, affected by the change and development of time and space.

It is indeed, through these deconceptualizations and changes that a new reinterpretation of luxury has started to spread, defining new ways of perceiving the term and its multiple facets (Seo et Buchanan, 2019).

Therefore, as luxury continues to transform across different spatial and temporal contexts, two complementary phenomena have started to emerge prominently: the globalization and democratization of luxury (Cristini et al., 2017).

Indeed, by democratization we refer to the extensive availability which luxury brand start assuming, becoming more diffused within the masses, while introducing less intricate alternatives, cheaper versions and numerous brand extensions (Gummerus et al, 2023).

Thereby, regarding the democratization of luxury, whereas little levels of expertise and personal skills are applied within the product choice and experienced lived, luxury is made available and accessible to everyone, losing the status symbol and premiumization it had in the past while providing more affordable versions (Cristini et al, 2017; Holmqvist et al.,2020).

Undoubtedly, luxury has historically gained its meaning and reputation from its association with status, wealth, craftsmanship, and exclusivity.

However, in recent years, it has undergone significant transformations, shifting away from its traditional ties to high-priced goods becoming a more fluid and multidimensional concept, no longer confined to a specific category of products, but encompassing diverse experiences and symbolic meanings, shaped by personal and cultural interpretations (Wang, 2022).

Hence, as wealth has become more widespread globally, the once-clear boundaries of luxury consumption have become increasingly blurred, no longer confined and reserved to a privileged elite (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2017).

Therefore , as new ways of portraying luxury have started to spread, an increasing number of consumers has started to embrace luxury through the new product offers that brands have created, small objects and goods, defined as “affordable luxuries”(Wang,2022).

Ultimately, being a highly subjective term which is evolving due to the cultural, social issues and expectations, individuals are the ones who assume a pivotal role in determining the several meanings and associations that luxury is gaining (Iqani,2022).

1.3 Moments of luxury - relevance of space and time

Given the inherent complexity and relativity of the concept itself – and the absence of a universally accepted definition – it is important to clarify whether the change in space and time has led to a new conceptualization of luxury, which shifts from a product-centric view to a subjective and consumer-centric perspective (Batat, 2023; Malone et al, 2023).

For this reason, since it has not been cleared a specific definition, consumers have become the ones that measure and interpret luxury, defining its different facets and delineating the measuring tools used to interpretate it (Kapferer, 2009).

Hence, gathering from the previous concept, Batat (2023) provides a valuable insight on the perspective of luxury and the relevant role that have the ones who are involved, arguing on the existence of one single type of luxury or multiple forms.

Furthermore, Ho & Wong (2022) state that time becomes an essential element, which allows luxury to change and shape its form by letting consumers learn and gather notions from past experiences, gaining skills, becoming passionate and deepening their knowledge.

Complementing these insights, von Pezold and Tse (2022) argued that luxury is inherently temporal and spatial, constructed through consumers' personal and cultural histories, drawing on memories, rituals, and the socio-historical context of their consumption.

Therefore, Gummerus et al. (2024) explore the essence of luxury throughout three distinct perspectives, in which three types of luxury are defined, based on the interpretation that the creator of such a complex concept assigns to it.

Although these multiple conceptualizations—provider, consumer and co-created luxury—differ in terms of who holds the power to define luxury, a common underlying premise persists: the creator, whether individual or collective, plays a pivotal role in shaping what is perceived and experienced as luxury.

In **provider-created**, the definition of luxury originates from the brand or firm. Here, the company is positioned as the authoritative source, which crafts the meaning of luxury through its products, services, and strategic market positioning.

In contrast, **consumer-created luxury** shifts the focus entirely to the individual. Within this perspective, luxury is defined and constructed by the consumer through personal experiences, interpretation, and emotional engagement, emphasizes the subjective nature of luxury, where value arises from consumer's lived reality and the meanings they attach to their experiences.

Finally, **co-created luxury** represents a hybrid model, where multiple actors—including brands, consumers, and other stakeholders—collaborate in the ongoing construction of luxury's meaning. In this approach, luxury is not a fixed property of the product itself, but an emergent value created through interactions, shared narratives, and mixed influence.

Furthermore, gathering from this theory both Hemetsberger and Banister (2020) explain the reasoning behind luxury experiences, introducing the concept of "*moments of luxury*", as an integral part of consumers everyday lives.

Indeed, as stated by the authors moments of luxury can be intended as little yet meaningful experiences which differ from brands' traditional notions of luxury.

Hence, from a temporal perspective, these experiences reflect a consumer-centric vision, in which individuals actively reclaim and revalue time as a scarce and personal resource , becoming opportunities and transformative moments through which people can temporarily escape from their everyday routines(*ibid*).

In this sense, time emerges as a core component of contemporary luxury, whereas people find and experience the joy and pleasure of "little luxuries" which detain deep personal significance, rather than being tied to material abundance or status (Malone et al.,2023).

Moreover, in this context time emerges as a dual concept, referring both to the various stages involved in the creation of a luxury product, ranging from ideation, sourcing of raw materials, craftsmanship and final execution, to the enduring quality and longevity that many luxury goods are expected to possess, often classifying them as "timeless" (Malone et al., 2023).

Building on this, contemporary theories suggest a shift in the role of time—from being a mere metric through which luxury is measured to becoming a luxurious element itself, which brings people to reformulate the meaning of time, reappropriating the luxurious value of it, being what really constitutes and can be classified luxury (Thomsen et al.,2020).

Indeed, it is within this reframing, that the reappropriation of time becomes central to the evolving definition of luxury, aligning closely with the rise of experiential consumption and becoming the driving force of modern branding.

Finally, rather than being purely object-driven, modern luxury becomes progressively rooted in experiences that evoke feelings of freedom, escape, and presence, elements that are deeply personal and emotionally resonant and through which individuals reframe their relationship with time, appreciating the profound novel meanings which experiences can offer (Banister et al., 2020, Thomsen et al.,2020).

1.4 Beyond the tangible: crafting the luxury experience

Since it has been constantly evolving, adapting to the shifting values and expectations of society, the concept of luxury cannot be considered the same anymore.

Historically rooted in material scarcity and exclusivity, luxury today transcends tangible products to embrace a deeper, more intricate dimension: the experiential side (Holmstiq et al., 2020).

Therefore, shifting from materialism to experientialism, luxury nowadays goes beyond the mere material attributes of goods, focusing on the changing role of consumers, who become the ones that create and define luxury itself (Gummerus et al., 2020).

Compared to previous generations, modern consumers have indeed started to seek for emotional fulfilment, authenticity, enjoying personalized connections and life experiences rather than possessions, pushing luxury brands to craft experiences that resonate on a deeper psychological and emotional level (ibid).

Thus, a new way of conceiving luxury has been arising, becoming a concept that is not just associated with products and material goods, but that becomes a way of being, embodied through relevant experiences lived by consumers (Holmqvist et al., 2020).

Therefore, Malone et al. (2023) define the modern concept of luxury as an *unconventional luxury*, developed around the “consumer experience”, and which delves around the idea that people experience “*little luxuries*” through personal indulgences every day.

Additionally, it is with the shift from tangible to experience, that the reappropriation and reconsideration of time becomes a central topic, intertwined with the concept of luxury and marking a critical evolution in perceiving the term beyond a merely materialistic definition (Malone et al., 2023).

Building on this, von Wallpach et al. (2020) define luxury as an experiential process through which consumers engage in “having, doing, being, sharing, and becoming,” whether through extraordinary experiences they have the chance to deepen the knowledge of luxury, but also of themselves. Similarly, Atwal and Williams (2009) reinforce the idea that consumers are essentially “emotional beings concerned and willing to achieve pleasurable experiences,” highlighting the personal and sentimental dimension at the core of luxury’s contemporary meaning.

Whereas, everything can be synthetised in the definition provided by Pitkänen and Tuohino (2006) who defined experience as an effective event that has a strong impact on the perceiver, being both memorable and meaningful (Podder et Paul, 2020).

Moreover, according to Weising philosophical theory (2019), luxury can be considered an *aesthetic experience*, which indeed is a moment lived by consumers, but pursued through the ownership of physical objects, pointing out that something to be considered luxury, must be experienced.

Therefore, rather than just a static object and its tangible features, the concept of luxury becomes tied to an ongoing process linked to personal experiences pursued by individuals.

Building on this, gathering from Immanuel Kant theory on beauty, physical attributes are not what define and generate luxury, but it's the specific experience lived by the receiver which formulates the reasoning and meaning behind the concept itself.

Hence, with the rise of experiential marketing, there has been a significant shift away from traditional marketing, once centered on the functional benefits of products, towards a more emotionally driven approach that prioritizes creating meaningful experiences and lasting memories for consumers (Pina and Dias, 2020).

Therefore, Bauer et Hemsterberg (2011) provide an innovative and groundbreaking perspective on luxury and experiences, being self-related, private and less materialistic, linked to a specific situation lived by the individual and narrated through the consumer point of view.

Likewise, luxury brands have introduced art as a new distinguishing and relevant feature of their creations, perceived as an impactful experience which strengthens the bond between artists and art itself by focusing on the storytelling of artisans' role while proposing innovative and disruptive experiences (Chailan, 2017).

Hence, the reason why art becomes a valuable helper is because it brings back those moral and aesthetic values which were losing their existence due to the democratization and massification of luxury.

Instead, with art and craftsmanship becoming the leading reason of elevated prices, consumers justify and appreciate that what they are buying is not simply a product, yet a symbol and concretization of the artisans' talent, the uniqueness of their works, and the timeliness of what they will be achieving (Kapferer, 2014)

What once were occasional collaborations, in which art and luxury met and were paired together, nowadays have become bonds which have strengthened the two, linking them and becoming one part of the other (Chailan, 2017).

Hence, combining these two fields, multiple relationships have been built developing numerous initiatives in which luxury and art seamlessly merge together:

- 1) *Art patronage*, in which luxury brands, interested in artworks, support and finance museums and exhibitions (e.g. LVMH and Louvre Museum and Bulgari and Ara Pacis Museum)
- 2) *Art-collaborations*, where luxury brand collaborate with artists to develop unique and iconic collections (e.g. Louis Vuitton and Takashi Murakami with its iconic cherries and polka dots collections)
- 3) *Foundations creation*, through which brands create a long-lasting bond between art and luxury

Fondazione Prada becomes a clear example of what means combining luxury, art culture and immersive experiences, becoming a bridge between individuals and institutions and through which the founder and designer Miuccia Prada , aimed to create a space of culture and art which was missing in the city of Milan, becoming a cultural, design and fashion point of reference².

In this sense, brand museums and temporary exhibitions allow people experience and discover not only the artwork of others, but also the craftsmanship and heritage of the luxury brand itself through engaging moments, delving deeper within the creative procedures of a brand, its communication and admiring the final outcome which is showcased through runways and fashion shows.

A notable example is Dolce e Gabbana exhibition “*From the heart to the hands*” in which people are brought within the creative genius and estrus of the two designers and stylists, showcasing the creative process which begins from the heart and is expressed and finalised through the hands and artisans work³. The public is indeed invited to immerse itself in different scenarios and in the creative universe of Domenico Dolce e Stefano Gabbana, understanding the associations, meanings and symbols that guided the stylists within their collections, in which clothing becomes a symbolical element expressed to a powerful storytelling imbued with culture and heritage.

Moreover, as an ode to the handmade, viewers are invited to admire the intricate beauty of embroideries, the precision of sartorial details, and the meticulous craftsmanship behind the processing of precious materials, each representing invaluable artisanal skills that engage in an open dialogue

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that consumer needs and expectations have evolved over time, since nowadays they are seeking more than just functional attributes, product quality, or brand reputation, but increasingly desire experiences that captivate their senses and engage them intellectually and emotionally through marketing communications and experiences delivered (Podder et Paul, 2020).

The reason why is that consumer, especially younger generations, are searching for experiences, and being in the communication era, they want to tell people about things they have done and experienced, rather than just bragging material goods.

As stated in the Forbes article “*5 ways to make your luxury event stand out*”, luxury events become one of the most important situation and context in which brands can combine the meaning of luxury,

² <https://www.architectural-review.com/today/fondazione-prada-in-milan-by-oma>

³<https://roma.dolcegabbanaexhibition.com>

seen as pure craftsmanship, with engaging moments for consumers, in which through powerful events they get to learn about the hidden and deep mechanics of the brand, its processes and culture.⁴

In this way, LVMH with its “*Les Journées Particulières*” itinerary event, becomes a clear example of what stated within Forbes article, whereas luxury events function as immersive platforms that fuse craftsmanship, heritage, and experiential engagement⁵.

Hence, by inviting consumers to engage directly with artisans, creative directors, and heritage curators, the LVMH itinerary constructs a form of experiential luxury that emphasizes intimacy, authenticity, memory, and symbolic value, giving the opportunity to witness the meticulous craftsmanship and artisanal techniques that define luxury production, while simultaneously listening to each brand’s cultural and historical legacy through curated storytelling.

Therefore, this model in which people participate lies indeed not solely in product ownership, but in the cultivation of sensorial and intellectual experiences that deepen brand loyalty and cultural capital, while revealing luxury through public access and behind-the-scenes revelations (Batat, 2023).



LVMH event “Les Journées Particulières”

Furthermore, also Gucci positions itself as a brand which relies on the experiential relationship installed with people by developing immersive sensory spaces.

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/08/07/five-ways-to-make-your-luxury-event-stand-out/>

⁵ <https://www.lvmh.com/en/commitment-in-action/for-people/the-journees-particulieres>

Inaugurated in 2011 within the historic Palazzo della Mercanzia in Florence, Gucci Garden multisensory museum-gallery exemplifies how luxury brands therefore are increasingly blending art, heritage, and experiential immersion to redefine the meaning of luxury.

The Gucci Garden has been indeed designed to offer a living narrative journey through the brand's history, narrating the new brand's vision while unravelling and celebrating previous advertising campaigns, artisans' craftsmanship demonstrations and vintage collections ⁶.

Therefore, in this context, Gucci Garden transcends conventional brand exhibitions, becoming an experiential site where luxury, art, and time intertwine, proposing a multi-sensory journey through the brand's campaigns and creations, blending history, art, and contemporary culture into a dynamic exploration of luxury and creativity.



Gucci multisensory museum-gallery, Gucci Garden

Ultimately, Tiffany & Co. exemplifies how experiential strategies can be powerfully leveraged to transform retail environments into emotionally resonant and sensorially immersive brand experiences. As explored in the study by Jeong, Lee, and Lee (2024), such experiential elements, including café settings and art exhibitions, serve distinct purposes within luxury spaces: cafés encourage emotional and relational engagement, while art exhibitions foster intellectual and aesthetic stimulation. Hence, the brand's flagship on Fifth Avenue, together with the Blue Box Café and curated art installations within the store, embody an elevated combination of sensory, cultural, and relational touchpoints.

Central to this idea is the Blue Box Café, which transcends its function as a dining venue to become a symbolic ritual space which allows visitors to experience the iconic atmosphere popularized by the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, through moments, rituals and environments that invite consumers not only to dine, but also observe, feel, and connect to brand's profound roots.

⁶ https://www.gucci.com/us/en/st/stories/article/gucci_garden

In doing so, Tiffany & Co redefines luxury as a lived and memorable experience, elevating the retail moment into a ritualized and sensorial journey that reinforces the evolving nature of luxury as an emotional and culturally rich experience. In this way high-end brands, moving beyond the tangible, are now trying to differentiate themselves, embracing and focusing on architecture, museums and art, leveraging on the artification concept, where objects that were historically not considered art become recognized as art (Shapiro 2019), by making designers idea and designs tangible products (Tarquini et al,2022).

Therefore, by enabling consumers to engage with the brand through iconic moments and feelings, the brand not only fosters personal connection and nostalgia but also affirms the growing centrality of narrative, memory, and multisensory immersion in the construction of contemporary luxury. Consequentially, luxury becomes less about the ownership of rare objects and more about the creation of unique, memorable, and meaningful experiences.

1.5 The 3 pillars of luxury: heritage, craftsmanship and creativity

1.5.1 Heritage: the importance of legacy, tradition and brand's history

Heritage is widely recognized as one of the most important and defining elements of a brand's identity, considered the core dimension rooted in a brand's longevity, foundational values and symbolic assets, driven by the belief that a brand's history is not merely a backdrop but a strategic resource for differentiation and authenticity (Urde et al., 2007; Beverland, 2005).

According to the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix developed by Urde (2013), heritage is one of the fundamental integrated elements that shape how a brand expresses itself to the outside world, influencing both its positioning and communication strategy.

Moreover, the Cambridge dictionary defines heritage as "*features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, which come from the past and are still important.*"

However, while this definition highlights the cultural and historical continuity embedded in the concept of heritage, it remains quite broad and general.

In contrast, Urde et al. (2007) previously offered a more nuanced perspective within the branding context, arguing that not all brands with a long history can be classified as *heritage brands*.

The authors indeed introduced a key distinction between a *brand with heritage* and a *heritage brand*: the latter is the one that intentionally and strategically emphasizes its heritage as a central element of its identity and positioning.

Ergo, this intentional use of the past to shape the brand's present and future sets heritage brands apart, reflecting a conscious effort to draw meaning, authenticity, and value from their historical roots (ibid).

Moreover, a further distinction must be made between the concepts of *history* and *heritage*, which are often used interchangeably but differ in meaning and purpose within brand management.

While history refers strictly to past events as something that has occurred and is completed, heritage, by contrast, is a selective and interpretative process that draws from the past to shape the present and inform the future with valuable insights (Urde et al.,2007).

As noted by the authors , referring to Lowenthal book “The Heritage Crusade and the spoils of history, 1998”, history is about what *was*, whereas heritage is about what is *valued* from the past, identifying and preserving elements of a brand’s historical identity that continue to hold relevance and significance in a contemporary context (*ibid*).

Moreover, within these two concepts there is an important shift in the temporal dimension; while historical accounts are necessarily rooted in the past, heritage operates across three interconnected time frames: past, present, and future.

Heritage brands do not merely reflect on what has been, but they actively construct a sense of continuity that aligns past achievements with current values and future aspirations.

In this sense, heritage is not merely a retrospective celebration of the past but becomes both a celebration of history and a form of "history in the making," shaping the evolving story of the brand. (Hudson & Balmer, 2013).

Therefore, an essential question arises in modern branding: “Why should brands preserve heritage in luxury, when changing and renewal is their *raison d’être*?” (Morley et McMahon,2011).

The reason why is that brands hold a strong bond with consumers through heritage and the emotional connection and response it creates, strengthening the relationship between past eras and people (Morley et McMahon, 2011).

In such evolving landscape, where consumers are immersed in unpredictable changes and shifts within their needs and requests, heritage and the personal attachment to brand’s traditions become the essential and leading elements of the brand’s value (Dryl,2022).

Luxury heritage brands, therefore, succeed when they manage to balance timeless tradition with forward-thinking innovation.

As Okonkwo (2007) notes, the most enduring luxury brands are those that effectively draw on their historical foundations while adapting their legacy to remain culturally and technologically relevant, finding pertinence in the present and future, while levering from their past and adapting it to their future capabilities.

Furthermore, within this framework, storytelling emerges as a powerful mean of communication, enabling brands to express their values, historical evolution, and cultural narratives in ways that

emotionally engage consumers (Fog et al., 2010). Throughout compelling narratives, luxury brands can narrate a story which involves its consumers, highlighting their own past and stimulating emotional responses, reinforcing the associations that define its identity and origins (Morley et McMahon, 2011).

Ultimately, heritage functions as a connective bridge between brands' historical foundations and its relevance in the modern marketplace, allowing them to remain connected to their foundational identity while evolving in response to modern expectations (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Alexander, 2009).

1.5.1.2 Heritage within flagship stores: where past meets consumers

Starting from the premise that heritage serves as the crucial link between a brand's history and modern consumers, particular attention must be drawn to the physical and experiential spaces through which brands communicate their identity and values.

According to Jeong et al. (2024), the evolving consumer approach to the purchasing experience, shaped by a search for authenticity and emotional depth, has transformed the retail space into an experiential platform which is deeply intertwined with the past and culture of brands themselves. Within these environments, consumers live immersive, sensory-rich experiences that engage them on a personal and emotional level, while these sites become the places where the heritage and cultural DNA are expressed and embodied (ibid).

Therefore, luxury stores become immersive environments where brands can embody and communicate their heritage, through deliberate choices in materials, architectural elements, in-store rituals, and the overall atmosphere, all of which contribute to shaping and enriching the consumer's experience (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

Indeed, within luxury every element, down to the smallest aesthetic or sensorial detail, contributes to the storytelling process reflecting the brand's historical legacy.

In this sense, heritage in luxury is not limited to archival materials or founding dates but is a living construct, continuously reinterpreted through consumer experience and spatial expression (Jeong et al., 2024).

Hence, through architecture, interior design, service rituals, and symbolic cues, these spaces allow the consumer not only to observe but to *live* the brand's story. As is, the retail environment becomes a vital touchpoint for the performance and communication of heritage, reinforcing the brand's authenticity and distinctiveness (Joy et al., 2014)

As stated by Urdon et al. (2007), a clear example of tangible brand heritage can be found within brand stores which leverage on iconic storytelling and elements which become the fundamental points of distinction within brands and their commercials.

Thus, brands' flagships stores are presented as the main link between the brand's history and consumers, whilst creating a bridge with the future and bringing those historical elements within its modern communication and marketing (Dion et Borraz, 2015).

Hence, within these spaces, a plurality of concepts emerges, as stores become the idealization of myths, places which mean both prohibition and sacralization of luxury itself.

Since the origins of humankind, myths have been used to explain and provide a rational meaning to our origins, present life and future events (Dion et Borraz, 2015; Boccardi et al., 2016).

However, within luxury, myths are generated around the figure of the brand's founder, which becomes a mythological figure, the genie who has brought to life all the brand's values and creations. Therefore, it is within retail stores that this concept is expressed, as these places become sort of temples of the founders, which include portraits and possessions of this figure, plus elements of inspirations and muse for future collections.

For example, The Cartier store on the Rue de la Paix recreates perfectly what the building looked like when Louis Cartier moved there in the 19th century and contains a room called "Louis Cartier's office" which is decorated with all his personal belongings, and this clearly explains how retail stores can be a link between heritage and the foundations of a brand.

Since myths are used to make complex ideas and concepts more explainable and accessible to people, they also contribute to the sacralization of luxury by establishing boundaries, limits and prohibitions. Luxury's exclusivity and inaccessibility is indeed what has always distinguished luxury, becoming sacred that is to say separated and isolated due to several prohibitions.

Accordingly, heritage stores are often characterized by some private areas which are not accessible to the public, considered sacred spaces, the heart and depth of the brand itself and which fully represent the prohibition linked to the sacralization.

However, brands can open their sacred spaces, to let special consumers experience the sacrality and magic of founders personal and intimate places such as coco Chanel's apartment at 31 rue Cambon, which usually instead is protected and close to the public.

In this way consumers are given the chance to catch a glimpse of the private and hidden side of the brand's heritage and founder, unravelling the elements, the atmosphere and the places which inspired the creation of such iconic brands.

As Hede and Kellet (2011) suggest this aligns with the concept of brand museums whereas flagship stores function as "narrative environments", where brand heritage is not only displayed but actively performed, shaping consumers perceptions and reinforcing brand identity, while levering of the sacred side of luxury.

Furthermore, on the concept of sacralization are also built the rituals which emerge within luxury stores and heritage.

There are some specific sets of codes and rituals which are continuously repeated and pursued, from fashion shows which represent the most representative and explicative moment of heritage embedded with rituals, to the small rituals which exist in retail stores and are constantly repeated everyday (Dion et Arnould, 2011; Dion et Borraz, 2015)

The atmosphere you can feel within the stores, the slight and gentle music, the attention to every small detail, the smell, colours and lights, how client advisors present themselves to you, the rituals which are followed when showing the luxury good, from using gloves to showing the product inside a protected couvet, these all are part of a set of specific luxury codes.

In this way flagship stores become more than simple places in which consumers enter to buy a luxury product, but they live an experience which will tackle all their 5 senses, through music, light, scent, texture and manners, indicating that there is a sacralization in everything that is done and nothing is left to chance(Podder et Paul,2020).

Nevertheless, heritage cannot be considered an isolated or static concept confined to the past but has to coexist with the intrinsic and present role it has within pop-culture and society.

In the context of luxury branding, heritage is increasingly analysed through modern lenses, particularly as brands strive to establish meaningful emotional connections with current and future consumers.

Beverland (2005) argued that luxury brands leverage their historical narratives not merely as a point of origin but as a strategic tool to signal authenticity, quality, and timeless relevance.

Furthermore, Kapferer (2012) highlights that luxury brands must continuously reinterpret their legacy to maintain cultural relevance, particularly as consumer expectations evolve in an era of digital immediacy and social media.

In this sense, brand heritage becomes a living construct, constantly performed, visualized, and recontextualized within contemporary discourse (Alexander, 2009).

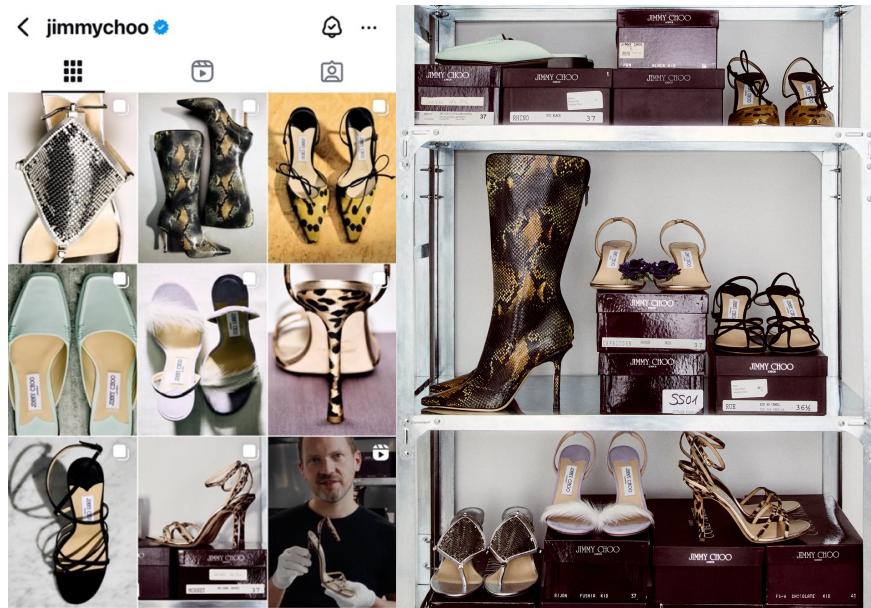
In the contemporary luxury landscape, brands that are seeking emotional connections with both current and future consumers turn to their archives, not merely as sources of creative inspiration, but as strategic tools for storytelling and emotional branding.,

By retrieving and showcasing elements of their past, brands highlight their foundational essence and reaffirm their longstanding presence within cultural memory, enabling the archives revivals to spotlight the brands' origins, core values, and the elements that have contributed to their longstanding cultural presence.

An illustrative example of this approach is Jimmy Choo's May 2025 archival initiative, which to commemorate its 30th anniversary, partnered with Moda Operandi to launch a capsule collection titled "The Archive: 1997–2001," reviving eight iconic shoe styles from its early years (Marie Claire, 2025)

The collection pays in fact homage to the brand's early designs, including the knee-high python boot made famous by Carrie Bradshaw in Season 3 of "Sex and the City", and making the past of the brand relive within modern times, levering on iconic cultural scenes which live rent free in consumers' mind.

As stated by the Stylist Jessi Frederick "Reviving these styles is part of this larger movement—tapping the archive to bring us back to another time and place... I love when designers go back to their DNA."'" ("For One Night Only, Jimmy Choo and Moda Operandi Recreated Carrie ...")



In explaining the rationale and meanings behind Jimmy Choo's archival revival, the brand's creative director, Sandra Choi, emphasized the importance of revisiting the early years of the label, which she considers embodying the foundational identity and enduring values of the brand, stating: “*We looked*

at three decades of work and dialed back to the first five years. Why? Because those years truly represent the heart and soul of Jimmy Choo—they’re our roots, where it all began, ”.

In this sense heritage and archives become brands’ way to develop a continuity with their past, grasping onto what has been and gaining inspiration for future activities and innovations highlighting themes such as glamour, femininity, and craftsmanship that remain central to its identity today.

Rather than viewing the archive as a retrospective exercise, the brand interprets these early designs as a source of continuity.⁷

Therefore, since it has been highlighted the strong coexistence between creativity and heritage, the two have been analysed as two complementary concepts: with heritage being the stored, past culture of a brand, creativity becomes the brand’s new culture which gathers from the past to develop a new brand legacy (Pistilli, 2018).

Thus, heritage in luxury branding is not simply about preservation, it is about curation, adaptation, and cultural dialogue, and yet brands that succeed in balancing their legacy with contemporary relevance are those that recognize heritage both as a foundation and a living, evolving narrative.

In this sense, within luxury branding Beverland (2005) argues that luxury brands leverage their historical narratives not merely as a point of origin but as a strategic tool to signal authenticity, quality, and timeless relevance, while heritage is increasingly reactivated through modern lenses, to establish meaningful emotional connections with current and future consumers.

1.5.2. Craftsmanship: the art of luxury production through artisanal excellence and human expertise

When referring to luxury, one of the most resonant and persisting concepts is craftsmanship – the mastery skill and artisanal excellence – which is brought within creations and that provides luxury products with their unique value and authenticity.

According to Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore research centre, craftsmanship indeed denotes both the skill of the artisan and the resulting quality of the product, being the innate or learnt capacity of a person to create something special and beautiful with its own hands.

Moreover, Mark Roskill (1977), gathering from the book Medieval craftsmen (1975), defines craftsmanship as the fundamental element of society, since human activities have always relied on skills, which existed and were the result of the coordination between brain and hands.

⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/02e5a560-3d97-4e37-96d9-9cff7bb6855d>
<https://www.marieclaire.com/fashion/jimmy-choo-archival-collection-carrie-bradshaw-heels/>

Furthermore, Glenn Adamson (2013) frames craft as a way of thinking and engaging with the world, suggesting that craftsmanship is not defined solely by technique but by intention, presence, and cultural responsiveness.

Thus, these definitions tie closely with UNESCO's recognition of traditional craftsmanship as "a vital expression of intangible cultural heritage", where knowledge is transmitted across generations, preserving identity and authenticity.

Therefore, the term "craft" itself conveys more than just manual skills but reflects a philosophy that blends technique with cultural and emotional resonance.

According to Hawley and Frater (2017), craft represents a synthesis of human values, artistic passion, and technical skill that transcends time, geography, and trend cycles, being not only a technical process but also a cultural and symbolic act that communicates meanings and emotions to the consumer.

However, the concept of craftsmanship cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the artisan, the creator of such complex and elaborated goods and giving this figure the right importance. Dolce e Gabbana within their exhibition "From the heart to hands" celebrate and venerate artisans' handcraft, their patience, workmanship and skills through which they stich, cut and embroider not just fabrics, but dreams and aspirations, developing what can be considered visual and tangible poetry.

Thus, the luxury industry has built its success on a form of storytelling that emphasizes craftsmanship, rarity, uniqueness, personalized works, and exclusivity, in which such elements are designed to evoke emotional value and a sense of privilege.

Finally, it is at the heart of this narrative the figure of the artisan stands out, throughout those skills and dedication which embody the very essence of luxury (Kapferer, 2019).

Historically, the artisan played a central role in the production process, often overseeing the creation of a product from conception to completion.

Moreover, within past production realization processes, the artisan was the person who was involved from the creation process to the distribution phase, being part of all the procedures from the beginning to the end (Sennett, 2008).

Thereby, artisans were intimately involved in every stage, ensuring that their personal expertise and human touch permeated the final product (ibid).

Yet the scale and complexity of modern production often prevent this level of involvement today, the craftsman figure remains essential to the identity of luxury brands.

If we recall that in ancient Greece there was no clear distinction between artist and artisan, as both were regarded as creators who lived by their craft, it becomes evident how closely intertwined artistic expression and technical skill once were (Kapferer, 2019).

However, at the beginning of the 16th century, artists started to be viewed as independent creators, pursuing beauty and emotional expression through art for its own sake, developing beautiful creations which reflected deeper emotions.

Besides, artisans have remained closely tied to *tekhne*—the mastery of handcrafted techniques used to reproduce fine objects based on specialized know-how, while exercising their creativity and aesthetic sensitivity within peculiar creations. (Kapferer, 2019).

Therefore, the craftsman's existential role remains central, being not merely a producer of goods but an owner of knowledge, tradition, and creativity, an expert person and an artist with a genius vocation (Bhaduri et Stanforth, 2017; Ni, 2020)

As Tarquini et al. (2022) argue, artisans are *cultural agents* whose practices reflect a deep engagement with materiality, technique, and meaning, whose work represents an intersection between individual expression and collective heritage, making craftsmanship a powerful tool for luxury brands seeking to communicate authenticity, heritage, and human connection.

Moreover, craftsmen are the perfect point of contact between luxury companies and consumers, being the interpreters of consumer desires, much like tailors who once created specific garments based on intimate knowledge of their clients (Tarquini et al, 2022).

Therefore, as Hawley and Frater (2017) suggest, the relationship established between artisan and consumer can be indeed linked to the traditional bond between tailor and client: deeply personal, trust-based, and rooted in a shared process of co-creation.

In this context, the artisan becomes not just a maker, but a facilitator of meaningful, individualized luxury experiences, reinforcing the emotional and human dimensions that are central to contemporary understandings of luxury and modifying that relationship from brand-consumer to artisan-consumer. As Campbell (2005, see Hawley & Frater, 2017) suggests, the figure of the artisan is the one who invests him/herself within the entire creation process so that the final outcome is filled with authenticity, attention, and personal investment, as qualities that are increasingly valued in a world dominated by automation and impersonal production.

Moreover, as stated by the authors, craft creations become an intricate combination between artisan skills with human values that go beyond time, space and culture and which leverage on the passion and ideas provided by the craftsmen.

Additionally, throughout the Craft Council Exhibition “Added Value”, Montgomery (2016) delineated a set of relevant characteristics which define craft and differentiate it from conventional luxury.

These features include uniqueness, authenticity to the maker, sustainability for both the artisan and their community, and a tactile quality that fosters a sense of intimacy and emotional connection. These elements not only enhance the perceived value of the object but also foster deeper consumer engagement through storytelling and sensory experience (Adamson, 2013).

Therefore, even though craftsmanship is embedded within luxury goods, it is the consumer’s ability to acknowledge the work that is behind the creation he is buying that makes craftsmanship even more valuable.

As stated by Wang (2022) consumers’ choice to invest in such products is linked to their willingness to learn more about the product and to learn more for their personal culture and knowledge, gaining what are defined as luxury competencies.

As is, linked to definition of craftsmanship there is the concept of connoisseurship, which is the skill, the valuable asset through which consumers, who have a specific interest and passion, are able to judge, admire with a critical eye and rational reasoning that topic or field (Hawley and Frater, 2017). Therefore, it is thanks to connoisseurship that consumers develop a bond with the craftsmen, recognising their skilled work, while craftsmanship becomes one of luxury’s most valuable currencies,

As highlighted by *Vogue Business* (2025), brands like Loewe and Bottega Veneta bring artisans to the forefront, through live demonstrations, behind-the-scenes workshops, and immersive retail experiences, which deepen consumer engagement and emotional resonance, while artisanship becomes the essential element of their storytelling.

However, a pressing question continues to emerge in discussions of craftsmanship in luxury: are luxury goods still truly the product of artisanal hands, or have automation and industrialization taken over, gradually eroding the authenticity and uniqueness traditionally associated with the artisan’s touch?

In today’s market, the iconic image of the artisan—patiently shaping each piece by hand—faces growing challenges as brands scale production and integrate advanced technologies.

It is important to recognize that while luxury brands often emphasize their artisanal heritage, not all their products are the result of high-level craftsmanship and handmade work, since many items now include elements of mechanization or standardized production processes.

Although these premises, a new way of conceiving luxury has started to spread, conceived as a revival of the artisan excellence and exquisite taste which is put by handymen in the creation of luxury goods, *bespoke luxury*.

Bespoke luxury represents the quintessential type of luxury, which in a sort of way, returns to its original meaning of creativity combined with artisan excellence, know-how and savoir faire, relying on the concepts of one of a kind, patience and custom-made, and opposing to the automatization and democratization of luxury, where brands produce limited quantities, making product that effectively consumers want and request (Hawley et Frater,2017)

In response to this shift, many luxury houses have been actively working to preserve and revitalize artisanal skills by founding training programs, laboratories, schools, and ateliers, where they teach the crafts skills to young generations in order to revive the art of craftsmanship, and artisanship (Arrigo,2016)

For example, Brunello Cucinelli⁸supports local craftsmanship in Solomeo, Italy, where young artisans are trained in traditional skills while earning dignified wages, beside Loro Piana⁹ promotes the excellence of natural fibres and hand-finishing through its artisanal processes and ways to create small creations at home.

Moreover, Brioni, known for its bespoke tailoring, runs tailoring schools to pass on sartorial techniques to future generations; similarly, Santoni has established internal academies to teach the art of handmade shoemaking, ensuring that its heritage lives on in each pair produced.

Ultimately, as Richard Sennett (2008) argues the rediscovering of craftsmanship values is essential, not conceiving it as a nostalgic return to the past, but as a forward-thinking effort to establish again the autonomy, social value of the artisan, and his personal dialogue with consumers.

Hence, these values, when reimagined in a contemporary context, can contribute to a renaissance of quality and meaning in production.

Similarly, Chris Anderson, director of *Wired* magazine, suggests that “the next industrial revolution will be led by a new generation of enterprises that bridge high technology and craftsmanship, producing highly personalized, small-scale innovations” (Campana et al., 2016).

In this renewed framework, artisanal skill embodies not only heritage and authenticity but also adaptability and creative potential, ensuring that luxury remains meaningful, personal, and relevant in this continuously evolving cultural and economic landscape.

⁸<https://www.scuolemestieridarte.it/scuola/scuola-dei-mestieri-di-solomeo-umbria/>

⁹ <https://sa.loropiana.com/en/harrods-workshop-tutorials>

Ultimately, this intersection signals a profound transformation within the luxury sector, where tradition and innovation intertwine to create a dynamic synergy and where craftsmanship is revitalized and redefined as a fundamental pillar that will shape the future of luxury.

1.5.3. Creativity: its role in brand storytelling, from design to advertising

With craftsmanship anchoring luxury to artisanal excellence, heritage, and savoir-faire, creativity emerges as its essential counterpart, shaping how these values are reinterpreted and communicated to contemporary audiences.

If craftsmanship ensures uniqueness and authenticity through material skills and tradition, creativity elevates these qualities into narratives, aesthetics, and cultural symbols that resonate on a global scale. In this sense, creativity represents the highest form of luxury's self-expression, transforming the artisan's savoir-faire into stories that inspire desire, aspiration, and identity (Roskill, 1977; Tarquini et al., 2022).

Indeed, without creativity luxury would risk losing one of its most distinctive features: its ability to continuously reinvent itself while remaining rooted in heritage (Pistilli, 2018).

Embedded in every singular phase, from the intuition of designers to the vision of artistic directors, the strategic choices of marketers and the collaborations with artists and cultural institutions, creativity permeates every stage of the luxury value chain—from conception and design to communication and storytelling (Cavender et Kincade, 2014).

Therefore, craftsmanship and creativity are not opposing forces but rather complementary dimensions: the former provides the substance and authenticity, while the latter translates these elements into cultural relevance and symbolic power.

Hence, to fully grasp this symbiotic relationship and creativity in its purest form, it is necessary to explore how the concept itself has been theorized and defined within literature, tracing its multidimensional role as both a human capacity and a strategic driver within the luxury sector.

Accordingly, the concept of creativity has been discussed and analysed by scholars over the time, providing a range of definitions which focused on the multidimensionality of the concept itself, defining it both as the ability of creative people and the capability of generating results which are unusual (Green et al., 2023).

Gathering from social and educational psychology, creativity has been defined as the ability of an individual to think out of the box, establishing unusual solutions to a defined problem.

Therefore, starting from this definition different theories and concepts have been developed, with the final outcome that creativity can be considered as the extent to which a process is different, unusual, novel, unique and original than others¹⁰.

Additionally, scholars have discussed around the existence of different conceptualizations of creativity, distinguishing the meaning of the term applied to “creative products”, considered as the attribute found in novel creations, and the definition of creativity applied instead to a set of processes and moments (Green et al., 2023).

Thus, to explain and develop creativity existent theories 5 recurrent elements have been taken into account: the actor, the process, the outcome, domain and finally the space (Wingström et al.,2022)

Therefore, as Amabile (1983) states, since creativity is unfolded through its innovative and unusual attributes, time becomes an essential element which drives brands’ positioning, becoming the driving force and the intangible magic that forges the brand, its heritage and values, making it stand out with its novelty and uniqueness.

It is within this conceptualization that the interconnection of creativity and time has been developed, generating different models and perspectives, which delve deeper on the relationship and dependence of the two. (Tolkamp et al, 2025)

The authors defined two main streams of studies around creativity, the linear perspective and the iterative, which even though seem far apart and different, must be considered two related and gradual processes, which intertwine and develop together around the concept of creativity.

If on one side there is a linear, consequential process, made up by clear sequences and phases, the iterative model represents a shifting, non-linear process, in which ideas and creativity evolve around streams of consciousness, changes of meanings and procedures, developing from a vague concept and producing at the end a creative work as its final outcome.

Thus, developing on the idea that creativity is seen as a process, scholars have defined different cognitive skills which are enabled when working with creativity, *divergent thinking* and *convergent thinking* (Wingstrom et al.,2023).

The two additional theories evolve around 2 processes which can be enabled to generate creative outcomes: within convergent thinking a set of thoughts and ideas are paired in a structural and defined

¹⁰ <https://hbr.org/2013/06/creativity-in-advertising-when-it-works-and-when-it-doesnt>).

way to produce just a single solution and final product/ process, instead within divergent thinking multiple ways of operating are enabled to obtain many solutions to solve a problem

1.5.3.1 Chronos and creation: the enduring link between time and creativity

It is within these theories that the temporality within creative processes emerges, arising the following question and issues:

“Does creativity exist because of time? Is there a relationship and interconnection between time and creativity?”

Within creativity studies and research, there have been many definitions and interpretations of time, seen both as an external and internal factor, which influences creative people choices and behaviours (Kaufman et Baggetto,2022).

Even though studies haven't always given the right focus to the perception of time and have just focused on the 4 P's framework (person, product, process and press), shifts were made within the importance of the “when” attribute.

Furthermore, it has been discussed the relationship between creativity, highlighting the relativity of time and multiple conceptions of the term.

Philosophical interpretations of time have long shaped our understanding of human experience, including creativity. For Plato, time was not absolute but a “moving image of eternity,” a temporal reflection of ideal, timeless forms, highlighting the duality between the eternal nature of ideas and their manifestation in the material world.

St. Augustine, in contrast, proposed a more introspective and psychological view, asserting that time exists primarily in the human mind through memory (past), perception (present), and anticipation (future), rather than as an objective reality (*Confessions*). This aligns with creative cognition, where imaginative processes are often shaped by subjective experiences of time.

Later, Henri Bergson distinguished between *mechanical time* (measurable, chronological) and *la durée* (inner lived time), emphasizing the fluid, qualitative experience of time that fuels intuition and creativity (Bergson, 1889).

Similarly, Martin Heidegger conceptualized time not as a neutral container but as a fundamental aspect of *Dasein*—our being-in-the-world—suggesting that temporality is intrinsic to human understanding and potentiality (*Being and Time*, 1927).

Therefore, these philosophical insights collectively highlighted the idea that time, far from being a neutral or linear constraint, is deeply intertwined with human consciousness and its creative expression.

Additionally, further theories considered time as flexible and something which is not singular, but that has different interpretations¹¹.

Indeed, there have been a series of different views of time which can be classified in the following ways:

- Internal clock, which can be considered as our psychological time, defined and scanned by our own emotions
- Biological clock (day-night cycle)
- Calendar time (cyclical and social)

Hence, during nowadays life rhythms and pressured by social expectation, time becomes an essential element which has to be optimized and used in the best way possible.

In this sense, creativity becomes a term which assumes numerous meanings, being a multifaced concept that changes connotation based on the moment in which is used, becoming a process, a product or a skill. (Budelacci,2023)

Gathering from previous studies regarding creativity, in 2002 Sinha, established 2 different theories that explained creativity, *divergent production* and the *investment theory of creativity*.

Taking from similar antecedent definitions of creativity, divergent production theory defines creativity as the set of solutions and reactions following a specific problem.

Creativity within the investment theory approach instead, is showcased as a combination of different attributes which take part of the creative process:

- Intelligence
- Knowledge
- Motivation
- Encouraging environment
- Appropriate thinking styles
- Appropriate personality

¹¹ <https://www.grapheine.com/en/graphic-design-en/time-creation-how-does-time-impact-our-creative-brain>

Furthermore, it has been cleared that the creative processes are made up by numerous phases which are intertwined and combined to produce the final outcome (Tolkamp et al.,2025).

The authors indeed discussed on the existence of multiple models which explained the creative processes, firstly delineating the origins of this process, presented with the definition of a problem, to the development and articulation throughout the search and encoding of the information, combining in a sequence the phases to produce the creative outcome.

Moreover, Johar et al. (2001) presented three main streams of studies which revolved around the creative process, explaining the mental activities and final result they developed.

Within the first conceptualization, scholars discussed on the peculiarity of creative processes, which are distinguished from everyday repeated activities and rational mental processes.

Thus, creative activities are considered as a leap of freedom, an irrational and fast moment of inspiration that cannot be reconstructed, and which can be explained as the process of thinking outside the box and developing new ways of thinking (Johar et al.,2001).

On the other side, instead the wave of reductionist research defined creative activities as processes that can be compared with everyday ordinary mental activities, without there being a real difference with the choices made every day.

As a matter of fact, they explain the existence of these creative processes as the phase in which the creative and innovative idea are born due to the overcome of the constraints imposed by ordinary mental categories.

Finally, the third perspective combines the previous ones, defining the essential basis of creativity, as the perfect balance between rational everyday thinking and groundbreaking ideas.

However, as stated by some scholars, within the design process creativity comes out and expresses itself through a specific moment – the creative leap- in which the creative person, identifies the significant and relevant moment in which everything changes, and the main concept starts to emerge (Dorst et Cross, 2001).

Therefore, it emerges that even though there have been numerous tentative in trying to explain creativity, this concept emerges as complex and articulated and can be clearly understood with a breakdown within the different creative fields.

1.5.3.2 Creativity within the design process

As creativity has been defined as those set of attributes which are considered when defining a novel creation, the role of the designers stands out, valued as the person who detains a specific set of manual and tangible skills, used to express his creativity.

Historically, designers have been the initiators and the driving force of luxury brand, being simultaneously the originators, the creators, producers and marketers, in an era when these different figures were still not separated and distinguished (Cavender et Kincade, 2014).

Therefore, within the creative process design must be considered a profound and meaningful phase, which does not indicate just the development of final products, but is a creator element of brand identity and a powerful tool of storytelling (Sachinika, 2023).

The creative act, particularly in design and other visual arts, is deeply tied to temporality. (Sennett, 2008). As Adam (2004) notes, creativity is not simply a linear progression, but a temporally embedded process shaped by social, cultural, and emotional rhythm, which become embedded in the authenticity and emotional depth of their work.

In this sense, time plays a fundamental and often underestimated role in the creative process, particularly for designers, artists, and painters whose work relies on depth, reflection, and emotional engagement.

As Sennett (2008) explains in *The Craftsman*, the development of skilled, meaningful creative work demands not just talent, but time-intensive dedication, developing a "dialogue between hand and head" that cannot be rushed without compromising authenticity.

Indeed, designers, much like painters and sculptors, require time to conceptualize, iterate, and refine their creations—time not only for execution, but for reflection and experimentation

For instance, designers vision time not merely as a logistical constraint but as a creative resource that enables experimentation, failure, and iteration, all of which are crucial to producing innovative and culturally resonant designs (Cross, 2006).

Similarly, painters and other visual artists engage with time both practically and symbolically: the duration spent with a canvas, the distance created between viewing and revisiting a work, and the emotional maturation that occurs over time all inform their final output (Tolkamp et al., 2023).

Barbara Adam (2004) emphasizes that creativity occurs in "lived time"—a subjective, socially embedded experience—rather than mechanical clock-time, reinforcing the idea that the quality of

creative production is not solely determined by speed or efficiency but by the creator's temporal immersion and attentiveness.

However, while time is an essential component in fostering creativity, it can also become a source of pressure when constrained by deadlines, productivity demands, or economic pressures.

When artists and designers are pressured by short timelines or commercial urgency, their ability to explore, reflect, and revise their work with the depth and breadth often diminished and compromised (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

Moreover, creative professionals may find themselves navigating the paradox of being expected to produce "original" ideas on a predictable schedule, a contradiction that reveals the tension between industrialized productivity and authentic artistic exploration (Caves, 2000).

Thus, across disciplines, time functions not only as a necessary condition for crafting original work but also as a symbol of care, intention, and human presence within the creative act—elements that remain difficult for even the most advanced AI systems to simulate authentically (Manovich, 2013). In this context, generative AI has emerged as a powerful tool capable of bypassing many of the temporal challenges faced by human creators. AI systems can produce designs, texts, images, or music at unprecedented speed, reducing the time needed for brainstorming, prototyping, or even execution (McCormack et al., 2019).

Moreover, these technologies are increasingly integrated into creative workflows to assist with ideation, generate alternatives, or simulate stylistic variations, thus alleviating some of the time pressure placed on human creators (*ibid*).

Unlike human creatives, AI is not constrained by fatigue, emotional fluctuations, or cognitive overload—it can iterate endlessly and rapidly across styles or concepts, offering efficiency gains in commercial contexts.

However, while these tools can assist in ideation and technical execution, they often lack the embodied knowledge, historical consciousness, and cultural intentionality that human designers bring to their practice (Manovich, 2013).

Therefore, the designer's touch—whether in haute couture tailoring or industrial product design—carries with it a form of creative authorship that AI-generated outputs struggle to replicate.

In this evolving landscape, the designer remains a key figure, not just for their ability to produce, but for their capacity to infuse objects with meaning, emotion, and cultural identity—qualities that require time, intentionality, and human insight.

1.5.3.3 Creativity within advertising

Creativity stands as a relevant component within advertising, not only as a stylistic choice but as a strategic asset capable of transforming brand communication into meaningful consumer experiences. In this regard, De Pelsmacker et al. (2007) defined creativity in advertising as a “violation of expectations”, underlying its power to surprise consumers by breaking conventional codes, being both novel, meaningful and connected to consumers’ values.

Therefore, when effectively applied throughout the creative and distribution processes, creativity in advertising has been shown to enhance consumer awareness, increase brand recall, improve recognition and brand attitudes (Till & Baack, 2005).

In this sense, advertising represents one of the few professions in which creativity plays a pivotal role and the people who work within this field are named “creatives”, deeply underlying the importance that creativity and artistry processes have within this field.

As stated, advertisers are not the only people who work with creativity, but they are the ones who are labelled as creatives for the activities they pursue

Creativity in this sense acts as a vital enabler in strategic communication, allowing brands to present product features, values, or social stances in ways that feel fresh, relevant, and emotionally engaging (Falmouth University, 2022).

Rather than simply delivering information, creative advertising transforms abstract brand promises into compelling stories, metaphors, and visuals that resonate with consumers' personal aspirations and cultural frames of reference.

Thus, creativity serves as a valuable helper to marketing and advertising, allowing brands to focus on an issue and communicating through innovative, fresh and distinctive way the benefits and values behind a brand and its products¹².

Therefore, scholars have tried to understand why creative advertising is so effective.

Recent studies have focused on the rational side of creativity, emphasizing the neurological and cognitive dimensions, leveraging on neuroscience and neuromarketing techniques which could explain the reasoning and behaviours behind creatives choices (Cascini et al., 2022).

Hence, studies using neuromarketing tools such as EEG and fMRI have been able to measure the brain activity of designers, understanding the processes and basis of design, studying the multiple brain regions and neural systems which are activated when generating a creative thought (Green et al., 2023).

¹² (<https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/news/what-creative-advertising>)

Therefore, since the main academics' purpose has been to define what does it mean really for an advertisement to be creative, different scholars proposed the elements which define and contradistinguish them.

To further clarify what defines creative advertising, Reinartz & Saffert (2013) proposed a comprehensive framework identifying five key dimensions that make advertising truly creative and effective.

Firstly, originality, refers to the use of rare, surprising, or unique elements that break away from conventional storytelling, capturing the consumer's attention through unexpectedness.

Flexibility involves shifting between perspectives or strategies within the ad, which broadens its interpretive potential and appeal.

Elaboration introduces unexpected details or simple ideas that deepen the message, which develop around deeper and complex meanings yet effective and impressive

Synthesis combines seemingly unrelated elements into coherent, meaningful wholes—encouraging viewers to make connections and derive meaning in creative ways. In this way, elements which in everyday life could not coexist become a unique blend and perfect pair

Finally, *artistic value* speaks to the aesthetic quality of an ad and its pleasing elements.

When visual, verbal, and auditory elements are harmonized and refined, they tackle consumers' senses in all different ways and make the ads memorable and unforgettable (Smith et al., 2007; Reinartz & Saffert, 2013)¹³.

Therefore, creativity becomes the key element that produces successful and impactful advertising, serving as the foundation upon which brands can build strong emotional resonance, distinctiveness, and memorability (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2014).

In a saturated media environment where consumers are exposed to hundreds of messages daily, only those campaigns that stand out through originality, relevance, and aesthetic appeal are likely to break through the noise (Pieters et al., 2002).

Hence, creative advertising does not merely attract attention, though it fosters cognitive and emotional engagement, enhances meanings communication, and improves both short and long-term recall allowing consumers to connect with brands on a more symbolic and experiential level (Ang et al., 2007)

¹³ <https://hbr.org/2013/06/creativity-in-advertising-when-it-works-and-when-it-doesnt>):

In conclusion, these insights confirm that creativity is not an ornamental feature of advertising, but rather a strategic necessity that plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making, brand loyalty, and marketplace success.

1.6 The rise of Generative ai – opportunities and challenges

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative and disruptive forces of the digital age, redefining not only technological systems and industrial workflows, but also the profound foundations of human interaction, creative expression, and idea generation.

Therefore, the origins of AI can be traced back to humanity longstanding desire of finding ways to enhance, deepen and better understand the mechanism of human intelligence, discovering the processes which lay beneath the surface of human rationality (Sheik et al.,2023).

History, literature and poetry have always narrated about the technological innovations built by men who wanted to go beyond human limits, created to enhance and overcome human capacities, while transforming traditional technologies (Sheik et al.,2023).

Recalling from the past, Ancient Greeks narrated the stories of whom, with their intelligence, tried to craft revolutionizing technologies that would make humans compete and reach gods, as Dedalus did with his creativities, from the wings crafted to escape from the maze to the giant Talos, built to protect the island of Crete.

Therefore, AI has always been present in history and lives, thus it has undergone changes in its conceptualization, definition and recognition based on the advancements made in technologies.

Artificial intelligence (AI) indeed nowadays has seamlessly merged within our daily life, becoming part of multiple tasks and processes that humans constantly pursue by facilitating and improving their mental activities (Kasinidou et al,2024).

However, even though throughout its daily usage AI seems a simple and immediate tool that simplifies human choices and behaviours, it must be intended as a much more complex technology which combines computation and knowledge, culture with society issues and that nowadays has become an integral part of our lives (Siemens et al.,2022).

Therefore, in recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force, significantly reshaping the ways in which individuals interact, think, and create across a wide range of industries and cultural domains.

From its origins, AI has aimed to simulate cognitive processes such as reasoning, learning, and problem-solving—core faculties traditionally attributed to human consciousness, being the combination between algorithms and mathematics, which developed neural networks, in order to simulate and explain human thinking processes (Shao et al.,2022).

Historically, the term "Artificial Intelligence" was firstly introduced by John McCarthy in 1956 during the seminal Dartmouth Conference, where AI was broadly defined as the science and engineering of creating machines capable of performing functions that required human intelligence, and which were fully capable of reproducing such mental processes (McCarthy et al., 2006).

Therefore, AI has been defined as "*a system's ability to correctly interpret external data, to learn from such data, and to use those learnings to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation*" (Nah et al.,2023).

Additionally, AI has commonly been presented as the set of algorithms and processes, which mimic humankind mental activities and operations, such as learning, comprehension, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, and autonomy while producing a final outcome given a previous prompt (Sheick et al.,2023; IBM,2024).

Furthermore, the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI HLEG) of the European Commission defines AI as a system capable of analysing its environment and taking actions—often with a degree of autonomy—to achieve specific objectives, aligning with Russell and Norvig definitions (2021), who describe AI as the study of agents that perceive their environment and maximizing their ability of reaching designated goals.

Although it is not simple to provide a unique definition of AI, since it actually represents an imitation of the intellect that humans still are not able to fully process and understand at its core, it is possible to breakdown the different phases it has undergone, to arrive to the closest modern conception and definition (Sheik et al.,2023).

Over time, definitions of AI have varied based on methodological and philosophical orientations, ranging from a computer science perspective, which relies on explicit representations and logical operations, to connectionist models (e.g. deep learning), which instead mimic neural structures and are capable of learning from large datasets and develop their own internal models based on experience and feedback (LeCun, Bengio, & Hinton, 2015).

Therefore, scholars stated the non-linearity of AI rise and affirmation, delineating 3 different phases and schools of thinking which have been recognised within AI development: symbolisms, connectionism and actionism (Shao et al.,2022).

These three stages have been indeed classified in Symbol AI, defined as the knowledge driven approach, data driven approach (based on deep learning) and finally the third generation Ai which combined seamlessly the 2 previous approaches.

Moreover, gathering from scholars' theories, 2 different approaches were outlined within the first wave of AI, defining the rule-based approach (a symbolic approach) and the connectionism approach (Sheik et. Al,2023).

Symbolic AI relies on the core principle that logical structures and rules are used by computers to encode knowledge and make decisions, using methods which rely on the "If X, then Y formula".

In contrast, between 1980 and 1990 connectionist AI rose, which uses artificial neural networks, leverages on processes that simulate the neuron activities in the brain, being fed and recognizing large quantities of data and obtaining useful and powerful patterns while recalling the biological neural activity.

Consequently, Russell and Norvig (2020) distinguished between systems that think like humans, act like humans, think rationally, and act rationally, encapsulating both "strong AI" (which aims to emulate consciousness or general intelligence) and "weak AI" (task-specific, rule-based systems).

Thus, AI today stands as a hybrid domain: at once technical and philosophical, theoretical and applied, deterministic and probabilistic. It encompasses systems that adapt, learn, perceive, and make decisions—ranging from basic automation to sophisticated generative models capable of producing language, images, and sound (Russell et Norvig,2020).

As a consequence, the definition of AI is deeply contextual and must be continuously revisited.

Scholars such as Floridi (2020) argue that AI should not be understood merely in terms of its imitation of human thought, but as a new form of artificial agency that expands and redefines the vision of intelligence itself.

In this view, AI is less about mimicking human minds and more about augmenting or transforming existing systems of knowledge, labour, and representation by achieving remarkable performance through pattern recognition and massive data processing.

Moreover, Crawford (2021) reminds us that AI systems are not neutral artifacts but are deeply embedded in cultural, political, and economic contexts that influence their design, deployment, and impact

Therefore, the multiple definitions of AI have emphasized the storytelling regarding the system's capacity to learn from data, understanding human language, adapting to new inputs, and improving performance over time, thereby progressively reducing or replacing the need for direct human intervention.

What constitutes “intelligent behaviour” evolves with technological progress, societal expectations, and ethical considerations, making AI not just a technological construct but a cultural and philosophical one as well (Crawford, 2021).

As a result, AI today is no longer seen merely as a tool that replicates human intelligence in specific tasks, but as a fluid and transformative framework that interacts with and reshapes its socio-technical environment, while reinterpreting reality through algorithmic logics (Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020).

1.6.1 Breaking down Generative AI: from definition to application

Within this technological evolving landscape, GAI enters as a disruptor in society and the digital landscape, generating final outcomes which difficultly can be distinguished by human created ones (Banh et Strobel, 2023).

While traditional AI excelled in analysis, prediction, and automation—using logical rules or statistical models to categorize data or optimize processes, GenAI extends these capabilities by creating novel content—text, images, video and audio—based on learned patterns.

However, its apparent novelty, does not arise from autonomous imagination or genuine innovation, but rather from the statistical recombination of existing data and information.

In this sense, GenAI functions as a simulator of originality and human mental processes, opening new creative frontiers while remaining confined within the boundaries of predefined domains.

(LeCun, Bengio, & Hinton, 2015; Radford et al., 2019; Nah et al., 2019).

Accordingly, Vaswani et al. (2017) discussed on one of the most significant moments within AI development with the introduction of transformer architecture, which allowed models to manage long-range connections and contextual relationships much better.

In this way, these improvements and advancements set the stage for generative models like OpenAI's GPT (Radford et al., 2019) and image-generating systems such as DALL·E (Ramesh et al., 2021), showing that machines could not only process but also create content with a level of fluency and originality similar to humans.

Therefore, unlike AI, which collects and analyses data and patterns previously given, generative AI can generate new data based on the patterns it has collected, analysed and learned, thank through natural given inputs, defined as prompts. (Oluwagbenro, 2024; Morris, 2023).

Starting from this conceptualization, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has been defined as “the set of machine-based systems designed to produce original and meaningful content, ranging from text and images to audio and video, by learning patterns from large datasets and deeply revolutionizing the way we work and communicate together” (Feuerriegel et al., 2023)

These systems indeed go beyond the simple replication, though operate through the creation of novel outputs that resemble human-generated content, often assisting humans within their everyday activities and tasks.

Therefore, since the multiple forms of AI generated contents which space within a range of different fields, numerous are the types of applications that have been implemented throughout the usage of this technology, shifting from business to healthcare and providing humans with valuable insights and supports (Nah et al.2023).

In healthcare, GENAI has been smartly introduced for many purposes, from diagnostics and analysis to assistance and support by becoming a helpful assistant in predicting, treating and monitoring patients (Sahin et Karayel,2024; Oluwagbenro, 2024; Nah et al, 2023).

In design and fashion, GenAI empowers practitioners to explore and develop new design variations through new combinations of colour palettes, fabric patterns, or architectural renderings, accelerating the ideation process while preserving human-directed aesthetics (Holmqvist et al., 2020; Oluwagbenro, 2024; Sahin et Karayel,2024).

Furthermore, **in marketing and advertising**, tools such as GPT-based assistants and image generators enable marketers to rapidly draft campaign copy, visualize conceptual advertising, and run A/B tests at scale, blending algorithmic efficiency with creative flexibility (Yang et al., 2025). Therefore, it has been demonstrated that GAI is able to replicate outputs that within society would be considered creative.

Artificial Intelligence has significantly reshaped the way brands approach advertising and interact with consumers, introducing a more data-driven and adaptive model of communication. With machine learning algorithms, companies are now able to analyse consumer behaviours, preferences, and browsing patterns to fine-tune their targeting strategies—ensuring that advertising content reaches the most relevant audience, at the most effective moment (Jarek & Mazurek, 2019).

Additionally, AI tools such as sentiment analysis, allow brands to monitor public opinion in real time, especially on social media platforms, enabling them to quickly adapt their tone and messaging in response to audience feedback, producing personalised marketing materials (Cambria et al., 2022).

Moreover, Generative AI has also found valuable use within the **manufacturing sector**.

Here, GenAI supports product development by generating optimized component designs, simulating production processes, and predicting system failures before they occur—ultimately reducing costs, waste, and lead times (Kotholliparambil et al., 2024).

Through generative design algorithms, manufacturers can input design parameters and let AI propose multiple, often unconventional, design alternatives that balance performance, sustainability, and material efficiency (Goh et al., 2019).

Yet, taken together, these numerous applications highlight a critical reflection: as Floridi (2020) asserts, GenAI challenges traditional notions of authorship, originality, becoming not just a tool but a supportive creative partner, becoming an indispensable asset across industries, capable of replicating tasks that have long been considered the domain of human creativity and decision-making. GenAI is not solely a technological advance; it is a cultural and creative evolution that redefines the way we conceptualize participation, innovation, creativity and value in sectors like advertising, design, and beyond, becoming a powerful accelerator of human creativity (Radford et al., 2019; Ramesh et al., 2021).

Therefore, this collaborative model shifts the creative process from a solitary act to a co-creative dialogue between human intuition and machine-generated suggestions, empowering human capabilities by combining with innovative forces (McCormack et al., 2019).

1.6.2 Threats and opportunities

AI has deeply affected our lives, entering subtly within our everyday tasks and activities, gaining with the passing of time increased space, taking over human tasks and replacing its decision-making processes.

In this sense, the introduction of this advanced and innovative technology has brought many opportunities within multiple fields in which it is applied, ranging from the simplification of cognitive processes within technology and businesses to smart and personalised support within healthcare and education (Nah et al., 2023)

However, even though many are the advantages that AI has brought within society, numerous are the challenges and drawbacks that followed with its implementation: algorithmic biases, security and privacy threats, ethical implications and social consequences (Forbes, 2024).

Moreover, the lack of values and emotional insight, fear of job loss and of the unknown, content saturation and consumer scepticism have generated growing apprehension and uncertainties within people who often are not fully aware of these innovative technologies, and due to the rapid advancement of generative AI, live with the fear of the unknown (Bir & Aksu, 2024).

Therefore, AI has quietly but deeply gained its space within society, having a dual impact, being both a potential opportunity and a dangerous threat, in which humans and the external environment are the ones mostly affected (Paic et Serkin, 2025)

In this sense it becomes difficult for people, who are not able to fully understand the processes and recognize generative ai outputs, distinguish what is real from what is fake and Ai-generated

This uncertainty is especially noticeable in the creative industries, where the rise of generative AI systems capable of creating art, design, music, and writing independently raises difficult questions about the value and role of human creativity (Elgammal et al., 2017; McCormack et al., 2019)

While AI can assist in enhancing efficiency and idea generation, it often lacks the cultural nuance, emotional depth, and intentionality that define authentic human expression (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). As a result, creators and consumers are increasingly called to reflect on what constitutes originality, meaning, and authorship in an AI-mediated context (Floridi, 2019).

Starting from these statements, it is important to remember to have a conscious and correct use of generative AI, since this technology can generate works independently, but cannot substitute human reasoning.

Thus, if on one side AI has entered our life to support and help humans with cognitive tasks, it is still unclear the long-term effects and benefits it will have in the long run.

Nowadays consumers' increased awareness about the topic and related issues, have made them desire and stand in need of consistency, transparency and authenticity from the brands themselves and the communication they devote to their customers and potential ones (Forbes,2022).

In an age marked by algorithmic mimicry and digital hyperproduction, it is the irreplaceable human capacity for empathy, storytelling, and critical judgment that will continue to define meaningful and trustworthy engagement between brands and their audiences (Kapferer, 2022)

In this context, it is essential to emphasize that while generative AI is capable of producing outputs independently, it remains fundamentally devoid of consciousness, intent, or ethical responsibility (Bir & Aksu, 2024).

Thus, a responsible and conscious use of AI must be grounded in cooperation with human reasoning rather than substitution, ensuring that AI will serve as a tool for empowerment rather than displacement.

SECOND CHAPTER – The evolution of creative processes: from human craftsmanship to AI-driven innovation

2.1 The Integration of AI in luxury brand storytelling

Stories are the foundation of human existence, being the most effective mean of communication through which people narrate, communicate and listen to imaginary stories or factual real-life events, being the mean they use to connect with others while sharing personal experiences (Hong et al,2021).

Stories indeed, represent a combination of myths, narratives and events which are shared with the purpose of communicating different meanings, uniting and shortening the distance between brands and consumers (Granitz et Forzman, 2015).

Therefore, within branding, storytelling becomes the greatest tool to present and divulge the heritage, values and meanings of a brand, while getting consumers to identify and recognise themselves in the story narrated (Granitz et Forzman, 2015).

Hence, it is important to remember that in the realm of marketing, storytelling transcends the simple communication of information, thus it conveys deeper messages, evoking emotions and creating strong relationships (Vidrih et Mayahi,2023).

Providing a clear definition, indeed, storytelling is considered “the art of creating compelling stories of a brand, developing emotional connections with consumers”, thus embracing the core values and communicating them in a captivating, impactful and memorable way (Hong et al,2021).

Additionally, discussing on the concept of storytelling, researchers have identified recurrent elements which define effective and well-described stories (Visconti,2020), expressed as:

- Identifiable characters
- An imaginable plot
- A turning point, also defined “climax”
- A defined outcome or a key learning

Furthermore, additional elements become the side of these narratives, enriching the stories with memorable soundtracks, iconic visuals and profound meanings, leveraging on the charismatic aesthetic pursued by brands when developing a powerful cultural brand strategy (Holt,2004).

Hence, narrative transportation enters as an essential element within the storytelling process, described as the intrinsic capacity of people to be captured by a story, being capable of fantasizing, understanding and immersing themselves in it (Visconti,2020).

However, nowadays within luxury we can also refer to an innovative way of narrating, defined as “digital storytelling”, being the way throughout people and brands communicate stories using social media platforms and addressing their narrative to a diffused public (Von Wachenfeldt,2019).

Hence, what today designates modern communication is the variety of touchpoints and channels through which brands can meet consumers, engaging them with hypnotic storytelling (Velar,2021).

Subsequently, as analysed by Giada Mainolfi (2020), luxury brands strategically construct their narratives around brands heritage dimensions – such as craftsmanship, heritage, art, continuity and people expertise – developing various digital formats, such as video documentaries, behind-the-scenes content, interactive timelines and artistic partnerships, which extend beyond traditional promotion and emerge into immersive and emotionally engaging experiences.

Hence, Mainolfi emphasizes that digital storytelling is not merely promotional but serves as a tool for brand requalification, making heritage accessible and resonant in a contemporary language, allowing brands to maintain authenticity while adapting to the demands of a digital-savvy audience.

Additionally, gathering from Aristotle's Rhetoric, Fisher (1984) stated that humans, being naturally narrative and communicative beings, deeply communicate and understand the world through stories (Sadaba et al.,2021 pag.281-287).

Thus, starting from this conceptualization, the following authors understood that luxury and fashion brands have been increasingly relying on the divulgation of their intangible assets by leveraging on impactful storytelling, that could be reached and grasped better by consumers throughout the presentation of engaging narratives (Sadaba et al.,2021).

Hence, this technique is pursued to reach and connect with those present or future consumers who don't have a profound knowledge of the product and brands themselves, nor they are searching for a reason to discover and become involved with a luxury brand (Park,2020).

Furthermore, as stated by Racbini et al. (2023), brand narratives are able to enhance the brand perception and positioning by establishing emotional connections, inspiring authenticity and developing engaging consumer experiences.

Thus, storytelling becomes the mean through which brands narrate and teach consumers the heritage, values, craftsmanship, creativity and origins of the brand (Copeland et Moor,2017).

In this sense, luxury brands benefit from storytelling, while helping consumers build and strengthen their relationship with the brand itself (Visconti,2020).

However, with the historical progression and technological integration of AI within narratives development, traditional storytelling, defined by human mind and creativity, has become deeply affected (Dayo et al.,2023).

Thus, what once was the result of individuals complex process of thinking, elaboration and production, has now become blended and intersected with the rapid advancements and potentialities of AI technologies.

Indeed, AI has had an impact on different aspects of the storytelling process, ranging from the independent creation of content, helping with the drafting of scripts, stories and articles, to the identification of emotional cues and creation of visual or sound contents (Aarzo et Lal, 2024).

Hence, its cutting-edge technology has been subtly entering within these creative jobs by generating and defining both plots and characters, simplifying those hard thinking processes, which in the past took days of briefing, confronting and brainstorming (Dayo et al.,2023).

Therefore, within luxury, the relationship between consumers, products and brands has been enhanced through the implementation of innovative technologies, which enriched luxury experiences through personalised and targeted strategies, developing impactful and meaningful storytelling (Sahne & Daronkola, 2024).

Consequently, in this evolving landscape, artificial intelligence becomes a natural extension of digital storytelling practices.

2.2 Beyond automation: the unique aspects of human creativity compared to AI

The increasing development and integration of AI has led to innovative ways through which technologies and creative activities have been combined.

Thus, as AI models have become able to generate creative and outstanding outputs, society has started to see changes in the existing paradigms of artistic production, with the rise of numerous concerns around the coexistence of technologies and human artistry and whether the first would replace and substitute the latter (O' Toole et Horvat, 2024).

Accordingly, scholars have been discussing on the ambivalence of AI creativity, being both similar and distant from human traits and abilities of creating, while levering on the different and unique characteristics of the two (Lee,2022).

Scholars indeed have defined the similarity that AI has in replicating human creativity, while producing outputs which are equivalent to human traits (Marrone et al., 2024).

Building on this, Edgell (2024) identified and then classified through an autoethnographic research the different connotations given to AI, providing different point of views on AI technologies and showcasing the three facets of artificial creativity.

Hence, throughout an anthropomorphization of Artificial creativity, three were the personalities identified which indicated AI's role and practices within society: the Trickster, the Surveyor and the Harbinger.

The Trickster – defined as someone or something that tricks people and faces conventions, AC (artificial creativity) is considered a mistrustful technology, which lacks the qualities and abilities of human beings' rationality and intelligence, yet tries to copy and replicate them.

Hence, being just an approximation of human creativity, AC can be considered the ultimate Trickster raising trust, governance and authorship issues.

The Surveyor – relies on careful measurements and analysis to define the outside world in a rational, precise and schematic way, utilizing technologies that will support AC within the entire process. However, relying just on automation and data-driven processes, the additional aspects of intuition, improvisation and experience would not be tackled, thus loosing creativity most impactful variables.

The Harbinger – considered as a spokesperson who communicates significant transformations, it defines new phases of existence, both positive and negative.

Therefore, these phases could lead to a dystopian view of creativity, in which with the introduction of new disruptive technologies, human creatives lose the meaningfulness, excitement and happiness derived from experiencing and developing their creativity and critical thinking skills (Edgell, 2024)

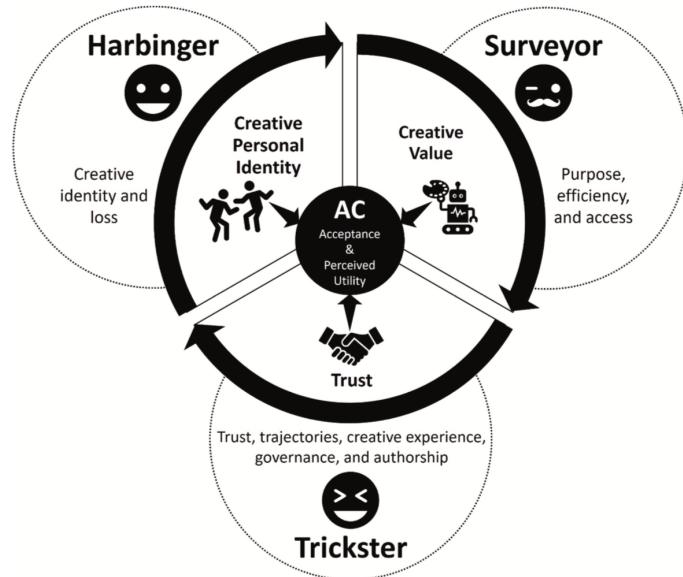


Fig. 1. AC faces, MCs-PCs, and theories.

Hence, one question arises and does not imply anymore just AI's capacity of being creative, but whether it is capable of replacing human skills, experiences and reasonings.

Undoubtedly, AI ability of being creative is limited and the result is that it often tends to produce “new” outputs by just copying human activities and combining the data picked in different ways (Vinchon et al,2023).

Moreover, as stated by the authors, even though humans have less information compared to AI, their elaboration and production can be much more disruptive and significant due to the experiences lived by each individual.

Therefore, since scholars have defined the incapacity of AI to produce independent and totally creative outputs, a necessary collaboration must exist within humans and technologies creative processes (Marrone et al.,2024).

As a matter of fact, on one side, modern technologies are able to perform and develop algorithmic tasks, identifying patterns and generating immediate outputs, yet humans are able to develop, throughout symbols and structures of thoughts, powerful and meaningful creativities, leveraging on the experiences and situations lived (Marrone et al.,2024; Lee,2022).

Additionally, Vinchon et al. (2023), define the collaboration and cooperation of the two through the arise of different scenarios, presented as “Co-Cre-AI-tion”, “Organic”, “Plagiarism 3.0” and “Shut down” as ways through which AI and human facilities are combined.

Co-creation – refers to a collaborative scenario, in which AI and human creativity are seamlessly combined, presenting an augmented creativity, which merges humans and technologies abilities, making them rely and depend one on another, not being able anymore to produce by themselves.

Organic – it is intended as the “traditional” way of perceiving creativity, in which humans assume the ultimate guiding role and where creativity is conceived as purely humancentric.

Plagiarism – is the situation that emerges when people’s desire of being considered productive exceeds their willingness of working and producing authentic works yet recurring to advanced AI technologies without stating and citing its usage, support and sources.

Thus, this will lead to additional challenges such as copyright issues, which will make difficult to understand who the real creator is and who has the rights on the produced work.

Shut down – within this scenario, since the advent of AI in every aspect of lives, people will increasingly become less motivated in producing their own creations and their feeling of being inadequate and less capable compared to technological advancements will arise.

Thereby, it is important to underline the unique aspects of human creativity compared to AI. Researchers have indeed discovered an essential element which is part of the human creative process, which cannot be replicated by technologies, that is to say the *engagement moment* (O’ Toole et Horvat, 2024).

Thus, this represents the participating phase within the creative process, also defined as the “flow experience” by which humans not just passively create (as AI technologies do, producing an outcome without reasoning), but actively participate and immerse themselves in the process itself, while setting aside the eventual outcome (O’ Toole et Horvat, 2024).

Additionally, as stated within the “AI and creativity Manifesto” (Vinchon et al,2023), there is a “creative intentionality” that drives artists choices and willingness of creating, enrichening their creative outcomes with their experiences, yet offering to the outside world something that can express their emotions while combining them with their skills and expertise.

Moreover, Runco (2023) defined the unique aspects of human creativity compared to Artificial creativity (AC), by focusing and leveraging on two concepts: authenticity and intentionality (Edgell,2024).

Indeed, the author expressed the experiential element within these two attributes, that are unique to humans, and that cannot be replicated by AI technologies, since they are unable of capturing insights from lived experiences in the empirical world (Edgell, 2024).

Therefore, when talking about AI creations, we refer to a “pseudo-creativity”, which gives back to human creativity its pivotal role and essence, yet rehumanising it (Lee, 2022; Edgell, 2024).

Additionally, it is through the experientialism which characterizes human creatives that a more profound and personal elaboration can be pursued, producing final outcomes which can lead to disruptive results, even though they are based on human mind limited processes and links (Vinchon et al., 2023).

Hence, even though AI’s vast databases, this technology is still confined and structured between what it has learned and processed and cannot compete with creative human works.

Consequently, these shifts in theorizations, raise profound questions regarding the nature and ownership of the creative process.

Accordingly, within AI generated creativity the artist becomes an essential figure, which assumes the role of a guide or mentor, proposing firstly the initial parameters and prompts that will be applied by AI and then the creative boundaries that AI systems will need to respect (Garcia, 2024).

Hence, as highlighted by scholars, the role of humans within the creative process will likely evolve and be subjected to changes, passing from generating ideas to evaluating and processing them (Garcia, 2024).

Consequently, humans maintain their central and essential role in two of the main creative processes phases: at the beginning and at the end.

Therefore, the creative person becomes a critical arbiter of creativity, an estimator who assesses and evaluates the role and relevance of AI generated outputs, rather than being just the person who relies and depends on AI work and the results obtained (Vinchon et al., 2023).

Hence a return to traditional values and meanings of creativity is unravelled, defining it as an experiential process in which human intrinsic motivations play a pivotal role in producing a conscious and intentional creative outcome (O’ Toole et Horvat, 2024).

2.3 Craftsmanship in the digital era: how creatives adapt to AI integration

Accordingly, drawing from the renewed focus on individuality and the human dimension, craftsmanship and the role of creatives are restored at the core of the discussion, highlighting the

relevance these figures have in the evolving dialogue between heritage and technological innovation (Fu et al.,2025).

Indeed, the evolution of craftsmanship and its growing relationship with technologies has deeply affected human creativity, revolutionising traditional values attributed to it and deeply changing the meanings linked to craft itself (ibid).

Thus, it has been necessary to analyse the impact that technology has had on luxury brands and the possibility to maintain and preserve in the age of automation the intrinsic values of craftsmanship.

Gathering from the Greek term *tekne* and its traditional definition, craft expressed the art of practicing and doing, yet paired with the concept of *episteme*, which instead meant knowledge, representing the activity which anticipates the creative process and produces something which has been previously thought (Yabanigul,2025).

Thus, craftsmanship has been interpreted as a dialogue between practical activities and thinking processes, in which the variables of time and repetition become the correct ways to acquire knowledge, overcome challenges and generate better outcomes (Salas,2019).

Additionally, craft has been defined as the branch of art which refers to the initial making and subsequently delivery process of goods and artworks, which emphasizes the craftsmen skills, their manual abilities and creativity knowledge, expressed through the manual skills and use of physical machine tools (Eskak, 2020).

Moreover, discussing on this topic, scholars have distinguished between traditional craft and craft embedded with novel technologies, defining the characteristics and the possible future coexistence of the two (Yabanigul,2025).

Historically, traditional craft has been considered a process-oriented activity, in which craftsmen assumed a pivotal role in the creation phase and outcome production, developing a direct interaction with the materials handled.

In this view, the craftsman had a profound desire and impulse of producing an ingenious, well-done output, without focusing only on the financial and economic result, yet regularly improvising according to the situation and materials he was working with (Salas,2019).

Therefore, within a process-oriented approach, craftsmen are aware of possible imperfections that could arise, but instead of condemning them, they acknowledge that their skills, intuition and expertise can guide them in adjusting, improving and delivering an even better result than expected.

Differently, result-oriented craft has been pursued through the implementation of machines, which alternately relied on large sets of data and given information, focusing on the achievement without encountering and appraising obstacles in the development of the final product (Salas,2019).

Therefore, within this process technology is not able to handle risks and uncertainties, hence these generate frustration and pressure in craftsmen.

Furthermore, within design, AI technologies are combined with craft to preserve culture, create enduring and durable archives, saving and identifying patterns, felt as clue elements of heritage, tradition and historical memory for future generations (Hikmatillo,2025).

Moreover, as stated by Halim et al (2024) AI has revolutionised textile and design industries, enhancing those traditional procedures by leveraging the skills of artisans, who are seen as the mentors that have always driven the creative process.

Hence, as AI enters these processes supporting the craft production, elevating process efficiency, error prevention, cost savings and increased productivity, it eases human creatives work by supporting the design process and inserting automatic machines (Eskak, 2020).

Thereby, AI enters craftsmanship as a valuable support, monitoring and assisting the entire process, estimating production more efficiently, maximizing the use of materials and reducing waste.

Consequently, within this conceptualization, AI has been implemented supporting these figures in the following activities (Halim et al.,2025):

Generating innovative designs – GANs and generative algorithms have been able to produce innovative designs, creating unique patterns by taking into consideration the large data sets that can provide inspirations from past works and, thus expanding the creative boundaries of human intellect and giving designers the chance to enlarge their inventions without manual and time-consuming interventions

Enhancing artisan skills – with a starting input provided by the artisans, AI has provided valuable supports in optimising processes, modify designs and patterns and give the possibility to experience, shift and modify the scenarios.

Customizing and creating in precise and detailed ways – following consumers requests AI technologies are able to satisfy their need, realising the processes requested and achieving precision and detail in the final creations.

Automating processes – reducing errors and being efficient within the entire process, artists are supported by AI which can automate repetitive tasks, such as pattern generation, colour matching, and template creation by saving artisans time and releasing them to focus on more creative and personal aspects of design.

Therefore, the integration of GEN AI has made it possible to collect data and synthetize inputs based on sketches, patterns and textures to generate future and innovative alternatives, while enhancing and improving traditional elements (Lee et Kim, 2024).

Subsequently, when applied to AI customization within the design process, AI technologies tend to increase perceived authenticity, particularly due to their ability to offer personalization tailored to individual consumer preferences.

As a result, thanks to its innovative and groundbreaking use, AI can generate personalised designs through prompts and inputs given personally by technologies or consumers, while making unique and innovative products (Lee et Kim, 2024).

Thereafter, it is expected that the negative perception and consideration of AI will be alleviated thanks to AI customization and personalization within the entire design process (Lee et Kim, 2024).

Ultimately, as stated by Boston consulting group (2025), through AI and Gen AI and with the personalization and humanization of goods and experiences, both consumers and employees will feel supported and sense an enhanced experience¹⁴.

2.4. Craftsmanship vs AI: balancing heritage and innovation

With the rise of modern technologies, AI has implemented new methods and techniques to develop, replicate and enhance traditional crafts, thus preserving the intangible assets of cultural heritage and developing innovative strategies which combined past elements with future outcomes (Fu et al., 2025; Ding, 2025).

Therefore, traditional crafts, which depend on manual skills and knowledge transmitted between generations, are being improved with the help of digital tools like 3D modelling, computer-aided design (CAD), and virtual simulations, simplifying artisans' creative procedures and giving them the possibility to focus on the smallest details (Ding, 2025).

¹⁴ <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2025/why-luxury-experience-needs-an-ai-moment>

Hence, technologies and AI must not be considered substitutes and replacements of humans' artistry, yet they become a powerful preservation tool of traditional craftsmanship, recording and archiving those valuable assets that will be transmitted to future generations (Ding,2025).

However, the main difference between machine production and tools used in craft, lies in the direct and rational control that humans have through their hands and mind.

Fashion and luxury field have indeed always been considered as human-dominant areas, in which the ideas, rationality and skills of artisans emerge (Lee et Kim, 2024).

Hence, as stated by Yabanigul (2025), tools which are chosen and selected personally by creators, establish a deeper, direct and intimate relationship between the material and the maker, highlighting the uniqueness that is brought within the creative process.

Additionally, it is indeed thanks to the peculiarity of human creation, that craftsmen are able to make spontaneous and immediate choices, derived by their understanding and connoisseurship of the material, processes and design, delineating the knowledge, intuition and studies that characterize human beings (Yabanigul, 2025).

Therefore, what makes human made craftsmanship unique is the intuition built throughout the years of knowledge and practices of creators, and the ability they have developed to understand through their hands the materials worked, a unique skill which cannot be replicated and replaced by robotic processes.

Thereupon, Sennet (2008) defines the pivotal role of repetition, as the mean through which craftsmen gain hands-on experience, learning by doing and mastering their skills, crucial element for the creative development which focuses on the connection between hand and head and distances from modern technologies.

Moreover, as stated by the author, craftsmanship is about the sharing of knowledge, passing skills and connoisseurship to others, while constantly observing, communicating and learning from the rules, actions and theories of skilled people, while leveraging on the history and symbolism of the brand (Sennet,2008; Hikmatillo,2025).

Consequently, differently from technologies and AI which are passive receivers of information, craftsmen are active and participative figures who build and influence the world with their knowledge, fulfilling their desire of transmitting their skills and mastery throughout a wider time (Salas,2019; Sennet,2008).

As a result, the advent of GenAI has paradoxically led to a resurgence in the appreciation of human craftsmanship and traditional creative processes (Lee et Kim, 2024).

While GenAI imitates human creativity, demonstrating impressive imitative capabilities, it lacks the cognitive depth, contextual understanding and moral reasoning inherent uniquely to humans (Forbes, 2024).

Thus, technologies offer the potential to push the boundaries of human achievements yet still not possess a moral compass.

This limitation, as carefully noted by retail analyst Robin Lewis, underscores the irreplaceable value of human wisdom, insight, and contextual interpretation in creative endeavours stating that “What AI doesn’t do is deliver wisdom, insight, and context... It is soulless.”¹⁵

Ultimately, as scholars continue to explore the potential of AI to enhance human achievements, it becomes increasingly clear that the synergy between human creativity and AI capabilities, will be the driving force that will lead to the most meaningful advancements in society.

2.5 AI-Driven luxury advertising: exploring authenticity and consumers' emotional connection

The rise and implementation of artificial intelligence as a groundbreaking component in digital transformation has deeply affected numerous fields, redefining paradigms in communication, human reasoning and creative practices (Arbaiza et al.,2024).

The rapid advancements in AI have indeed revolutionized the marketing and communication landscape, potentially disrupting the advertising industry and affecting the entire business processes (Yu,2025).

Thus, as AI arises, its combination with traditional communication has developed new innovative ways of advertising, improving consumers' relationship with brands, understanding better their needs, personalising their experiences and guaranteeing profound user understanding (Xin et al.,2023).

Particularly, AI-generated content has helped advertisers in simplifying and accelerating their creative processes definition and development, throughout the creation of automatic and personalised publicities, which ranged across different media and touchpoints, delivering multiple and disparate outcomes (Eriksson,2022).

¹⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2024/04/24/lvmh-understands-the-ai-challenge-for-luxury-is-not-technology-but-the-human-element/>

Thus, the digital advertising environment has undergone a profound evolution, shifting from previous static banners, to dynamic, interactive ads, which rely on algorithms and automation in order to develop programmatic advertisements and enhance traditional creative works (Eriksson,2022). Therefore, these strategies have been able to communicate the right message to the right people at the right moment, while being cost effective and relying on data-based real time bidding, supporting and simplifying human tasks (Lee and Cho,2020 in Turksoi,2022).

Moreover, progress within artificial intelligence technologies has enabled the collection, analysis, and utilization of users' behavioural and cognitive data which significantly improved precision compared to the past, discovering hidden patterns in users' behaviour and delivering targeted, personalized, and real-time suggestions (Nozari,2025).

Therefore, as stated by Yu (2025), AI has enabled the improvement of past traditional processes, while introducing new steps in advertising activities, combining creatives' role with the advantages of technologies in the following ways:

Discovering consumer insights – algorithms and technologies are able to identify consumers' demographics, psychographics, motivations and behaviours in order to develop the best strategies to involve and capture consumers' attention and deliver an optimal experience (Turksoy, 2022).

Develop programmatic advertising – throughout AD platforms, AI enables the management of programmatic advertising, supporting the entire process which guides the distribution of a campaign, from the definition of costs to the placement and analysis of the commercial.

Optimize budget and time while addressing a relevant target – AI is able to provide effective and intelligent solutions which optimize advertising expenditures and save time, yet perfectly identifying the right targets to whom deliver their campaigns (Turksoy, 2022).

Advs creation – AI supports humans in the process of creating advertising campaigns, assisting them to enhance and increase their performance, delivering the best outcome, while reducing mental distress and time employed, obtaining faster and enhanced results.

Additionally, gathering from the Creative process theory (Wallas,1926), Arbaiza (2024) described the phases within the creative process that have been affected by AI implementation and the improvement they have undergone since its strategic and powerful application.

Therefore, identified the 4 stages – preparation, incubation, illumination and verification – AI has been applied seamlessly in order to accelerate and optimize these phases.

Preparation phase – within this moment, creative people gather information and ideas to generate their final outcome, thus AI enters as a valuable tool which accelerates the entire process by simplifying the acquisition of notions and further data analysis.

Illumination phase – seen as the span of time in which the idea is generated, AI can propose innovative and groundbreaking solutions that may not be contemplated by human mind and its restraints.

Verification stage – it is the phase in which creative ideas and results are tested, yet AI can optimize this timely process through effective simulations and tests, significantly reducing costs and time employed.

Subsequently, it has been important to understand how professional and creative people involved in ingenious processes have perceived and adapted to the automation of their activities.

As stated by Türksoy (2022), AI-driven advertising becomes a gamechanger for the industry, defined as a “ consumer-centered, data-driven and algorithm mediated brand communication that understands and acknowledges consumers’ needs, interests and expectations”.

Notably, within this new theorization, digital advertising blends with neuromarketing, becoming more than simple advertising seen by consumers, but a multifaceted experience in which technology, rationality and sentiments are combined to tackle consumers senses in every aspect of their lives (Nozari,2025).

Therefore, the role and impact of AI goes beyond mere automation yet appears and presents itself as a mean to reshape communication and creativity.

Thus, with the cooperation of different figures within advertising creative departments – ranging from copywriters to graphic designers and creative directors – AI is integrated and placed strategically within the luxury field to enhance the entire creative process, without replacing the human touch and interaction (Arbaiza et al.,2024).

Historically, fashion and luxury brands have relied on a type of advertising which was distributed and exhibited within life-style magazines, films, television and outdoor media (Velar,2021).

However, even though these touchpoints have been used to create an emotional connection with consumers, who were able to immerse themselves in the brand’s vision and imaginary, with the rise

of AI and GAI, brands have started to rely on AI-driven advertising, modifying their traditional creative approach.

Hence, as stated by Campbell et al. (2021) technological innovations have given advertisers the ability to automate advertising processes, developing both “synthetic ads” through the combination of artificial content and data provided, and simplifying the pre- and post-distribution analysis.

Therefore, within luxury these innovations have been introduced in all the phases, creating both new processes while automating existing ones, generating new products with the support of technology and offering hyper-personalised advertisings (Pantano et al.,2024).

Likewise, Deloitte (2024) explored the role of Gen AI in transforming the luxury environment, shifting the way through which luxury maisons connect with customers, create personalised experiences and develop their storytelling¹⁶.

Thus, since the advertising landscape has undergone drastic changes, communication has gone from hand-printed and tangible posters and billboards to a type of communication developed through the collaboration of luxury brands and virtual influencers (Soloaga et Peinado, 2024).

Therefore, many luxury brands have started to rely on advertising campaigns which built partnerships with virtual influencers, focusing on their collaboration as a tool to reinforce consumers’ brand perception, enhance the brands’ authenticity and leverage on the functionality of luxury products (Franke et al.,2023; Pantano et al.,2024).

Hence, stable relationships have been established between brands and AI-generated virtual influencers, becoming the way through which technology and humans merge.

Conversely, nowadays few luxury brands have undertaken the path of integrating AI technologies within the stage of developing advertisements.

Moncler, for example, as one of the most resonant and statement brands within luxury, understood the potential of AI integration, launching during the 2023 London fashion week ¹⁷, a fully Ai-generated advertising campaign, which loudly expressed the power that AI created content holds within the luxury industry and remarking fiercely the brand’s entrance in the world of AI campaigns (Park, 2025).

¹⁶ <https://www.deloittedigital.com/fr/en/insights/perspective/luxury-maisons-and-generative-ai-redefining-brand-activation.html>

¹⁷ <https://maisonmeta.io/6765-2/>



Moncler "The Art of absolute imagination" campaign

However, one simple yet articulated question arises: "How will consumers respond to AI generated advertising, and will these implementations alter their perception of luxury brands, losing the authenticity they attributed to this world?"

Yet, researches have discussed on the following issue, defining that the introduction of this technology inside advertising projectualizations generates negative responses within consumers.

Particularly, relying on their implicit and intrinsic beliefs, consumers consider AI generated ads less authentic than traditionally created ones, recognizing a lack of effort within the entire development and creative process (To et al.,2025).

Additionally, as stated by the authors, the reasoning lies within the associations made by luxury consumers, who equal and associate the brands essence, uniqueness and craftsmanship to the higher levels of effort involved from the design process to the distribution phase and communication.

Similarly, in line with previous theories (Kruger et al,2004; To et al,2025), the lack of effort put by AI has been linked to the limited time devoted to the creative process, fostering not only the perception of minimal effort, but also implying a decrease of the economic and aesthetic value, which is inherently tied to the time invested in developing a creative product (To et al.,2025).

Consequently, luxury brands have been reluctant in adopting technology and AI within their creative activities, since they have been afraid that their embracement could lead to the loss of those intrinsic traditional values associated to luxury, such as heritage, artisanship, timeliness and exclusivity (Pantano et al,2024).

Additionally, asserting the devaluation of luxury as a consequence of technology implementation, consumers have developed ambivalent perceptions, yet considering AI advertising and virtual influencers inauthentic, due to the lack of expressivity typical of human beings communication (Lou, 2022).

Thus, although there is a growing interest and curiosity within AI-driven advertising both by companies and consumers, there still are high levels of scepticism around this topic, that because of its “syntheticism”, is not entirely felt genuine, authentic and sincere (Aljarah et al,2024).

Hence, a duality coexists in consumers’ perception of AI integrated advertising, seen both as a form of communication that revolves around narratives and visuals that surpass human creative capabilities, simplifying and fastening processes, yet being a weaker tool that lacks authenticity and reasoning (Jung et al.,2025)

In conclusion, the integration of AI in advertising marks a complex landscape of opportunities and challenges, offering unprecedented creative possibilities and operational activities, yet facing significant hurdles in terms of consumer perception and trust.

Therefore, it is necessary to define a balanced approach which merges humankind individualities and technologies to proceed with a constructive implementation, fully realizing AI potential without compromising the human connection that lies at the heart of effective communication.

2.6 Redefining creativity: AI’s role in branding and the changing role of human creatives

Since recent improvements and developments in AI models and technologies, with the rise of new real-life needs, relevant and innovative updates have been made concerning the definition of creativity, driving a profound re-examination of what the term means.

Traditionally, creativity has been assessed through the dual lens of novelty and utility, however nowadays, with AI systems capable of generating innovative images, fashion designs, and texts questions have emerged regarding whether these criteria are sufficient to assess creative outputs in the age of machine intelligence (Runco, 2023; Vinchon, 2023).

Within this context, a new paradigm has emerged, a posthuman conceptualization of creativity, characterized by co-creativity, where human intuition, emotional depth, and cultural knowledge converge with the computational capabilities of AI to generate hybrid and elaborated outcomes (Wingstrom et al., 2023).

Therefore, since within previous definitions the creator was the person who assumed a relevant role, being the main actor that drove and brought to life final product creations through its own skills and abilities, the growing integration of AI into creative processes has introduced a sense of ambiguity and dualism, challenging long-standing assumptions about authorship, intentionality, and the locus of creative agency. (Wingstrom et al., 2023)

Given these considerations, it is important to recall that all previous definitions of creativity have given an outstanding positioning to the human person who was able to delineate and execute the process, while being surrounded by the other creative components of process, outcome, domain and space (Wingstrom et al. 2021; Amabile, 1996)

Furthermore, previous research stated the impactful role that creative advertisement has had on consumers' memorability and recall, stating the importance of the "3P" framework within advertising, which affirms the fundamental role of the *person* designing creative advertising, the *process* which is applied and the *place* in which they are working (Wangbing Shen, 2020)

Throughout the last 20 years the concept of creativity has undergone many drastic changes due to the powerful and impactful rhetorics of creative agencies (Lee, 2022), which have often exploited creativity as a mere capital, dehumanizing it and forgetting the characteristics that have made it a human-centric process.

Accordingly, a further question has arisen, asking whether AI can substitute people or is it just a tool used to work together and enhance the creative results.

The Working It podcast episode: "Can AI really do creative work?" from the Financial Times investigated the use of AI within digital creative agencies, focusing both on the pros and cons of this new technology.

Sherratt indeed argued on the "dehumanization of creativity" (see Lee, 2022) and the outstanding position that not-AI made works will have in the future, that will be perceived as unusual artisan outcomes, synonymous of hard work and intentionality, and as ideas that simply derive from human intellect.

As Sherratt stated "there will always be people, agencies, creatives that use these tools to devalue

work”, however some creative outcomes derive solely from humans’ mind and creative talent (e.g. the emotions communicated, the right proposition, the values expressed).

The main statement has been that even though AI generates creative final outcomes, it does not operate as a human being, who instead owns and uses its creativity as an intrinsic attribute that relies within himself and his sense, through which it can connect and analyses the word through its senses. Therefore, AI cannot work on its own, but relies on human given inputs, which start with the identification of a problem and questions that it is asked, and through which Ai provides a possible desired output (Vinchon, 2023; Forbes,2019).

Hence, there is a subjective side that relies in a human work, impacted by its history, relationship and dialogue with the outside world.

Marketing, advertising, design and entertainment sectors have been dealing with the rise and consequential introduction of Generative AI within their creative processes, dealing both with the opportunities and challenges that AI has brought with it (Forbes,2024). Nowadays within creative agencies GAI is used both in the ad creation process and in the analysis of the campaign results to deliver a better outcome to its clients, integrating strategies and creative processes in order to enhance the emotional storytelling by combining human feelings and modern technologies (Aarzo,2024).

Forbes in 2024 in the article *“How 16 agencies are using AI to optimize campaigns”*, defined different ways through which Ai technologies are supporting and revolutionizing adv campaigns, showcasing different communication agencies and the way through which they implemented the use of generative technologies.

Sixteen were the great advantages that AI brought within the creative field, however, the most relevant changes concerning AI and creativity were related to breaking the rules, pushing divergent thinking and quickly developing creative variations.

Furthermore, creatives can explore their creative vision more deeply by leveraging the time-saving capabilities of AI, speeding up the process, freeing them from the constraints of tight deadlines and market pressures (Forbes 2024).

For this reason, AI can be considered a tool that can augment human creativity, support the creation and development of new ideas and enhance the final outcome (Harvard Business Review, 2023).

Hence, there still are many misconceptions and uncertainties which revolve around the concept and meaning of creativity, on how it should be assessed and the effects that it produces on human

behaviour (Rosengren et al.,2020).

Indeed, creativity has an intricate meaning, it is not just about the creative agencies' processes and the traditional creative vision that characterizes human beings' thoughts, but it is also about the new definition and conception introduced by AI creativity (Lee, 2022).

In this sense AI enters as a tool that enhances human artistry and capabilities, setting new innovative ways of perceiving traditional luxury, changing the previous meanings associated to luxury and branding.

Luxury brands start levering AI to analyse consumers data, crafting compelling narratives, transforming the previous role of marketing, communicating not just through a simple and detached storytelling, but seamlessly blending the brand's heritage with the aspiration and values of its customers(Forbes,2024).

Brands like Moncler, Valentino and Ralph Lauren have started using AI to create campaigns and to generate copy and graphics, unifying creative directors' vision with the vast and diverse possibilities offered by AI, pushing the boundaries of luxury advertising and generating innovative and captivating campaigns. (Maisonmeta,2023)

In the realm of fashion, design, and advertising—fields where personal narratives, aesthetic judgment, and cultural symbolism play a vital role—the distinction between artificial and human creativity becomes particularly salient.

Although AI can assist in ideation and automate certain creative tasks, it cannot replicate the deeply human processes of intuition, emotion, and existential self-expression that underlie much of artistic innovation.

Therefore, as AI becomes more integrated into creative industries, the role of the human creator is not diminished but rather redefined as human creatives become curators, editors, and conceptual leaders who infuse meaning into automated processes (McCormack et al., 2019).

In this context, creativity is no longer just about producing something new, but about asserting human values, ethics, and cultural identity in a digitally mediated world (Vinchon,2023).

Indeed, previous research has tried to define what is creativity, how creative is AI and if could it substitute human mind.

Nevertheless , nowadays creative researchers define the complementarity of AI Creativity and human

creativity, since the vast data base of AI cannot be compared to human growing knowledge and life experiences considered when doing specific job tasks and activities (Vinchon, 2023).

Indeed, what makes humans different is the “creative intentionality”, defined as the willingness of creatives to produce something from their own mind and still considered an issue when defining the characteristics of creativity itself (Karwowski & Beghetto, 2019). AI hasn't come up with truly random creations, but it is a collection and interpretation of data and inputs that humans provide it with. (TEDx Talks, Ahaan Pandya, 2023)

Moreover, what makes Generative AI exciting are the emotions, values and depth that human beings apply to it, assuming a relevant position in the decision-making process, both when they give inputs or when they need to interpret the output (Vinchon, 2023).

Therefore, it is now clear that AI will not replace humans in creative fields, since people have a central estimator role within the entire decision process, from the beginning to the end (Vinchon, 2023).

As stated by Marita Canina within her foreword in the book Creativity in the Design Process (Carmen Bruno, 2022) “We must shape technologies around human values and needs, rather than allowing technologies to shape humans”

As highlighted by the author (Runco, 2023), while AI-generated content may often appear innovative and filled with functional value, it still lacks some of the core elements that define human creativity which can be synthetized with authenticity and intentionality.

In this context, authenticity goes beyond mere originality, though it encompasses within a final output a person's individual experiences, emotions, and subjective worldview.

Similarly, intentionality refers to the conscious, rational and mind-driven process that shapes creative decisions, grounded in purpose and meaning. These elements are deeply human, shaped by cultural, emotional, and experiential dimensions that cannot be replicated by algorithmic processes alone.

Therefore, even if AI systems are capable of producing outcomes that appear creative on the surface, they do so without the emotional depth and intentional agency that characterise genuine human expression.

Furthermore, according to Mazzone (2019), numerous are the missing points within Ai creation, since it lacks all those intrinsic attributes that are typically human, and which transfer identity, felling and experience to the outcome produced.

Thus, as artificial intelligence becomes more integrated into creative workflows across fields such as fashion, design, and advertising—domains where aesthetic judgment, symbolism, and cultural

narratives are essential—the role of human creators is not being replaced, but redefined. Increasingly, human professionals act as curators, storytellers, and conceptual leaders who direct and give meaning to the processes enabled by intelligent systems (Canina, in Bruno, 2023).

Ultimately, this convergence of technological and human intelligence marks a critical inflection point. Creativity, in this new age, is no longer just about the generation of novel outputs, but about asserting human agency, ethics, and emotional truth in the face of digital automation. As we continue to explore the capacities of AI, it becomes imperative to distinguish between the surface-level novelty it can offer and the deeper, human essence of creativity—an essence grounded in subjectivity, intentionality, and the irreplaceable richness of lived experience

Thus, as AI continues to reshape creative practices, it becomes increasingly important to differentiate between the appearance of creativity and its deeply human essence.

2.7 Challenges and ethical concerns in AI-Generated creativity

Creative fields and domains have always been associated to those creative figures – craftsmen, designers, advertisers – who studied and mastered their skills in order to protect and diffuse their traditional creative activities.

Hence, even though AI has been implemented to support humans in the creation of original content within complex and timely activities, many people still question about the reliability and authenticity of the AI output (Lee et Kim, 2024).

The main reason is that, since AI relies on given prompts and a database of existent information, the originality of the content produced is often doubted and questioned.

Thus, since GEN AI benefits are undeniable and clearly visible, it is necessary to define the ethical concerns that come with its implementation and develop powerful ethical frameworks that can protect and secure traditional meanings of creativity and previous human roles (Sedkaoui et Benaichouba, 2024).

Therefore, since the implementation of AI has led to innovative, yet intrusive and manipulative practices, it has been essential to define ethical regulations that could protect consumers' identities and rights, plus maintaining public trust and order (Arbaiza et al., 2024).

Hence, concerns about the artistic ownership have risen, questioning whether copyrighted works should be accessible to AI models as training data (O' Toole et Horvat, 2024).

Indeed, there have been numerous debates regarding the genuine and authenticity of AI generated content discussing whether it is just a mere copy and paste of existing knowledge using innovative combination, or it represents a deeper issue which has led human creators to lose rights on their produced works (Garcia,2024).

Furthermore, being AI models able to retain information from large data sets and memorize them, often they have incurred in the copy and replication of artworks, including private and copyrighted data, and incurring in copyright infringement and privacy violation (Ismayilzada,2025).

Subsequently, leveraging on this issue, numerous debates have been developed around the definition of copywriter owner, disputing if it should be attributed to the creator of data, data feeder, user or directly to the AI program (Lee, 2022).

However, since currently there still are no clear regulations that protect human creative artworks and define the authorship when AI technologies are implemented within the creative process, it will be fundamental to develop a new legal framework, which will safeguard human artistry while implementing technological advancements (To et al.,2025)

Consequently, scholars have discussed on the ethical necessity of providing a responsible and honest advertising in the context of AI, calling out for the transparency, authenticity and integrity in communicating, with a conscious and responsible use of AI tools in the creation and distribution process (Arbaiza et al.,2024)

Moreover, as Gen AI models rely on enormous datasets which contain personal and sensitive information, further ethical challenges rise, arguing on issues such as privacy and data security threats (Sedkaoui et Benaichouba, 2024).

Hence, it is key that brands carry out an honest and transparent communication, providing consumers with right and clear information about the data collected and used, ensuring a balance between management and ethics (Arbaiza et al,2024).

Thus, considering that AI has entered people's life in a disruptive way, habits, behaviours and ways of thinking have been altered in order to adapt and be in line with the introduced technologies.

Therefore, the growth and spread of concerns and fears, have brought to the identification of additional challenges and issues that need to be faced.

Ergo, recalling from the ability of AI of enhancing and augment human capabilities, numerous concerns have rose around job loss and unemployment, building apprehension on the topic of human rights (Nnamdi et al.,2023).

Additionally, algorithmic biases, being a relevant component within AI creative proposals, become a critical challenge explored with the aim of protecting and leveraging diversity, inclusion and cultural representation, without incurring in stereotypes and biased representations (Garcia,2024).

Therefore, AI technologies must be inclusive and need to overcome those biases that lead to a misleading understanding of the world, influencing negatively human rationality and that miss in defining the richness and depth felt by human experiences (Garcia,2024).

Thereupon, LVMH group has stated that within luxury AI challenges are not related to technology yet to the human element, which needs to be protected and preserved due to its decadal role within the luxury environment¹⁸.

In this regard, Generative AI technologies hold an immense power in redefining industries and societies, standing as a transformative force, yet facing multifaceted challenges, ranging from privacy to ethical concerns (Rane,2024).

Thus, ethical challenges in Gen AI implementation go beyond the existing problems, though need a proactive prediction of upcoming issues associated with its up-growing development and capacities.

Hence, the key to a durable and long-term relationship lies within a balance which maximizes AI technological advancements thus enhancing and protecting human creativity, while ensuring both privacy, transparency and authenticity (Arbaiza et al.,2024).

For this reason, a responsible, rational and aware introduction and development of Gan Ai practices must be pursued, since its powerful and influential impact on consumers, community and societies has been steeply arising (Sedkaoui et Benaichouba, 2024).

Subsequently as stated by Edgell (2024), human beings need to be clear about the values that are shaping automations in order to develop technologies with purpose and ethical boundaries, mitigating its potential danger and uncertainties.

Lastly, if it will be able to overcome these challenges, AI will unlock and discover its transformative potential, enhancing creativity, productivity while being the bridge between technological advancement and humanity core values, preserving its intrinsic essence.

¹⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2024/04/24/lvmh-understands-the-ai-challenge-for-luxury-is-not-technology-but-the-human-element/>

2.8 Managerial relevance and introduction of the research question: "*How can luxury brands proactively preserve their heritage and craftsmanship in the era of generative AI within creative processes—ranging from design to advertising—while maintaining authenticity and emotional engagement with consumers?*"

Artificial Intelligence plays a pivotal role in the current luxury environment, showcasing the drastic evolution that creativity has been facing, representing a fundamental tool which has profoundly entered and improved brands' multidimensional creative processes.

Therefore, while different authors have highlighted the practical and emotional impact of AI within creative fields (Aarzo et al.,2024), representing a significant component which develops deeper and significant relationships between brands and consumers, its implementation has spread numerous uncertainties questioning the actual authenticity of this tool and its impact on people's life (O' Toole et al., 2024).

Accordingly, in an era in which the implementation of AI and Gen AI has slowly brought to a loss of genuineness, reality and trueness, authenticity becomes the essential determinant, which drives consumers behaviours and preferences towards luxury brands, inducing them to lean towards these types of goods and appreciating the communication pursued (Pantano et al.,2024).

Particularly, a new conception has started to spread, defining what can now be considered *craft authenticity*, based on the techniques implied to develop a creative product and which showcase the rationality and skilled creativity of craftsmen (Lee et Kim, 2024).

Thus, consumers start evaluating companies based on their authenticity, meant as the brand's relationship with its heritage and core values, valuating the merge of this value with brands' different dimensions such as product information, craftsmanship, trustworthiness, and advertising honesty. Subsequently, as consumers increasingly value this element, an equilibrated balance must be established in order to remain relevant and competitive in an era where technology is reshaping creative industries yet remaining tied to the brands' intrinsic and leading values, while simultaneously meeting consumer expectations for genuine, handcrafted luxury goods (Arbaiza et al,2024; To et al.,2025).

Therefore, luxury brands face a critical challenge in maintaining authenticity while integrating AI and generative AI technologies into their creative processes, carefully balancing the use of AI for customization and personalization while preserving their heritage, craftsmanship, and core values (Garcia,2024).

Hence, drawing upon the stated premises the following research question has been developed:

"How can luxury brands proactively preserve their heritage and craftsmanship in the era of generative AI within creative processes—ranging from design to advertising—while maintaining authenticity and emotional engagement with consumers?"

To fill the existing research gap, this study aims to explore how leading luxury houses navigate the intersection between AI-driven innovation and brand heritage preservation.

Rather than merely evaluating the strategies of emerging technologies communication, this research delves into the deepest essence of modern luxury branding, conceived as a solid yet dynamic bond between past and future possibilities.

With the objective of transcending traditional definitions of luxury and go beyond traditional borders, the interplay of two disparate, yet related concepts, algorithmic technologies and brands' symbolism will be analysed, leveraging on the current demand of communicating with clarity, honesty and authenticity.

By answering this question, the study will investigate the role of human creativity in AI-augmented processes, the shifting expectations of luxury consumers in a technologically mediated landscape, and the ethical implications tied to authenticity and originality.

Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to managerial practices by offering actionable frameworks for balancing technological advancement with core brand values, shaping a future in which technology complements rather than compromises the human dimension of luxury.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This chapter illustrates the methodological framework adopted to explore how AI-generated campaigns, throughout their visual and verbal languages, reshape traditional luxury narratives, influencing both consumers' perception of authenticity and their emotional engagement with brands.

Developing the analysis from a semiotic and cultural perspective, the chapter aimed at decoding the symbolic structures, meanings and narrative strategies employed by brands in order to gain a comprehensive and deep knowledge of the phenomenon analysed.

Moreover, to strengthen the research framework, an empirical investigation was developed, conducting a focus group in which Gen Z consumers took part, aimed at fostering an in-depth and meaningful discussion.

Hence, the focus group offered direct insights into how AI-driven campaigns are interpreted, received, and emotionally experienced by their intended audience. By collecting qualitative data, the focus group provided a valuable empirical perspective that complements the semiotic approach, adding depth to the understanding of the experiential and emotional dimensions of consumer engagement.

Therefore, through the integration of these two complementary perspectives, the study not only examined the symbols, meanings, and narratives constructed by luxury brands but also uncovered the emotional and perceptual responses triggered in the target audience when artificial intelligence enters brand creative processes.

In this sense, the semiotic analysis offered the conceptual tools to decode the systems of signs and values embedded in campaigns, while the focus group anchored these findings in lived consumer experiences, redefining brand narratives and consumer engagement in the digital age.

Ultimately, this dual integrated perspective, enables the research to address its central question:

How can luxury brands proactively preserve their heritage and craftsmanship in the era of generative AI within creative processes—ranging from design to advertising—while maintaining authenticity and emotional engagement with consumers?"

3.1 Research Objectives and Methodological Choices

This research aims to explore how AI-generated visuals and textual languages, when integrated into luxury brands communication, shape Gen Z's perception of two key values: brand authenticity and emotional connection.

To address this question, the study employs a mixed-method approach, combining semiotic analysis with qualitative marketing methodologies.

Thus, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate to examine how AI conveys complex narratives that function not only as powerful advertising tool, but also as a medium that activates symbolic meanings and elicits emotional responses in consumers.

The research therefore unfolds across two complementary phases.

The first phase consists of a semiotic analysis of three AI-driven advertising campaigns from luxury brands Moncler, Valentino, and Thalie Paris, selected for their cultural resonance and pioneering use of innovative hybrid visuals and narrative languages.

This analysis indeed sought to decode the symbolic structures, cultural codes and isotopies embedded in these campaigns, demonstrating how AI both reconfigures traditional luxury narratives and constructs new systems of meaning through which consumers interpret authenticity and value (Barthes, 1964).

The second phase involved an empirical validation, conducted through a focus group in which Gen Z participants took part.

This phase was designed to capture interpretations, reflections, and expectations elicited by the AI-generated campaigns, with particular attention to perceived authenticity, emotional engagement, and overall effectiveness felt by consumers (Krueger, 2002).

By doing so, the focus group, complements the semiotic perspective with direct, experiential insights into contemporary consumers' expectations, thereby anchoring theoretical findings in their lived experiences.

Taken together, these two levels of analysis, semiotic decoding and consumer validation, enable a comprehensive understanding of how AI is reshaping luxury brand narratives, while offering an interpretive framework that integrates symbolic construction with audience reception.

3.2 Selection Criteria of the Corpus and Analytical Methodology

This further section outlines the criteria that guided the selection of the research corpus, clarifying both the motivations for choosing the campaigns and the rationale for the brands included.

The corpus consists of three AI-driven luxury brand campaigns: two from established luxury houses Moncler and Valentino, and one from the emerging luxury brand Thalie Paris.

These cases were indeed selected for their strategic significance in experimenting with advanced technologies and for their innovative engagement with new narrative forms in luxury communication.

The choice of each case study responded to distinct yet complementary criteria.

Moncler's *Art of Explorers* campaign was selected due to its recognition at the ADC Annual Awards, one of the most prestigious competitions in the fields of advertising and media creativity, which confirmed its relevance as an exemplary case of innovation in communication.

The choice of Valentino's *Essentials* campaign reflects instead its syncretism within its communication strategies, where AI-generated visuals are intertwined with the presence of human figures and ambassadors.

Rather than replacing traditional storytelling, AI here complements and amplifies it, producing a layered discourse in which technology rearticulates the brand's codes, enhances the brand's identity while human representation safeguards its emotional and relational depth.

Finally, the Thalie Paris campaign was chosen as a representative of new-generation luxury. The brand distinguishes itself by integrating sustainability and technological innovation, adopting AI as a cost- and time-efficient tool for creative experimentation, while positioning itself as a disruptor within the contemporary luxury landscape.

Beyond their conceptual relevance, however the campaigns resonance was particularly visible in terms of consumer reactions and media coverage, sparking the significant influence that nowadays brands have within modern communication platforms.

Moncler has 5,8 million followers on Instagram (Source: Instagram official profile [@moncler](#)) and 1,3 million on TikTok (Source: TikTok official profile [@moncler](#)). Its social media feed masterfully intertwines its outdoor adventure heritage with luxury high-performance fashion while developing dynamic visual narratives.

Thus, predominantly featuring models wearing Moncler signature outwear, set against various scenarios and settings, the brand's posts highlight not only their products' functional purpose, yet their strategic purposes of combining luxury with functionality throughout compelling and impactful visuals.

Hence, the Art of Explorers campaign was just the starting point in developing a relevant and insightful debate around consumers' perception on AI implementation within creative domains, especially within luxury brands.

Reinforcing the brand's adventurous and experimental identity, blending AI-generated models with immersive narratives, the content strongly resonated with audiences, who engaged through approval

yet contrary comments, developing various creative interpretations of the campaign which made viewers' actively respond under the brand's posts and CEO Remo Ruffini account.

Valentino with 18,9 million followers on Instagram (Source: Instagram official profile @maisonvalentino) and 1,7 million followers on TikTok (Source: TikTok official profile @valentino) blends its rich heritage with contemporary luxury narratives, combining haute couture aesthetics, immersive visuals and editorial storytelling.

Traditionally associated to a model-centric visual, in which human models stood at the centre of the brand's social communication, Valentino "Essentials" campaign generated strong debate on social media, gathering approval yet contrary point of views in which consumers elicited both their admiration and scepticisms for the innovative visual language adopted and the emerging role in haute couture of AI-made models.

Meanwhile, Thalie Paris, as a smaller and emerging luxury brand with 42,6 thousand followers on Instagram (Source: Instagram official profile @thalieofficial), gained visibility precisely thanks to its AI-made campaign, appearing on Forbes (2024) as a smaller yet sustainable maison that emphasized its positioning by combining ethical luxury with digital creativity.

Therefore, taken together, these consumers' reactions underscore how AI-driven campaigns not only shape brand narratives, yet they catalyse conversations across social media, becoming cultural events that reinforce or challenge perceptions of authenticity, innovation and luxury identity.

Consequently, the methodological analysis of these campaigns was articulated across two complementary levels, combining throughout a mixed approach both semiotic analysis and qualitative marketing perspectives.

In the case of Moncler Genius campaign "The art of Explorers" and Valentino "The essentials" campaign, both producing audiovisual and textual outcomes, an advertisement breakdown was made following Peverini's campaign segmentation framework outlined in the book "I media: strumenti di analisi semiotica (2012).

Subsequently, the generative trajectory of meaning outlined by Greimais and Courtés (1982) was applied, articulated across discursive, narrative, and axiological levels, supported then by a complementary visual textual analysis, developed upon the plastic- figurative elements of semiotics (Polidoro, 2008).

Thereafter, in Thalie Paris case, whose campaign centered on a text-image output, a figurative-plastic model was applied (Polidoro,2008), developing a particularly effective perspective through which compositional elements were distinguished, in order to uncover symbolic structures, and identify cultural categories embedded in the brand's communication.

Therefore, this framework enabled an in-depth understanding of both the material dimension of the visuals and the cultural stratifications through which Thalie articulates its emerging brand identity in the affirmed digital luxury context, decoding existing categories.

Finally, to support the semiotic analysis, a focus group was conducted with Gen Z participants. This stage aimed to gather direct insights into how young consumers interpret AI-generated luxury campaigns, with particular attention to their perceptions of authenticity, emotional connection, and technological innovation (Krueger, 2002).

The comparison between the symbolic meanings constructed by brands and the actual responses of consumers made it possible to highlight points of convergence as well as areas of divergence, thereby providing a richer understanding of how AI-driven narratives are received and interpreted by modern consumers.

3.3 Breakdown of the brand Moncler: heritage, values and resonance

Positioned at the intersection of classic functionality and avant-garde fashion, Moncler has evolved from an alpine outerwear specialist into a global luxury icon whose identity has been defined by the continuous combination of functionality, innovation and cultural relevance.

Founded in 1952 in Monestier-de-Clermont, France, by René Ramillon and André Vincent, the company initially produced quilted sleeping bags and technical mountaineering gear.

It was not long after that the now-iconic down jacket was conceived, with the purpose to protect workers from extreme alpine temperatures, yet later becoming the choice of professional expeditions and the official uniform for the French Olympic ski team in 1968 (Moncler website).

Following, the brand's evolution and worldwide recognition rapidly accelerated after its acquisition in 2003 by Italian entrepreneur Remo Ruffini, whom with its creative direction, steered Moncler from a niche performance label to a leader in luxury outerwear.

Indeed nowadays, Moncler's aesthetic codes are instantly recognizable: glossy lacquered nylon, precise quilting, bold yet functional silhouettes and the tricolour logo that remains a constant link to its alpine heritage.

Furthermore, while originally rooted in functional and muted tones, contemporary Moncler collections have embraced a spectrum of bright, vibrant colours, bold textures, material experimentation and unexpected collaborations, thereby reinforcing the brand's status as both a heritage guardian and a design innovator (Elle Décor, 2021).

Hence, at its core, Moncler's brand values revolve around *heritage*, preserving the functional excellence of its origins; *innovation*, embracing new materials, technologies, and cultural dialogues; and *exclusivity*, maintaining its position in the luxury sector through controlled distribution and high-profile collaborations.

In recent years, these values have been expressed not only through seasonal collections but also through conceptual marketing creations such as *Moncler Genius*, which invited multiple creative voices to reinterpret the brand's DNA, aligning the brand with art, streetwear, and now, with emerging technological frontiers like artificial intelligence.

In this way, Moncler's trajectory can be read as a continuous process of *hybridization*, merging the pragmatic with the visionary, the mountain with the city, and increasingly, the human with the digital.

Therefore, this capacity to navigate between tradition and transformation has positioned Moncler as a fertile case study for understanding how contemporary luxury brands redefine their identities in an era where cultural heritage, technology, and creative experimentation intersect and are combined.

3.3.1 Moncler Genius AI campaign “The art of absolute imagination” (2023)

In 2023, during London Fashion Week, Moncler in collaboration with Maison Meta unveiled “*The Art of Absolute Imagination*” campaign, developing the brand's first and leading AI-driven advertising.

The initiative marked indeed a significant milestone in the brand's communication trajectory, positioning Moncler among the pioneering luxury houses to incorporate artificial intelligence and emerging technologies into its narrative and visual strategies.

Moreover, as the starting point of the brand's AI-integrated communication journey, this initiative is regarded as the precursor to the brand's subsequent explorations, most notably the award-winning "*Art of Explorers*" campaign, which further expanded the dialogue between technology, creativity, and luxury.

Therefore, the brand stated that the primary aim was to generate what could be described as an "AI exaggeration" within the imagery of its campaign lookbooks, while simultaneously establishing powerful and groundbreaking partnerships.

These collaborations highlighted the creative vision of the selected *Geniuses*, whose artistic talent and brilliance have not only shaped iconic brands but also positioned them as influential figures within contemporary pop culture.

Building on this objective, Moncler extended its collaborative framework by partnering with Adidas Originals, pop-culture icons such as Pharrell Williams and Jay-Z, and fashion labels like Palm Angels, Fragment, and Salehe Bembury.

These synergies culminated in one of the brand's most striking and innovative AI-driven campaigns, further amplified through its presentation on *Vogue Runway*, reaffirming Moncler's position at the crossroads of luxury heritage, streetwear culture, and technological innovation.

Therefore, to understand how luxury brands effectively communicate values, identities, and ideologies while integrating them into AI-based campaigns, this chapter adopts the semiotic model proposed by Polidoro (2008), grounded in the Greimasian theory of structural semiotics.

According to this framework, the analysis of a visual text is articulated through two fundamental levels:

- **The Figurative level** which focuses on the recognisable elements within the image, such as characters, actions, spaces, and objects, which convey narrative, symbolic, or representational meanings.
- **The Plastic level** that explores the visual and sensory form of the message, colours, lines, compositions, textures, light, and movement, which create emotions and aesthetic value.

These two levels work together to form a comprehensive understanding of how meaning is constructed.

When applied to luxury campaigns, especially those involving AI-generated visuals, this method enables a detailed understanding of how luxury is visually expressed, styled, and ideologically positioned in the post-digital era.

Hence images can be analysed throughout some specific tools which go beyond the real outside world yet can argue and develop a second level defined as plastic level or language.

Therefore, gathering from the definition of plastic semiotics and its application within the visual configuration of images and campaigns, a figurative-plastic analysis has been conducted within the Moncler “*The Art of Absolute Imagination*” campaign.

Starting from the figurative level, which defines images as the representation of world, the figures and models have been analysed based on the partnership developed by the brand with resonant and powerful streetwear brands such as Adidas Original and Palm Angels .

In this sense, applying Polidoro conceptualizations (2008), it has been possible to identify and recognise the distinctive advertisement components in order to generate a punctual and detailed analysis of the brand’s developed visuals.

Hence a breakdown of the different elements has been developed following the different collaborations and partnerships through which the brands combined their distinctive traits with AI implementation.

Moncler x Adidas Original - Blue Inflated Puffer



Moncler text-visual campaign – The Art of Absolute Imagination (2023)

I. Figurative analysis

a. Characters

AI-made digital avatars are the subjects and characters of the entire campaign, being represented just as human-like models which pose at the centre of the camera wearing the brand's most iconic and outstanding pieces.

In this specific advertising campaign, a black AI-generated model is represented wearing an oversized cobalt blue puffer jacket, with his/her face partially obscured by ski-style visor.

Moreover, the subject stands motionless, facing forward with his hands enclosed within the jacket sleeves, conveying an aura of power, control, and detachment. His posture is rigid, straight, and symmetrical, indicating that perfection typically pursued and achieved by AI creativity.

b. Objects

The puffer jacket itself becomes the main object-actor: almost sculptural, echoing inflated architecture and protection, it represents the statement garment and iconic product of the brand, communicating all the power absorbed and transmitted by the figure.

The jacket is indeed both a cover of the figure, which is nearly hidden underneath, yet it is also bulky element which takes up most of the space and gathers viewers' attention.

II. Plastic Analysis

Furthermore, as outlined in Polidoro 's semiotic framework (2008), by developing the complementary plastic semiotic level and analysing its distinctive traits, additional characteristics emerge and unfold in the following ways:

- Eidetic category

Defined as the category in which characteristics that can recall geometrical figures or lines' properties emerge, within this advertising campaign they are commonly associated to the shapes and forms of the brands iconic product, the Moncler puffer jacket.

The puffer jacket appears extremely voluminous, taking up the majority of the space within the visual ad, both physically and visually, delineating the soft and curved lines that trace and outline the AI-model silhouette.

Therefore, inflated, rounded silhouettes and perfectly symmetrical compositions stand out, highlighting the puffiness and multiple textures of the product advertised, representing the shapes as they would have been seen on human figures and models.

In this sense, the campaign viewer can sort of feel and perceive the textures showed, such as the puffiness, softness and comfort of the jacket, paired with the fluffiness and cosiness of the hood.

- **Chromatic category**

Within each partnership and campaign visual different colours dominate, creating various palettes and emotional codes which define the multiple signifiers and meanings.

In the Moncler x Adidas campaign, a monochromatic, gradient blue cobalt tone dominates the entire advertising, signifying technology, futurism and bold innovation.

Additionally, the yellow logo at the bottom adds a vibrant contrast, making the tagline “The Art of Absolute Imagination” standout.

Moreover, the lighting, being entirely centred on the model figure, creates depth and shadows which emphasize the reflective plastic-like surface of the jacket and its texture and the model’s mighty existence.

- **Topological categories**

Referring to the spatial plane of representation, this category analyses the way through which elements are positioned within the frame.

Accordingly, the subject is always centred, occupying the majority of the frame, though suggesting authority and mightiness of the figure which captures consumers’ attention.

Additionally, without there being a spatial and environmental depth, the space is reduced to gradients and coloured backgrounds in which the AI-figure stands out in a virtual, far from everyday reality world.

Therefore, throughout these compositional choices the visuals isolate and monumentalize the figure, detaching it from narrative or lived space, positioning it as an icon within a digital, de-materialized space and which collectively, these plastic features construct a visual language that stages luxury as hyper-designed, emotionally stylized, and technologically enhanced.

In this sense, the immaterial and identifiable environment lets consumers focus their gaze entirely on the character, making it standout through colours and materials textures.

Finally, if left to viewers’ interpretation, the background could be interpreted as a resemblance of the sky or the depths, making the figure stand out thanks to its perfection and powerful presence.

Subsequently, the same deconstructed analysis has been pursued within the further partnerships and collaborations made by Moncler, revealing the meaningful and effective connections installed between emerging brands, AI technologies and pop-culture figures.

Ergo, a further compared figurative-plastic analysis has been conducted on the 3 following collaboration that saw Moncler partnership with the street wear brand Palm Angels and footwear designer Salehe Bembury, followed then by two resonant collaborations made with artists Jay Z and Pharrell Williams and finally its partnership with emerging brand FRGMNT.

Moncler Genius x Palm Angels - Pink Puffer and Moncler Genius x Salehe Bembury – Orange Puffer



Moncler text-visual campaign – The Art of Absolute Imagination (2023)

III. Figurative Analysis

a. Characters

In both visuals, the AI-models wear again exaggerated, statement Moncler puffer jackets in unconventional colours and designs (bubble-gum pink and bright orange).

In the Palm Angels collaboration, the subject is an AI-generated female avatar, styled with an unusual hairstyle, revealing pink hair tied into a ponytail that matches the bubble-gum pink jacket. Her skin is smooth, matt, and perfect, without any type of imperfection, showcasing the hyper-symmetrical and flawless features, which not only represent an embodied and idealized fashion beauty standard, but also an AI-made intrinsic idealization.

In the Salehe Bembury visual, the subject still remains an AI-generated avatar, yet his face is almost entirely hidden by an oversized sculptural balaclava wrapped around his head, leaving only futuristic ski goggles visible.

Therefore, the anonymity de-individualizes and deconstructs the figure, turning the model into a living mannequin, transmitting experimental creative design rather than personality, and letting come through a narrative which develops not only around visual figures, yet, also symbolic representations, embodying the brand's identity, experimental being and artistic ethos.

Additionally, focusing on the characters' way of being, both subjects are represented standing still, almost statuesque, motionless and frontal.

Their postures are highly composed and symmetrical, radiating a calm and authority behaviour typical of AI-generated models.

In the first image, the model faces directly forward with an assertive and serious gaze, while her arms are hidden inside the massive pink puffer pockets, suggesting both vulnerability and power, yet unapproachability and detachment.

In the second image, instead the model's face is totally obscured by the singular balaclava and oversized goggles, intensifying the sense of anonymity and futurist abstraction expressed by the virtual model.

Consequently, the covering of the face explains a simple yet powerful concept: what matters isn't who the wearer is, human nor artificial model, but the garment itself as creative expression.

Furthermore, in both visuals there is an absence of a dynamic movement which denotes a narrative of perfection, control, frozen in time idealization and hyperreal artificiality, typical of AI narratives and achievable throughout technological generation.

b. Objects

The puffer jackets transcend clothes functionality and become sculptural objects, which detain the message and reasoning that rely beneath the brands' communication strategy.

The jackets act as *object-actors*, carrying the campaign's powerful narrative about creativity liberated by AI and the art of geniuses' absolute imagination.

Their highly detailed, visible quilting, metallic zippers, and the iconic Moncler logo patch function simultaneously as fashion items, sculptural objects, and symbols of creativity, becoming a clear contrast between the other garments structure and materials (the brown trousers), which instead oppose to the puffer's softness and detailing.

Moreover, the orange puffer jacket is represented as a hyper-architectural piece of clothing: textures, pleats and bulges dominate the entire visual, turning what commonly has been considered as a simple jacket into a wearable piece of art.

Hence, the exaggerated volume, glossy materials, and intricate details (like zippers, goggles, or pleated fabric) reinforce Moncler's brand identity: merging luxury, technical innovation, and avant-garde design.

IV. Plastic Analysis

Following, a plastic analysis has been developed, taking into consideration the pivotal elements and categories found within the two campaigns visuals:

- Eidetic category

As in the previous visual, the same approach has been followed, relying on rounded and padded shapes, which communicate the voluminosity and majestic of the jacket itself.

In the pink jacket visual, clear and soft lines develop around the curviness of the garment, emphasizing its puffiness and softness, while framing the rigid verticality of the AI figure.

In the orange jacket, instead the pleats and ruches introduce a dynamic movement through the different textures and layers within an otherwise static composition.

Moreover, the singular and unusual balaclava assumes those creases and veins typical of a human brain, resembling what could be viewed as an enormous organ.

Indeed, this could clearly refer to the meaning and symbolism that drove the creation of the genius campaign, representing the distinctive element which distances human creativity from AI, brain and reasoning.

- **Chromatic category**

The study of colours defines that each colour carries distinct emotional codes, meanings and associations.

Differently from the previous visual, which developed around a singular monochromatic tone, in these two campaigns, colours, shades and backgrounds assume numerous and deeper shades.

The pink jacket is paired with a neutral gradient background, providing coherence between all the elements presented and their facets.

Subsequently, the way of mixing warm and cool shades, creates a soft yet bold visual impact that denotes femininity, ethereality and futuristic style, enhancing the textures and components of the puffer.

Therefore, the precise combination of colours and background, generates multiple mental associations.

For example, The Palm Angels visual surrounded by clear and candid clouds, could resemble the dawn and sunrise of a new day, representing the birth and beginning of a new era within the luxury environment.

Alternatively, the Salehe Bembury orange jacket sits against a gradient orange-to-black background, adding depth and touch of drama, while amplifying warmth, disruption and daring boldness.

Lighting is direct and clean, accentuating gloss, puffiness, and shadows, making the textures appear almost touchable.

Moreover, with its orange gradient background the visual recalls the colours of lava and fire, representing the total disruption, dynamicity and innovation be found within this advertising campaign.

Finally, in both, the brand's yellow logo and tagline ("The Art of Absolute Imagination") adds a contrasting pop that reinforces the campaign's creative manifesto.

- **Topological category**

As seen in the Moncler x Adidas previous collaboration the environment is minimalistic and immaterial: gradient backgrounds with warm transitions (from dusky pink to neutral orange tones) create an atmospheric but undefined space.

The two backgrounds, ranging from light colours to deeper and darker shades, indeed represent ethereal worlds, where the viewer is not able to identify a specific setting and space in time, yet can imagine parallel worlds or recognise particular day moments through the association of colours and shades in which the two figures fiercely stand out.

Therefore, within both visuals the AI-models are centralized and symmetrical: each character occupies the vertical axis of the frame, drawing the viewer's gaze to the model and jacket, occupying an abstract place in time.

Hence, what stands out is the figures positioning and the surrounding background.

Within the Palm Angels visual, the Ai-figure directly faces the camera, standing alone at the centre of the frame, evoking confidence, detachment yet contemporary coolness.

She becomes a symbolic figure rather than an individual: a digital muse, stripped of narrative, whose sole function is to wear and embody the product.

Additionally, within the orange visual, since the jacket fills most of the frame, the symmetrical posture and covered face shift focus entirely to garment design and material experimentation rather than the person who is behind all of those clothes.

Therefore, in all of these associations, the background functions not as a literal space, but as an emotional and symbolic atmosphere, which is able to enhance the garment's warmth, dynamism, and sculptural presence, while distancing it from everyday reality.

Moncler Genius x Jay Z - Yellow Puffer and Moncler Genius x Pharell Williams – Military green puffer



Moncler text-visual campaign – *The Art of Absolute Imagination* (2023)

Within these two campaign visuals, which represent instead the brand' choice of partnering with resonant music pop-culture figures, Jay-Z and Pharell Williams, it is clear the return to a monochromatic presentation of the brands, in which the colours create both an outstanding contrast, while complementing and supporting the colours choices.

The plastic-figurative analysis is nearly the same, with the presence of AI-centered models that wear structured vibrant puffers, yet some clear differences can be discovered throughout a more profound and deeper focus on the puffer alternatives.

In both cases the jacket appears and seems an armour, an exterior component which protects the figure from the external environment, appearing as a snakeskin within the yellow puffer collaboration, yet a bulletproof jacket in the second green kaki visual.

In this way it seems that the brand's intent is to create a shield that separates human capabilities from AI technologies and creative implementation, whereas those AI-figures are ready to fight them and establish Ai supremacy.

Therefore, within the character representation, with the resemblance that the AI-models have with traditional human models, it seems clear that the brand intent is to declare and state its use of AI, representing an extreme realistic vision of models, yet inserting a profound symbolism behind the choices of colours, textures and figures.

It is in this sense that a semiotic concept of veridiction emerged, intended as the brand's tendency to create an effect of veridicity and authenticity within their visuals.

Indeed, in these representations the brand's aim is to showcase humans in the most realistic way, focusing on their minimalist representation, in order to focus on the product and its innovation.

Finally, in one of the last visuals proposed that established the brand collaboration Moncler with emerging brand FRGMNT, an additional AI-model is presented, yet recognizable and associable to one of the human characters presented in the Moncler GENIUS audio-visual commercial "The city of Genius".



Moncler text-visual campaign – *The Art of Absolute Imagination* (2023)



The City of Genius



Moncler 53.000 iscritti

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Condividi

Clip

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Moncler audio visual campaign – The City of Genius(2023)

The protagonist is indeed a young woman with Chinese features which in a sort of way resembles the avatar presented in the collection FRGMNT, becoming the centre of the campaign visual and entire narration.

In this sense, this could suggest the brand's willingness to develop a fil rouge, a coherence between its narrations, that go beyond reality and meet in different and distant worlds, such as AI-created creations.

In continuity with this, the city of Genius campaign, assumes a deeper meaning, going beyond mere AI-created visuals, yet finding a point of contact which links to separate yet similar worlds, human reality and technological innovation.

As one of the advertising lines narrates, the city of Genius becomes “the expression of the unimaginable over the measurable”.

Therefore, an additional concept stands out, intended as the union of different languages, text and audiovisual, which are both combined in order to justify and explain the object, campaign and purpose showcased .

Building upon this foundation, and as previously mentioned, the *Genius* campaign represents only the initial step in the brand's broader AI-driven strategy.

It is within this context that the subsequent *Art of Explorers* campaign must be taken into consideration, being a sort of sequel of what presented in the brand's first AI stream.

Clearly, it is important to define the relevance and positioning that this campaign has achieved, being mentioned within the international ADC Annual Awards.

These awards indeed celebrate and reward the best advertising, digital media, graphic and publication design, photography, illustration and fashion design, focusing on artistry and craftsmanship (One Club, 2024).

Additionally, building upon the previous campaign and collaborations, a key outstanding point emerged, that is the brand's willingness of pushing the boundaries of co-creation, while integrating AI groundbreaking technologies (Adidas, 2023).

Hence, the entire campaign focused on the concept and figure of explorers, that appear as shared figurehead, represented first through a series of AI-generated adventurers, then through a collection of unique mixed-media sculptures.



Moncler x adidas Originals



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Moncler X Adidas audio visual campaign – The Art of Explorers (2023)

Consequently, to obtain a complete and overall view on the brand communication strategy, a breakdown of the audio-visual campaign has been conducted following Peverini's (2012) textual segmentation and advertising decomposition sheet.

Hence, starting from the deconstruction of the campaign in its fundamental components, the pivotal, strategic elements (such as sound, colours and content description) are defined, developing a first

“meticulous observation”, essential to unravel the deepest nuances and meanings of the campaign narratives (Peverini, 2012, p.36)

Thereby, a table has been developed to describe the segmentation of the sequences, describing their main visual, length sound, and compositional components.

#Sequence	Sequence's length	Visual column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0:00 – 0:04	<p>Content The Adidas and Moncler logo are written in a bright yellow and appear at the beginning of the shot. They both appear on a bright blue background in which 4 indistinctive figures are alternatively represented in pairs.</p> <p>Transition effects are inserted, developing short and brief fading and where a fade to black effect lasts only a few seconds.</p> <p>The visual resembles a situation in which something is starting to be presented, shadows are moving, and viewers do not know what to expect.</p> <p>Frame Width: Mid-plane</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: In the first second there is a stable fixed lightning, then flashing lights are represented</p> <p>Colour: Black on bright blue, high-contrast monochrome, with some hints of yellow and white</p> <p>Transition: Blurred and dissolving graphic</p>	<p>Sound: a dancing yet robotic music is utilized, with a high presence of drums and hand- claps</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

2	0:04 – 0:06	<p>Content</p> <p>Two sets of black shadows still appear on the same blue background, showcasing still to undistinguished figures which can be associated two to human figures and the other two to similar monsters. There is an immediate passage from the two initial figures to the next ones</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle:</p> <p>Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: there is a dark atmosphere, only a background light can be seen</p> <p>Colour:</p> <p>Black on bright blue, high-contrast monochrome, only shadows are shown</p> <p>Transition:</p> <p>quick transition from two figures to the other ones</p>	<p>Sound:</p> <p>the same dancing robotic music is used within this frame</p> <p>Sound Type:</p> <p>Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
3	0:06 – 0:07	<p>Content</p> <p>Lights are switched on, shadows disappear in order to reveal the two previous shadow figures, lightened up and now clear and identified.</p> <p>2 models are there, a human figure and an AI-created avatar, wearing vibrant and coloured clothes, and in which the iconic Moncler puffer stands out.</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: from a dark and obscure ambient, the light is switched on, showing a bright cold light that brightens up the entire scene</p> <p>Colour: on a greyish background the clothes colours stand out, revealing a</p>	<p>Sound:</p> <p>adding to the previous sound, claps and drums are inserted within the soundtrack</p> <p>Sound Type:</p> <p>Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

		<p>bright white colour, black stripes and hints of blue and bright red. Moreover, a silver pair of sunglasses wore by the AI-model catch viewers' attention.</p> <p>Transition: fading from darkness to bright light</p>		
4	0:07 – 0:10	<p>Content Description: An immediate close up on the other 2 figures (a black male model and the AI-avatar) is made, while they are moving, dancing with each other and are intertwining</p> <p>Frame Width: mid-plane, full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: right-angle and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: following the previous sequence the light remains the same</p> <p>Colour: vibrant colours continue popping from the neutral grey background, revealing the always emblematic colours, blue, red and black. Additionally in this scenario, the silver colour is more prominent, since there still is a pair of mirrored sunglasses, yet paired with the AI-model "clothes", which is entirely covered by silver disks, which reflect the human model clothes colours.</p> <p>Transition: No effects</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
5	0:10 – 0:13	<p>Content Description: From a closeup to immediately moving away, other 2 models are presented (a Chinese model and an AI-avatar which assumes a tribal African appearance), wearing the same clothes. They both stand</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and</p>	

		<p>still in a static, straight position, while the camera then slowly starts moving backwards and moving away from them</p> <p>Frame Width: half-length, full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: right-to-left visual and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: the lighting remains the same as sequence 4, yet more focus is given to the pavement, which appears lighter than the rest of the background, being an optical white and making the figures stand out.</p> <p>Colour: new colours emerge within these sequence, kaki green, a red coral, hints of blue and black. Particularly, black colour stands out through the “hairstyle/hat” of the Ai-model.</p> <p>Transition: an immediate transition is made from the previous sequence, shifting from a close-up visual to an entire figure one, no effects</p>	drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12) Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)	
6	0:13 – 0:14	<p>Content Description: A further close up is made on a new human model, who has blonde hair, light blue eyes and white brows and eyebrows and pale skin. She is wearing a white puffer jacket with black details, which represent Adidas iconic 3 stripes, showcasing the partnership that is behind this campaign. Even in this shot the frame slowly moves away from the model, while on the left side of the background can be foreseen her AI- avatar companion.</p> <p>Frame Width: close up</p> <p>Camera Angle: right – angle and horizontal</p>	Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12) Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)	

		<p>Lighting: same lighting as the previous sequences</p> <p>Colour: the white colour is prominent within this frame, found within numerous elements, from the puffer jacket, to the brown and eyebrows of the model. Plus, black elements are found, and everything stands out thanks to the grey background</p> <p>Transition: no effect</p>		
7	0:14 – 0:15	<p>Content Description: The black model and its fellow Ai- avatar return in this sequence, continuously moving together in the same ways, and resembling one the shadow and copy of the other one. In this case the Ai- avatar is covered with reflective- coloured disks which imitate the human model clothes, in which Adidas logo emerges clear on the puffer jacket, together with small patches that instead represent Moncler's logo.</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: horizontal and frontal</p> <p>Lighting: same lighting as the previous sequences</p> <p>Colour: there still are the vibrant colours blue, red and black, which pop from the neutral grey background, and there still are silver elements.</p> <p>Transition: no effect</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
8	0:15 – 0:16	<p>Content Description: An additional close-up is made again on the Chinese female model (as seen in sequence 5), focusing in this case on the</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound,</p>	

		<p>garments wore by the two. The vibrant red coral colour and military green are showcased, highlighting the textures of the materials.</p> <p>Frame Width: mid-plane</p> <p>Camera Angle: from down to up angle and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: same lighting as the previous sequences</p> <p>Colour: same colours as sequence 5 emerge, kaki green, a red coral, hints of blue and black.</p> <p>Transition: no effect</p>	<p>paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>
9	0:16- 0:17	<p>Content Description: Following, just a closeup on the garments of the collection is made, without revealing the models that are wearing those clothes, yet highlighting the colours(intense red, blue and black), textures and logos of the 2 brands</p> <p>Frame Width: detail</p> <p>Camera Angle: from up to down, horizontal and frontal</p> <p>Lighting: same lightning as previous sequences</p> <p>Colour: vibrant colours continue popping from the neutral grey background, revealing the always emblematic colours, blue, red and black.</p> <p>Transition: no effect</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>

10	0:17- 0:18	<p>Content Description: Subsequently a further closeup is made on the upper part of different models (the ones who take part to the sequence 6), catching the same visuals, but with a new camera angle</p> <p>Frame Width: mid-plane</p> <p>Camera Angle: from down to up angle, horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: same lightning as previous sequences</p> <p>Colour: again, the white colour is prominent from the puffer jacket to the brows and eyebrows of the model. Plus, black elements are found, and everything stands out thanks to the grey background</p> <p>Transition: no effect</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
11	0:18- 0:19	<p>Content Description: In this sequence the Chinese model is finally seen interacting with her Ai-avatar, firstly hiding behind it and leaving only her head to show. It is necessary to highlight the textures and physiognomies that emerge from this AI- avatar closeup, showcased and represented as a sort of alien. Following the human model is seen leaning to kiss the Ai figure.</p> <p>Frame Width: close up</p> <p>Camera Angle: frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: same lightning as previous sequences</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

		<p>Colour: same colours as sequence 5 emerge, kaki green, a red coral, hints of blue and black.</p> <p>Transition: a fast transition between the 2 different scenes</p>		
12	0:20 – 0:21	<p>Content Description: The black model and his AI- disk made model are seen dancing and grooving together, with a quick and immediate closeup of the camera on the two.</p> <p>Frame Width: mid-plane</p> <p>Camera Angle: close up and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: same lightning as previous sequences</p> <p>Colour: there still are the vibrant colours blue, red and black, which pop from the neutral grey background, and there still are silver elements.</p> <p>Transition: a slow close up</p>	<p>Sound: the same dancing robotic sound, paired with the clapping and drums sound is used within the following sequences (from sequence 4 to 12)</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
13	0: 21 – 0:22	<p>Content Description: This is the last closeup which shows finally the entire white, blonde model together with her Ai-model, throughout a frontal camera angle, which moving immediately away from them finally shows entirely the two figures and their outfits. The two are indeed standing still, in a straight pose which clearly demonstrates their clothes, colours and fit.</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: horizontal and frontal</p>	<p>Sound: the dancing soundtrack slowly fades into just robotic sounds</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

		<p>Lighting: the same lightning as the previous scenes</p> <p>Colour: white colour is prominent from the puffer jacket to the brows and eyebrows of the model. Plus, black elements are found, and everything stands out thanks to the grey background</p> <p>Transition: no effect</p>		
14	0:22 – 0:24	<p>Content Description: All the models, AI- made and human, are finally showed all together in one single frame, individuating the 3 couples, who are standing still one next to each other, looking straight to the camera. Just one Ai-model is seen moving, turning and looking toward the camera, even though it is not possible to see its eyes (since it is entirely made up of reflective disks). The peculiar aspect is also that all of the Ai-models have their eyes covered, with reflective sunglasses.</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: The camera angle is straight, direct on them and still, horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: the same lightning of the previous scenes is represented, yet there is an entire view of the setting and background</p> <p>Colour: finally, all the colours emerge together in the same sequence, showcasing the white, red, blue, black and green elements seen before singularly in each sequence.</p> <p>Transition: immediate transition, no effect</p>	<p>Sound: robotic sounds</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

15	0:24 – 0:25	<p>Content Description: A Quick close up shows and focuses on the 3 human models faces, shifting quickly from one to another, through a game of shadows which reveals them and passes from one to another</p> <p>Frame Width: extreme close up on the faces</p> <p>Camera Angle: frontal, horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: a darker lighting returns, in which a game of shadows reveals the human models faces</p> <p>Colour: dark colours return, the initial bright blue background is reused</p> <p>Transition:</p>	<p>Sound: robotic sounds continue playing Sound</p> <p>Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
16	0:25 – 0:29	<p>Content Description: This is the final frame in which all the figures' shades (Human and Ai) are shown together with a blue background, still standing one next to the other and reclaiming the first frame visual. The name of the campaign "The art of explorers" appears in a vibrant yellow colour that stands out in contrast with the dark coloured background</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: no lightning is found; the figures' shadows appear and just the background seems a bit more illuminated</p> <p>Colour: the 2 main initial colours return, the black of the figures' shadows and the blue of the background, followed then by yellow contrast of the written name of the</p>	<p>Sound: robotic sounds</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

		<p>campaign</p> <p>Transition: immediate, no effect transition; then, suddenly the name of the campaign emerges</p>		
17	0:29 – 0:30	<p>Content Description: Finally, the Moncler Genius campaign logo (a yellow building) appears on a black background</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: no lighting is found within this frame</p> <p>Colour: black and yellow in contrast with dark background</p> <p>Transition: a blurring transition passes from the previous sequence to this one, revealing a totally black screen in which the campaign logo emerges</p>	<p>Sound: the robotic sounds fade in complete silence</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

3.3.2 Semiotic-Narrative Level Analysis

After developing the segmentation of sequences and descriptive analysis of the *Art of Explorers* campaign, which allowed to breakdown and identify the visual, auditory, and narrative elements at a surface level, it was crucial to proceed towards an additional and complementary phase: the semiotic-narrative level.

This level, indeed, focuses on uncovering the middle structure of the narrative, introducing Greimas' (1973) actantial model and canonical narrative schema.

I. The Actantial Model

The actantial model provides a framework for identifying and interpreting the fundamental roles that drive a narrative.

These roles, referred to as actants, are not limited to characters alone but can also take the form of objects, abstract entities, or symbolic forces and it is through their interactions and oppositions that the narrative acquires both consistency and direction.

As Greimas (1973) stated, each actant performs a precise narrative function within the storyline, situated within a web of causal and semantic relations that determine how the narrative will unfold.

Therefore, the Actantial analysis allows for the mapping of roles and relationships among the actants, revealing how these figures can contribute to the semantic and narrative structuring of the campaign.

Hence, in the Art of Explorers campaign six main actants were identified, each performing a precise function within the narrative structure.

Subject	The main character of the narrative, it is often associated to the Receiver once he undertakes the action to achieve a specific goal.
Receiver	The entity that ultimately benefits from the subject's actions, gaining the value or outcome of the accomplished quest.
Opponent	Any force, character, or circumstance, whether intentional or accidental, that obstructs or challenges the subject in reaching the intended goal.
Helper	An agent or element that facilitates the subject's progress, offering support in the form of resources, guidance, or strategies that aid in accomplishing the mission.
Sender	The source that initiates the narrative by proposing a mission, assigning a task, or motivating the subject to pursue the object
Object	The desired goal or value that constitutes the target of the subject's action and justifies the unfolding of the narrative.

Sender

The sender is represented by the two brands, Moncler and Adidas originals, who initiate the entire narrative throughout this campaign, establishing the mission, purpose and values (e.g. innovation, groundbreaking creativity and technological exploration.

Object

The object of value, originality, is explicitly articulated from the very outset of the campaign development.

As a matter of fact, the headline “ORIGINALS” anticipates the campaign’s central value, which is further reinforced by the accompanying “The Art of Explorers” that encourages to be original and embrace exploration.

In this way, the brand not only presents its core value but also performs it discursively, guiding interpretation and positioning originality as the ultimate goal of the narrative trajectory.

Receiver

The receivers of this campaign are the models, both humans and AI, who embrace the journey of innovation, entering new fields of creative exploration.

These figures indeed blend and coexist in a unique space, embodying the brand’s vision, and communicating the innovative combination of two separate yet complementary worlds.

These indeed become the expression of the campaign bigger purpose, showcasing what is meaningful for the receiver, and consequently for the subject: to explore new technological and creative frontiers through the fusion of human creativity and AI.

Subject

The AI-generated explorers and their human companions represent the protagonists and subjects of the story, being the ones who start a journey, whether factual or symbolic.

The whole campaign is structured around the pivotal role of these figures, covered and dressed in the iconic Moncler puffer created in collaboration with Adidas original brand, embodying the brands’ core values of versatility, boldness and innovation.

Moreover, the brands’ communication and visuals find inspiration in the physical boundaries that could incur while exploring while spanning mountaintops and metropolitan cities, two of the most resonant environments that are associated to the brands concept.

Helper

Within the Art of Explorers campaign, AI is presented as the intrinsic and indispensable helper.

Far from replacing human creativity, AI indeed operates as a supportive tool that, through a reasoned and conscious implementation, generates compelling narratives and original visual contexts.

In this sense, AI not only amplifies the pursuit of originality, but enables the brand to distinguish its story from others by blending technological innovation with human intentionality, reaching what can be intended as the “explored originality”.

Opponent

The opponent is represented by homologation, which stands in direct contrast to the originality promoted by the brand and emphasized throughout the entire campaign.

Indeed, standardization of traditional aesthetics and homologation to common ideologies emerge as the main obstacles to creative distinctiveness, a boundary that the campaign urges to overcome.

In this sense, the opponent embodies the tension between conformity and peculiarity, against which Moncler positions itself by loudly calling out for originality, innovation, and creativity.

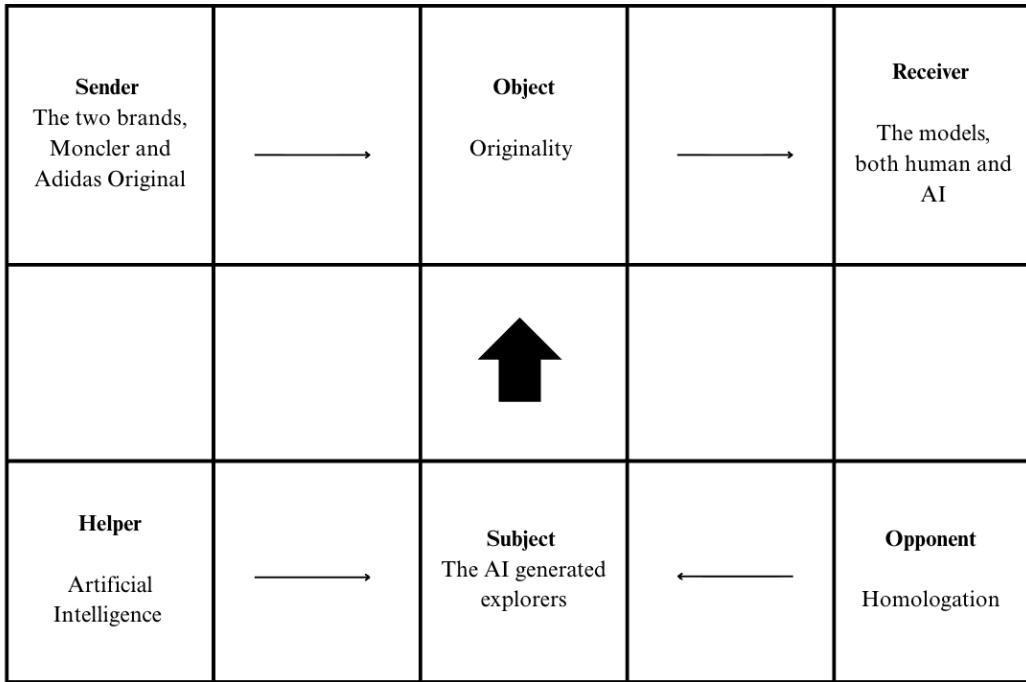


Table X. Actantial Model Applied to the “The Art of Explorers” Campaign. Source: Greimas framework (1973).

III. Canonical narrative scheme

Subsequently, to formulate a clear and advanced analysis which identified the fundamental stages through which the subject undergoes, Greimas' (1973) canonical narrative scheme has been applied.

This schema is structured around four main phases:

- **Manipulation:**

The initial phase, in which the Sender persuades the subject to take action. Desire and the drive toward an objective are activated.

- **Competence:**

In this preparatory phase, the subject is equipped with the requisite skills, knowledge and resources to carry out the mission. The subject does not act yet but prepares for the upcoming challenge.

- **Performance:**

It represents the moment of proper action: the subject uses the acquired competencies in order to achieve the object of value

- **Sanction:**

It is the concluding phase, in which the results of the subject's performance are evaluated. This assessment may end in recognition of success or acknowledgment of failure, but in both cases it provides resolution to the narrative trajectory.

In the *Art of Explorers* campaign, the canonical narrative scheme unfolds through the explorers' progression: first driven by curiosity (manipulation), then equipped with Moncler's symbolic tools (competence), they embark on the expedition (performance), ultimately reaching a state of discovery and self-realization (sanction).

Manipulation Phase

The campaign opens with AI-generated explorers sent by the two brands Moncler and Adidas original and that are emerging from an undefined almost liminal digital space,

The two indeed proceed with a call to adventure, which incites, consumers and adventurers to go beyond the traditional and familiar environment (in the case of Moncler and Adidas collaboration from the mountains to cities) and from a medium view (from physical to virtual and digital).

Moreover, a sense of suspense, mystery and anticipation emerges, activating the desire of knowing and willingness exploring of the viewers and receivers.

Competence Phase

Within this phase, the human explorers are shown with their symbolic helpers, the generative Ai visuals, which are coherently part of the entire narration.

Therefore, the two type of figures (human and AI), coexist and live together within this unknow and unidentified space, in which there is still no full action, yet a preparation and acknowledgment of the aesthetic language, technological support, and cultural positioning.

In this sense on a symbolic level, the human explorers gather and understand the skills, AI companions and the technological capacities that will be needed to undertake the journey and develop a higher and innovative type of experience.

Performance Phase

In this phase, the subjects and figures finally start interacting, engaging in different activities and movements.

Hence, what at the beginning were distant and separated figures, now become combined entities, which merge seamlessly, while moving and dancing together, overcoming the traditional creativity boundaries.

Additionally, product details are revealed in motion and close-up, focusing on the existence and functionality of the design in both real and imagined worlds.

Sanction Phase

The sanction is presented in the final phase , in which the digital and real world is unveiled, leading the audience to explore and discover who they can interact with the “world” of the campaign. Indeed, the closing tagline “The art of explorers”, the final genius campaign and the overall visual branding confirm that the transformation is complete and a new territory can be discovered. Finally, the journey concludes with a positive sanction, in which the audience receives the message that AI-enhanced creativity is now part of the brand’s ongoing DNA.

In this way, the *Art of explorers* campaign takes the form of continuation and follow-up tale, that starting from the previous “The art of absolute imagination” creates an ongoing narration which unveils the profound transformation that the luxury world is experiencing and embracing.

3.3.3 Axiological level

Having examined both the discursive level and the underlying narrative structures through the actantial model and the canonical narrative schema, the analysis then moved to the axiological dimension, which Greimas and Courtés (1982) identified as the third and deepest level in the generative trajectory of meaning.

At this stage, attention shifts from actions and narrative roles to the systems of values that are found beneath , with the aim to uncover the value categories embedded within the discourse.

Therefore, it is in this phase that the underlying ideological framework becomes visible, allowing us to interpret the social and cultural positioning that the text conveys to its viewers.

Thus, after identifying the role that technology and Ai assume within The Art of Explorers campaign, it is evident that AI is not presented just as a background production tool, yet it becomes a co-creator and co-protagonist of the entire narrative.

In the case of *Moncler X Adidas Original* campaign, the axiological dimension indeed unfolds through the representation of a hybrid and transitional world in which humans, AI figures , and artistic representations coexist, progressively reconstructing the traditional values embedded in luxury.

Moreover, unlike purely conceptual experiments, this collaboration materialized a real released capsule collection, producing actual products designs that brought together the core identities of the two brands(Adidas,2023; Moncler,2023).

The collection, indeed, included puffers, bombers, vests and footwear which expressed the brands' symbolic value, expressed throughout the dialogue between alpine heritage and urban streetwear.

Hence, different values and tensions are identified, in order to deconstruct the narration and recognize the existent and developing principles.

At its core, one of the earliest value oppositions to emerge is identified within the fundamental tension between *tradition and innovation*.

From the earliest sequences, the subject, embodied by AI-generated explorers, moves through an ethereal, non-identifiable space, in which not only past and future merge, yet their co-presence invites the possibility of integration and technological experimentation.

Additionally, the concepts of human and artificial emerge as two additional, pivotal opposites . Visually, the campaign alternates between human models, sculptural artworks, and AI avatars, dissolving the distinction between organic and synthetic presence.

Thereby, this cohabitation does not resolve into a hierarchy and prevarication, instead it forms an ambiguous space in which the artificial is not an antagonist to defeat, yet a partner in the creative process, capable of amplifying human expression.

Additionally, a further tension unfolds.

Symbolically, the collaboration promotes inclusivity by merging luxury and streetwear realities, supported by immersive campaigns and global media coverage which make the aesthetic and narrative discourse accessible to wide audiences (Global street art,2023).

However, the pricing strategy outlined the embedded characteristic of luxury: exclusivity and scarcity (Kapferer,1997), showcasing that the high price range of the collection, which coherently alignates with Moncler's traditional pricing spectrum, ensures that the praised democratization expected from this collaboration does not translate into actual affordability.

Therefore, the gap between *exclusivity and accessibility* is identified.

Finally, the campaign articulates between the opposites of *stasis* and *transformation*.

Stasis is embodied in the initial stillness of the models, whose absence of movement evokes a moment of suspension, as if time has momentarily paused.

Additionally, this sense of permanence is reinforced by the brands' anchoring to their own heritage through instantly recognizable design elements, such as the signature puffiness of Moncler jackets and the three-striped motif of Adidas, symbols of continuity, heritage, and stability within an otherwise changing world.

Transformation, besides, is at the core of the "Art of Explorers" campaign.

The progression from Moncler's alpine origins to Adidas's urban and streetwear culture is not merely geographical; it is a symbolic passage that reshapes the models' identities, visual environment, and stylistic codes.

Through this fluid transition, the campaign narrates an exploration towards hybridization, where tradition meets innovation, and static icons are reinterpreted within a dynamic, evolving cultural landscape.

In conclusion, the axiological analysis of *The Art of Explorers campaign* reveals a narrative in which value oppositions operate not as fixed dichotomies but as dynamic fields of negotiation.

By staging the coexistence of *tradition* and *innovation*, *human* and *artificial*, *exclusivity* and *accessibility*, *stasis* and *transformation*, the campaign positions both Moncler and adidas Originals within a value system that celebrates exploration as a multi-dimensional act, physical, technological, and creative, while inviting the audience to reconsider luxury as an evolving interplay of heritage and innovation, becoming the epitome of how a collaborative experience can elevate culture and community.

When viewed alongside the Moncler AI Genius campaign, the message conveyed is reiterated and recoded through the insertion of additional AI figures, enhanced movements, and interactions between humanity and virtuality.

The introduction of human figures indeed acts as a bridge, simplifying the perceived distance between innovation and tradition and making the concept of hybridization more accessible.

Therefore, this results in an *integrated approach* between reality and virtuality, merging these two realms into a unified vision that is communicated and delivered directly to the consumer's gaze.

In this sense, it becomes all about the journey itself.

The models, on one side, are guided into an intricate and evolving journey that goes beyond the mere structures of luxury and creativity.

On the other instead, the route from Moncler's mountain to Adidas's city and street culture becomes not only a stylistic transformation but an exhortation towards exploration, presenting the beauty that emerges when one chooses to go beyond the ordinary.

Hence an *ibridization* between reality and virtuality emerges, combining these two worlds in order to communicate and deliver them united to the consumers' side.

3.4 Valentino – Essentials (2023)

3.4.1 Breakdown of the brand Valentino: heritage, values and resonance

Founded in Rome in 1960 by Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti, Maison Valentino quickly established itself as a symbol of Italian haute couture, renowned for its meticulous craftsmanship, creativity and refined silhouettes, emblem of the brand's heritage and timeless elegance.

From its beginnings in the glamour of the 1960s, dressing figures such as Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, the brand has balanced tradition with intentionality to evolve, while maintaining its status as a cultural reference in luxury fashion and Italian craftsmanship.

As stated by the brand, re-signification is a core value deeply embedded in the Maison's philosophy. Indeed, the concept itself finds expression in the creation of enduring artifacts and collections that embrace technology and innovation as strategic allies, not only reimagining the brand's production processes but also pushing further the boundaries of creative possibility¹⁹.

¹⁹ <https://www.valentino.com/it-it/creating-shared-value>

Accordingly, under Pierpaolo Piccioli's creative direction, Valentino has nowadays embraced a more inclusive, contemporary vision, infusing the brand with modern hints, yet still remaining anchored to its artisanal heritage.

Therefore, Piccioli's approach has brought a poetic modern touch to the brand: it celebrates individuality, diversity, transformation and emotional resonance without compromising the Maison's tradition and heritage.

Hence, his collections often blend haute couture with modern comfort, presenting fashion not only as an aesthetic experience but as a form of cultural dialogue, in which craftsmanship, expressive individuality and innovation are seamlessly combined, positioning Valentino as a storyteller that merges tradition with experimentation.

Building on this narrative, in 2023, Maison Valentino announced the "Essentials" menswear line, a youthful yet innovative collection that reinterpreted shapes, structures and the contemporary vision of masculinity.

Hence, guided by creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli's vision and his unique style, the entire collection was imbued with a distinctive aesthetic that set new boundaries within luxury and advertising, yet introducing subtle signs of innovation.

Accordingly, the campaign stood out thanks to one of its most notable and defining element, the creative implementation of AI to entirely shoot the campaign, developing a new groundbreaking type of production and communication.

Thereby, one of Maison's core values, freedom of expression, undoubtedly rose, developing the evolving notions of authenticity and contemporary masculinity historically enclosed within the brand and then transferred within the *Valentino Essentials collection*.

Within the entire scene loose and soft proportions, bright and outstanding colours emerge, expressing the brand's tailored precision and forging a unique identity, which fully represents the brand's heritage and iconicity (e.g. the iconic Valentino pink PP).

True to its Roman roots, yet driven by forward-looking creativity, this aesthetic finds form in a selection of garments that push the boundaries of menswear further than ever before, offering an expandable and constantly evolving system of fashionable pieces designed to liberate the wearer from both traditional sartorial constraints and the social conventions often associated with luxury fashion. As stated by the brand itself, the essential collection "is the extract and the concentrate of a vision, representing what is permanent and opposite to the accidental".

Hence, essential are the things that retain such quality, which by its very nature is dynamic and constantly in evolution (Valentino,2023).

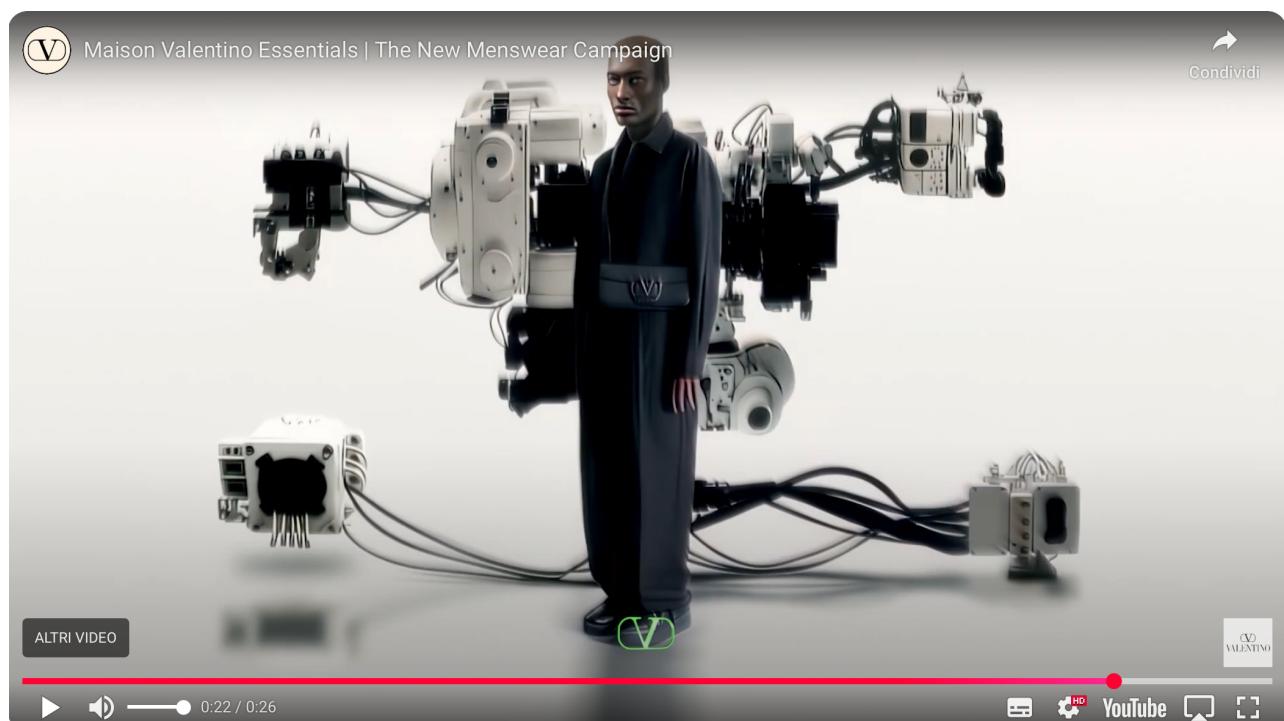
Pushing innovation and being more than just a visual experiment, this operation highlights the brand's willingness to explore new creative and technological frontiers, examining the changing relationship between luxury and AI.

Therefore, a narrative which celebrates innovation has been developed, acknowledging how technology can transform beauty, identity, and storytelling in a digital era in which infinite are the game changing possibilities and traditionality is intertwined with transformation (Hero, 2023).

The advertising indeed, unfolds through two complementary strands: an audio-visual campaign and a series of text- visual materials, each serving as a distinct yet interconnected mode of communication of the brand's values and purpose.

Yet, in alignment with the analytical framework outlined earlier, a two-folded semiotic analysis has been conducted, breaking down the surface-discursive level throughout Peverini's (2012) advertising decomposition sheet, drawing on Greimas' generative trajectory of meaning and ultimately applying Polidoro's plastic/figurative model.

Thereby, to develop a clear and relevant analysis, a table has been developed, Peverini (2012) outlining the audio-visual components and mapping each sequence according to its primary visual content, duration, soundtrack, and compositional features.



Valentino Essentials audio visual campaign (2023)

#Sequence	Sequence's length	Visual column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0:00 – 0:02	<p>Content Description: The brand's logo is presented on a white background, slowly moving and modifying its form into the following model figures</p> <p>Frame Width: Full screen</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire visual</p> <p>Colour: A strong prominence of white is found within the background scene, on which the logo in black appears in contrast, and a smaller neon green logo is find underneath.</p> <p>Transition: Blurred and dissolving graphics</p>	<p>Sound: robotic sounds cover and are part of the entire video campaign from the beginning to the end</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
2	0:02 – 0:06	<p>Content Description: throughout a transition, the initial logo merges into the first Ai model created, which stands as a statue behind shooting equipment, wearing the items of the brand's menswear collection</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p>	<p>Sound: the same robotic scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

		<p>Colour: On the white initial background new colours appear, more of the black takes up the scene and neon green becomes the colour of the camera equipment</p> <p>Transition: Blurred and dissolving graphics that merge the different Ai figures into one another, dissolving and blurring their lines</p>		
3	0:06 – 0:09	<p>Content Description: The previous AI- model blends into a new figure, which is wearing other menswear pieces and one of the iconic Valentino shoulder bags. Moreover, differently from the previous figure, this model is seen assuming a dynamic pose, with a tension representation within his arm that is extended, and calves muscles that emerge from underneath his shorts</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p> <p>Colour: within this sequence only black and white colours are used to showcase both the garments and the camera equipment</p> <p>Transition: The different Ai figures are merged into one another, dissolving and blurring their lines</p>	<p>Sound: the same robotic scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
4	0:09 – 0:15	<p>Content Description: Also in this frame the model melts into a new figure, which is wearing bright</p>	<p>Sound: the same robotic</p>	

		<p>colours and is staring directly into the camera. The camera equipment is now positioned behind him and takes up part of the background. However, the model is only showed within a very short frame, before blending and melting into the next frame.</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p> <p>Colour: within this sequence new colours are used, such as neon green, different shades of purple and always hints of black and white that take up the background.</p> <p>Transition: an immediate, quick shift happens, modifying the shot visuals</p>	scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)	
5	0:15 – 0:18	<p>Content Description: The camera equipment now takes up the majority of the scene, with the model positioned in between. Also in this case, the Ai-model assumes a dynamic posture, bending towards the left and staring towards that side of the screen.</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p>	Sound: the same robotic scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)	

		<p>Colour: in this sequence the solely presence of black and white colours return, being represented mostly by the models' monochromatic look</p> <p>Transition: an immediate, quick shift happens, modifying the visuals, dissolving the lines into the following scene</p>		
6	0:18 – 0:21	<p>Content Description: A model appears walking towards the camera, moving both his arms and legs in front of the equipment which is instead is positioned onto the background</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p> <p>Colour: A bright pink colours (the jacket wore) stands out from the white and black background</p> <p>Transition: an immediate, quick shift happens, modifying the visuals, dissolving the lines into the following scene</p>	<p>Sound: the same robotic scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	
7	0:21 – 0:24	<p>Content Description: The last model is represented, standing in a still, statuary and imponent pose, tilted towards left, yet still staring towards the camera. One is the main object that emerges, even though there is a monochromatic colour choice: the Valentino bags, small yet clearly visible and present, closing the entire scene</p>	<p>Sound: the same robotic scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end</p> <p>Sound Type:</p>	<p>The colours black and white return, yet they hold an immense power within this last model representation. In the study of colours black means boldness and elegance, while white means the minimalism yet openness and new</p>

		<p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p> <p>Colour: black and white return in this last visual, yet communicating the boldness, impact and futurism of the entire campaign</p> <p>Transition: in this last figure representation the model slowly appears, then dissolves and vanishes as if it was a shadow or a cloud</p>	<p>Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	beginning, indicating the brand's willingness to explore new frontiers.
8	0:25 – 0:26	<p>Content Description: following the model vanishment, the last frame shows just a small representation of the brand logo which reappears closing the entire video campaign</p> <p>Frame Width: full figure</p> <p>Camera Angle: Frontal and horizontal</p> <p>Lighting: A bright fixed lightning highlights the entire scene</p> <p>Colour: white returns as the main colour, part of the entire background. Additionally, a small presence of the neon green appears within the small logo</p> <p>Transition: Blurred and dissolving graphic</p>	<p>Sound: the same robotic scratching sounds cover the entire campaign from the beginning to the end</p> <p>Sound Type: Off-screen (extradiegetic)</p>	

Subsequently, a semiotic-narrative analysis on the “*Essentials*” campaign visual has been developed, applying Greimas’ generative trajectory of meaning framework (1982), delving first into the narrative level throughout the actantial model and canonical narrative scheme, then moving towards the axiological level breakdown.

3.4.2 Semiotic-narrative analysis

I. The Actantial Model

In Valentino Essentials campaign six main actants have been identified, in order to proceed with the narrative discourse and identify the role attributions within the entire advertising.

Therefore, the following roles have been identified:

Sender

The sender is represented by the Maison itself, Valentino, and specifically the creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli, which position themselves as the bridge between consumers and the luxury world, breaking the boundaries and limits which previously characterized the creative field.

Hence, the two initiate the action by realizing a campaign which redefines essential wardrobe items and AI- powered creations.

Subject

Being the main characters of the narrative, The AI models are the central figures and essence of the narrative, becoming the new way through which the brand expresses its purpose, values, positioning and creativity.

The entire campaign, both audio visual and textual, is indeed centred on these AI figures, represented individually which are dressed in the new brand’s collection, stating the return of minimalism, fluidity and identity, yet individualism and fragility of the characters.

Helper

Within the Valentino’s Essentials campaign, Artificial Intelligence returns as a supportive helper, enabling the development of the campaign visuals by reinterpreting the physical collection and overcoming the boundaries of traditional tangible creations.

In this way, rather than serving as a mere technical tool, AI through an innovative digital lens guides the entire narration yet becoming an enhancer of what will then be presented as the object of value.

Object

In this campaign the “Essentials menswear collection” represents the object of value, expressed as the essence of the overall campaign.

Therefore, the collection itself becomes the point of contact between virtuality and reality, where tangible creations are blended and transformed into AI outputs, profoundly reimagining contemporary fashion luxury.

Opponent

The antagonists are the cultural and societal traditions/expectations that constrain creativity and luxury, such as rigid heritage codes and resistance to implementing disruptive technologies in high luxury fashion.

Therefore, as in the previous Moncler campaign, the opponent can be identified within the boundary between real and artificial, the preconceived notions of luxury authenticity and the definition of creativity.

Receiver

As in the previous campaign, AI-generated models still embody the pivotal figures of the narrative, acting simultaneously as receivers and subjects once they have accepted the mission presented.

Within Valentino’s *Essentials* campaign, the AI models are essential, and their receiver role is clear: they do not merely showcase the garments but become relevant symbolic mediators.

Accordingly, they embrace the brand’s purpose, they understand their mission and translate the collection’s physical essence into a hybrid aesthetic, merging the real and the virtual.

In this sense, these figures are not passive, but actively contribute to the brand’s narration, accepting and embodying new concepts of luxury and creativity.

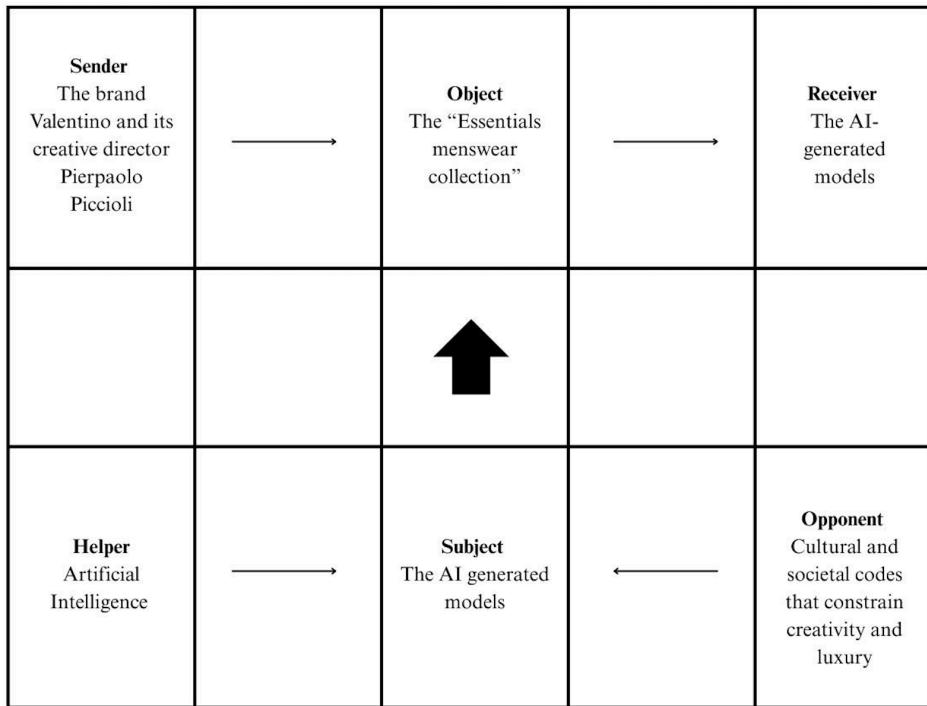


Table X. Actantial Model Applied to the “Essentials” Campaign. Source: Greimas framework (1973).

II. Canonical narrative scheme

Manipulation

The sender (Maison Valentino, embodied by creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli), perceives the limitations and boundaries set by cultural and societal traditions, such as rigid heritage codes, resistance to AI in luxury and conventional definitions of luxury.

Therefore, they initiate the narrative by envisioning a campaign that merges minimalism, innovation and technological artistry to challenge these constraints, developing the visuals and images of the AI-models subjects. The desire and goal are clear: to reimagine the essential menswear capsule going beyond real and artificial, yet developing a new creative language which fuses luxury, creativity and AI.

Competence

Within this phase, the AI-generated models acquire their leading role, being the face and visual of the entire campaign.

Hence, to achieve this vision and to undertake the mission, the helpers (AI technology, Tommaso Garner and Vittorio Maria Dal Maso) are mobilized, providing the AI figures with the necessary tools and meanings that will then guide the entire narrative.

Ergo, they provide the technical skills, creative direction, and AI expertise needed to bring Valentino's concept to life.

Performance

The AI-models (subject) are the central figures in this campaign visual, becoming the executors of Valentino's vision.

Individually portrayed in minimal yet expressive settings, they wear the capsule collection, embodying the tension and harmony between tradition and innovation. Moreover, the object (the menswear collection), perceived as the essence and combination of creativity and luxury, is revealed as the point where human heritage and digital invention meet.

Sanction

The receivers (the Ai-created models) become the guiding figures of the campaign, leading entirely the brand's message: AI can be a legitimate and powerful creative tool in luxury without overcoming heritage and tradition.

In this way the receiver is essential in generating a cultural debate in which the models convey new narratives, embracing the brand's stance to reshape luxury, achieving a symbolic victory over the opponent (restrictive and past traditions) and marking a shift in the industry's visual and creative codes.

3.4.3. Axiological level

At the axiological level, the Valentino Essentials AI campaign positions artificial intelligence not just as a mere technical facilitator but as an active creative partner and the core of the entire narrative.

By placing AI-generated models at the centre of the visual and conceptualization, Valentino redefines the boundaries of luxury's creative legitimacy, challenging cultural and societal traditions that have historically tied high fashion to human craftsmanship, strict heritage codes, and human-made creative processes.

Therefore, the campaign's value system emerges from a series of outlined and clear tensions, *tradition* versus *innovation*, *human* versus *artificial*, *freedom of expression* versus *rigid cultural codes* and finally *stability* versus *fluidity*.

In this configuration, AI becomes a symbolic bridge where human intentionality and machine execution coexist, suggesting that technological creativity can amplify rather than weaken luxury's cultural presence.

Eventually, the collection itself becomes the point of contact between virtuality and reality, elaborating a combination of traditional lines, clothes structures and innovative visions, embodying both fluid identities and hybrid authorship.

Yet, the brand becomes capable of reframing exclusivity as an intellectual and conceptual quality rather than solely a material or artisanal concept.

Thereafter, the visual texts of the same campaign have been taken into consideration, as a way to develop a further plastic-figurative analysis (Polidoro, 2008) and expand the meanings and categories which could reinforce the entire narration.





Valentino Essentials text visual campaign (2023)

I. Figurative Analysis

a. Characters

All the characters are young, androgynous-looking models, each styled with minimal facial expression and rigid statuesque posture.

They all stand still and motionless, yet their physical presence is strong.

Acting almost as mannequins that are wearing the brand's capsule, they emphasize the clothing structures and colours, rather than their individual identity.

Hence, within the entire visuals, there is an intentional absence of dynamic action.

The AI-models stand still, in a controlled and highly composed manner, mirroring the static rigidity of the robotic equipment surrounding them. The lack of movement conveys a staged, almost set/shooting like atmosphere, where humans are positioned next to technological tools that will be used for the campaign.

b. Objects

Two are the main objects that standout: the prominent and large robotic arms, which resemble film camera equipment, composed by lenses and cables, and the bright and structured clothes worn by the models.

These objects indeed dominate the frame as much as the models, blurring the distances between fashion subjects and industrial- technological elements, fading the line between technology, automation, and human.

II. Plastic Analysis

Subsequently, a plastic analysis has been developed, identifying the following categories and relevant elements:

- **Eidetic Category**

All the visuals rely on a heavily presence of geometric and industrial forms, where human figures and machines are equally part of a display.

Straight lines and figures compose the clothes structures and some pieces of the camera equipment.

Moreover, the equipment and robotic arms are made up of cylindrical joints, circular lenses, rectangular pieces and linear yet soft cables that indicate the linear continuity and mechanical symmetry of technology.

Additionally, as already mentioned, rectangular and vertical geometries appear in the clothing lines and oversized silhouettes, opposing them to the softer and rounder lines used to represent the human characteristics of the models.

Therefore, the interplay between the human figure's multidimensionality and the machines' rigid and structured components creates a dialogue between organic and mechanical shapes.

- **Chromatic Category**

Within the entire text visual campaign, two are the dominant colours, the black of the camera machines and the white gradient background which makes stand out all the additional figures and elements.

Additionally, bright, high saturation tones pop up from the clothing lines (emerald and lime green, fuchsia and purple), standing out from the monochromatic background.

Lighting is uniform, with no strong shadows, creating a polished, hyperreal clarity, showcasing sort of plastic no-dimensional figures.

Therefore, a clear contrast is defined: the colour, brightness and vivacity of the models' clothes against the still, quiet and soulless colours of the background and machines.

- **Topological Category**

In the two images analysed, along with the others presented within the same campaign, the models appear positioned centrally, framed symmetrically by the robotic camera equipment. This latter is positioned in multiple ways, sometimes becoming part of the background, while others partially cover the human figures, emphasizing the intertwined reality and hierarchy which exists between the two.

The models face both directly into the camera or towards the frame sides, placed in different positions and angles, creating tension and contrast between the machine stillness and human dynamism.

Additionally, the sterile environment, and undefined space with a neutral gradient background removes any clues about time or place, making it impossible to define and recognise the two. Therefore, this unidentifiable setting isolates the subjects and robotic machinery, making viewers' attention move on forms, colours and structures.

The only way through which depth is created is thanks to the overlapping of the elements (humans and machines), with machines in front of and behind the models.

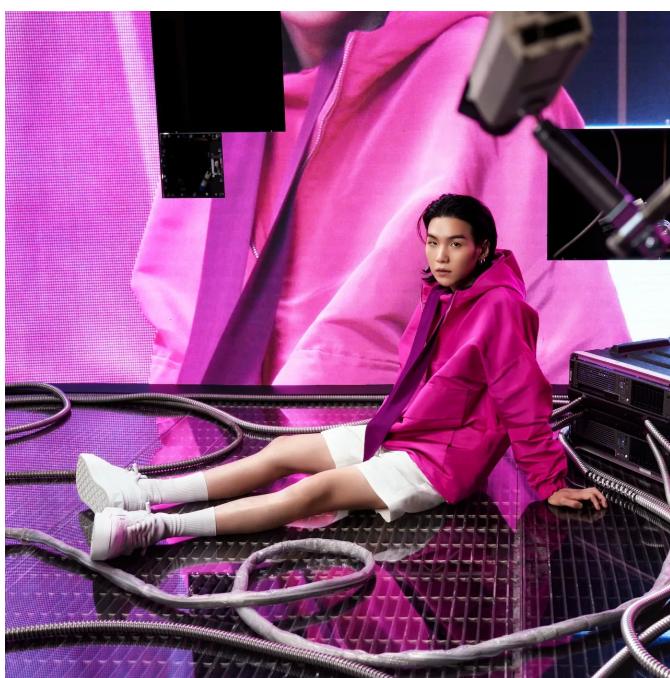
However, the overall space feels flat because of the minimal backdrop and to the way in which the figures are positioned, assuming a sticker way application.

Yet, what emerges is the brand's willingness to combine seamlessly the two elements, technology and humanity, AI and reality, defining and showcasing both the flaws and strengths of the two.

Developing around this parallelism, presented by the brand within the different visuals such as the AI-generated campaign and the ones featuring human ambassadors (e.g. K-pop artist Suga), it is clear that the narrative remains the same even though the nature of the figures is disparate.



Valentino Essentials text visual campaign (2023)



Valentino Essentials text visual campaign featuring Suga (2023)

Indeed, with the Essential campaign Maison Valentino's purpose was to maintain a luxury vision that incorporated both AI-models and human ambassadors, making them wear in two different yet analogue visuals, the same capsule collection and opening the frontiers of innovation and interrelation.

For instance, the emerald green suit has been worn, styled and structured on both AI-black model and Suga ambassador, showcasing how the lines and textures have been adapted perfectly to the silhouettes of the two.

Hence, consumers and viewers could ask which is the reason why the brand has led towards these two approaches and visuals, asking if human models and ambassadors would not be enough anymore. Yet, as cited by Jingle Daily magazine (2023), the brand's purpose was to implement and embrace Ai to help with photography and the production phase, developing an exciting intersection between fashion and Ai, developing a fusion which went beyond the traditional conceptions of luxury and campaign shootings.

Therefore, together, these images form a dialogue, not of opposition, but of complementarity, reinforcing the brand's vision of a future where artificial intelligence and human creativity coexist in a mutual enhancement.

3.5 Thalie Paris x ONIRIQ campaign (2024)

Within the fashion and luxury industry, AI has generated what can be considered a rebirth of creativity and a reinvention of advertising campaigns, becoming both a support tool yet a threat to carefully adapt within the many sectors.

Indeed, following Covid-19 pandemic, which marked a pivotal turning point for fashion and luxury industry, with the disruption of traditional practices, brands were forced to rapidly adapt to a new digital reality, revealing AI's potential and generating innovative solutions in a constantly changing world.

Therefore, in response to the sudden halt of physical interactions and runway shows, many turned to technology not simply as a temporary solution, but as a mean to fundamentally rethink how fashion and luxury are created, communicated, and experienced.

More than a technological trend, AI has become a driver of innovation, enabling brands to explore novel forms of expression and interaction in a world increasingly defined by digital hybridity.

Within this context, Thalie Paris presented a notable case in February 2024 during Paris Fashion Week, launching an entirely AI-generated campaign in collaboration with ONIRIQ, completely reshaping the traditional boundaries of fashion storytelling.

Through this partnership, the brand demonstrated a forward-thinking approach that embraced the creative possibilities offered by generative technologies, while serving as a reflection of a broader shift in the fashion industry, where AI is no longer perceived as a threat to human creativity, but rather as a partner in reimagining the future of design, branding, and visual communication.

Moreover, the relevance and impact of this campaign, led it to its inclusion in the American magazine Forbes, which explored the use of AI as an advertising tool, with Thalie Paris being honoured as one of the main subjects and pioneers of this innovative implementation.

The article intitled *“Is Licensing Models’ Images The Future Of AI In Fashion Campaigns?”*, published on August 8, 2024, discussed the future of AI in fashion campaigns , acknowledging this case as an evolution inspired by reality, which combined AI and humanity, using real models faces “ as avatars that offered a unique human touch in the AI-driven world”.

3.5.1 Breakdown of the brand and its values

Founded in Paris in 2020 by Nathalie Dionne, Thalie Paris stands as a pioneer in the realm of eco-luxury handbags and accessories, merging and embodying Parisian chic and minimalism with an unwavering commitment to sustainability.

Deriving from the ancient Greek, “Thalie” meaning *“the flourishing,”* encapsulates both the brand’s ethos and aesthetic, presenting a harmonious balance of elegance, refinement, and modernity.

Furthermore, deeply influenced by the artistic currents of the 1930s, Greek Muses, and the enigmatic spirit of Paris’s 16th arrondissement, Thalie channels the timeless allure of women who have shaped the history of fashion photography and art, which translated into designs that are at once romantic and architectural, bold yet understated.

The brand indeed pushes the boundaries of contemporary luxury, combining textile innovation, craftsmanship, and creativity to define new frontiers in responsible fashion.

Therefore, being a forerunner in material innovation, Thalie was the first brand in France to commercialize bags made from recycled marine leather sourced from Ictyos and vegan cactus leather developed by Desserto. Its creations are not mere accessories but statements of style—pieces for women who embrace individuality while valuing comfort, functionality, and environmental responsibility. This commitment to noble, sustainably sourced materials reflects the brand’s belief that true elegance is inseparable from ethical integrity.

It is within this framework of *modern artistry, timeless elegance, and sustainable innovation* that the brand's latest campaign unfolds, offering a rich terrain for a plastic figurative analysis.

Through the interplay of characters, actions, spaces, and objects, and by considering eidetic, chromatic, and topological categories, the campaign reveals how Thalie visually constructs its identity and emotional register across its imagery.



Thalie Paris x ONIQUIRI campaign (2024)

Source: Instagram official profile @thalieofficial

I. Figurative Analysis

Hence, a breakdown of the text-visual campaign has been developed, defining the figurative-plastic levels introduced by Polidoro (2008) framework.

a. Characters

The protagonists of the campaign are three digitally rendered, hyper realistic female avatars, developed from young human models faces and features.

The 3 AI models indeed embody the classical beauty standards requested and admired in this sector, such as elegance, statuary beauty and divine fluctuant posture, further enhanced through AI precision and uniformity.

Their expressions are serene and confident, with no hint of imperfection or emotion, emphasizing control, idealization, and timeless glamour.

They are styled with breathtaking, sparkling and translucent couture garments and accessories which evoke both high fashion couture, fused with a futuristic edge.

They serve not just as models, but as symbolic carriers of brand values: femininity, modern elegance, and a luxurious futuristic aesthetic.

The three figures are captured while doing a catwalk and walking directly towards the viewer, with the central figure leading, followed by the two models positioned slightly behind.

Positioned in formation, they project unity and collective empowerment, but also detachment, typical of AI-generated representations where individuality is abstracted. Moreover, the sense of movement is also expressed throughout the presentation of the dresses, which softly flow, as they are pulled along by the models walk, adding textuality and movement within the entire frame.

Additionally, the undulating of the waist belt made out of fringes and diamonds enhances the overall sense of movement, complemented by the leg movement that transpires from the silhouette and transmits all the models' presence.

Therefore, unlike traditional posed and static visuals, this campaign introduces action and movement, adding narrative depth and a sense of dynamicity into the otherwise static frame.

Finally, their composed facial expressions and synchronized movement contribute to an aura of elegance and authority, typical of high fashion editorials but heightened here by digital perfection.

b. Objects

The central and outstanding objects are the satin metallic shiny gowns worn by the models and the brand's handbags that represent the perfect paired accessories.

These garments become sculptural elements in the composition, reflective, fluid, and body-contouring. Their textures mimic liquid metal or moulded material, blending traditional couture silhouettes with futuristic materiality.

Additionally, the brand's small, angular handbags, reinforce the entire fashion narrative while reflecting the models' composure and elegance, yet the luxury and uniqueness.

The dresses and accessories are not just clothing items, but symbols of high fashion reinterpreted through the digital lens, reinforcing the AI-enhanced, elevated aesthetic.

II. Plastic Analysis

Subsequently, developing the plastic analysis the following categories have been identified and unstructured:

- **Eidetic Category**

The dresses are seamlessly constructed following continuous, curved lines that enhance the body silhouettes with fluidity and structure, yet opposing to the structured and angulated handbags.

Subsequently, the soft lines stand out in contrast with the geometric and sharp references that appear within the symmetrical and solid landscape (e.g. the pavements, the bridge edges, statues and arc) folds of the gowns and angular handbag shapes.

Hence, the perspective creates depth with those leading lines that converge toward the background, directing the gaze forward and enhancing the central model's prominence.

The composition indeed captures viewers' attention thanks to its triangular geometry, in which the central figure is positioned at the peak and the side models form the base.

Furthermore, the clean, regular lines of the hair, jewellery, and architecture allow the various textures to stand out, from the sparkle of the sequins to the lightness of the feathers, the rigidity of the jewels worn, and the softness of the dresses fabrics, while still enhancing the overall sense of harmony and balance.

- **Chromatic Category**

The entire visual is dominated by warm metallic tones, rose gold, bronze, copper, blended with soft sunset shades that rise from the background and are reflected onto the models' dresses, creating unique light tricks.

The warm, glowing light captures a sunset or sunrise moment, perfectly illuminating the setting in a way that both enhances and complements the figures, yet accentuates the materiality of the gowns.

Moreover, the high saturation and glossy textures further contribute to a luxurious, polished aesthetic, enriching the campaign's emotional register as both romantic and traditional, yet bold and futuristic.

- **Topological Category**

The central model occupies the primary vertical axis, drawing immediate attention on the entire figure, while the two models beside are slightly behind, yet balanced and symmetrically aligned, supporting the overall visual.

This hierarchical arrangement enhances the idea of a heroine figure, such as Greek goddesses guiding the scene and drawing focus, supported by the symmetrical structure.

Additionally, the background situates the scene on a deserted Parisian bridge, recognized as Pont Alexandre III at sunset.

Iconic Parisian architecture and statues are recognised, creating a profound spatial depth and grounding the campaign in real-world environment, in which heritage and luxury meet in the capital of luxury, Paris.

Therefore, vertical orientation dominates: the upward posture of the models is enhanced by the statuary presence of the majestic architecture on the background emphasizing greatness and power.

However, the empty streets, softened golden hour lighting, and balanced symmetry suggest a curated dreamscape rather than a lived-in environment in which the space itself feels hyperreal and slightly surreal, with an almost painterly quality.

Hence, the use of a well-known, romanticized urban setting contrasts with the artificiality of the models, creates tension between tradition and technological reinvention.

Following, additional visuals were generated within this AI campaign, developed and analysed using always the plastic figurative analysis:



Thalie Paris x ONIQUIRI campaign (2024)

Source: Instagram official profile @thalieofficial

III. Figurative Analysis

a. Characters

In both visuals, the protagonists are again hyper realistic AI-generated female avatars, with different faces developed, each embodying idealized beauty and elegance. They differ from the previous visual in the styling and body language, more dynamic and varied, with multiple hair stylings, different types of clothes, and greater differentiation in poses.

Moreover, much more skin appears, showcasing typical human traits such as collarbones, abdominal muscles and shoulder blades.

In the first of the two visuals bronze, coral, and pink colours emerge on a clear and bright background.

The central figure maintains a statuesque, still yet moving frontal position, expressing calm, seriousness and authority. She is juxtaposed by two models in motion, one going backwards toward the opposite direction and one moving forward, with their dresses swirling and flowing, suggesting energy, movement and freedom.

In the second visual (rose-gold halter top and skirt), the central model again occupies the primary axis, but her expression and stride are slightly more casual and confident.

Accordingly, the two side models adopt different walking rhythms, wearing and styling two different styles of outfits yet adding diversity and asymmetry to the group dynamic.

The overall action across the two new visuals combines forward motion toward the viewer with the flowing and movement of the garments.

In the first, the sweeping fabrics create a sense of wind or momentum, while the central model's steadiness anchors the frame.

In the second, the movement is subtler, with the flowing skirt of the central model contrasted by the more static side figures, creating a rhythm between stillness and motion.

Compared to the first campaign visual (sunset scene), these visuals increase the feeling of vitality, dynamism and narrative progression—transitioning from the poised grandeur of the first scene to a livelier, almost runway-like momentum.

b. Objects

The garments and handbags remain the central objects, but their presentation, cuts, and movement differ by colours and textures.

However, one main concept emerges: the bags are seamlessly part of the outfits and environment, blending in a perfect way and complementing the entire advertising.

In a sort of way, being perfectly merged, the bags could pass on the secondo piano, while centring consumers attention onto the models posture, garments and presence, accompanied by the clothes worn.

IV. Plastic Analysis

Moving onto the plastic analysis:

- Eidetic Category

As the overall aesthetic of the campaign a prominent and strong use of curved, sinuous lines has been implemented within the representation of the dresses and hairstyles of the models.

Moreover, geometrical, detailed forms emerge within the representation of the brand's iconic bags, which seamlessly blend with the entire context.

Furthermore, compared to the first campaign image (sunset), both introduce more diagonal, imperfect lines, both in the human and dresses representation, breaking the previous near-perfect symmetry of the first visual.

- **Chromatic Category**

Within these visuals, the same palette of colours is used to represent and showcase the garments.

In the first adv campaign bronze, pink and coral colours are used, standing out from the background soft and neutral colours (light blue, white, grey), and creating an airy and fresh atmosphere.

In the second visual instead, darker colours are used (brown, black, silver) and bolder contrasts are made between warm rose-gold metallics and deeper shades, with a more intense and bright colours that rises from the background.

- **Topological Category**

Both visuals retain the Parisian bridge setting, but with a shift in lighting exposure.

The first visual is characterized by bright daylight and cool tones which emphasize architectural clarity and the fabric textures, showcasing the surrounding city ambient.

The second visual instead has warmer tones, making less distinguishable the background behind, yet positioning the attention on the textures and colours of the fabrics.

Additionally, the overall choice of an open, iconic Paris location reinforces the brand heritage, but the absence of pedestrians or real-world distractions keeps the scene in a hyper-curated, almost surreal sphere—an AI-enhanced Paris that feels pristine and cinematic.

Finally, developing an analysis of the setting, it is evident that in all three campaign visuals the central model occupies the vertical axis, commanding and drawing attention to her gaze.

Alternatively, even though in the last two visuals there is still a representation of movement and catwalk perception, the strict perfection and ethereality of the first campaign dissolves, representing a much more natural, sudden and not posed representation, highlighting all the energy and power expressed by the models.

Therefore, compared to the first Thalie visual these compositions are less strictly symmetrical in terms of movement, though still visually balanced, introducing a sense of spontaneity and cinematic dynamism.

3.6 Results discussion

Therefore, the analysis of the three campaigns, ranging from the text visual materials to the audio-visual productions, highlighted the integration and complementarity of multiple narrative forms. Syncretism, defined as the union of discourses and languages, played indeed a central role in constructing meaningful narratives within these campaigns.

Static textual and visual outputs (such as posts or printed advertisement) acquired greater depth and resonance when integrated with audio visual campaigns, thereby creating coherence and enriching the overall narrative framework, giving an overall sense to the campaign.

Thus, what emerged is a discursive coherence, in which the verbal dimension (posts, textual campaigns, taglines) and the visual dimension (campaign imagery and videos) are seamlessly combined, reinforcing and rearticulating the overarching sense of the publicity.

Therefore, starting from the visual campaign, the original message is re-enunciated, integrating new elements and reinterpreting the discourse through the combination of AI-generated images and human presences (as exemplified by Moncler's The art of explorers campaign).

Similarly, as seen in the Valentino campaign, AI served as the starting point for a broader narrative in which human ambassadors completed and enriched the narrative, providing additional depth to the brand's vision.

Hence, this interplay highlights a hybrid form of storytelling in which technology provides the initial creative impulse, while human figures anchor the campaign in meanings, emotions and cultural resonance.

Furthermore, from this dynamic an additional concept emerged: veridiction, defined as the semiotic construction of authenticity.

Starting from the plastic-figurative analysis, it appeared luxury brands' tendency to pursue an effect of authenticity and truthfulness.

Luxury brands, indeed, as demonstrated in the campaigns analysed, rather than employing AI technology to achieve hyper-realistic human figures, leverage it as mean to generate innovative narratives which stimulate and provoke debates regarding the blurred lines between human and artificial.

Hence, with a discourse matured around the arising tension between real-simulated , AI becomes not just a technical tool, yet a catalyst for a broader meta discourse on emerging creative scenarios, in which hybridity and contamination redefine the very codes of luxury communication.

Ultimately, this type of hybrid communication demonstrated the growing complexity of contemporary luxury narratives.

By strategically combining textual, visual, and audiovisual languages across different media platforms, brands are nowadays able to craft multilayered stories that resonate and reach consumers in powerful ways.

Hence, these narratives are not only coherent but also dynamic, exploiting the interplay of tradition and innovation, human and artificial, to reaffirm the symbolic depth of luxury in the digital age.

3.7 Qualitative methodology: Focus group

A focus group was conducted with the aim of understanding young consumers' perceptions on the implementation and development of AI technologies within the luxury industry, delving from design to distribution and finally communication.

Particularly, to gather deep and powerful insights on the topic presented, the research was run within a sample of consumers which belonged to Generation Z, interested and fascinated by the luxury environment , and whom were willing to initiate a debate, providing their points of view while challenging themselves.

Therefore, to support the previous semiotic analysis, a qualitative methodology has been integrated, chosen for its powerful and dynamic way of generating a debate in which all participants were able to proactively contribute.

As stated by Trinity Duke (2005), it is throughout this method, which differentiates itself from rigid and static surveys, that focus groups can capture deeper levels of human responses, such as the expression of emotions, feelings, concerns, doubts and approvals .

Hence, the discussion was developed around a protocol of unstructured questions, chosen with the aim of stimulating an interactive debate, in which participants had the opportunity to move from

general questions to more specific ones, arguing upon the topic of the research question and the emerging themes.

Thereby, open-ended questions were intentionally picked, avoiding the inclusion of dichotomous questions(yes/no) ,and in line with Krueger's methodological recommendations, encouraging participants flow of thoughts and freedom of expression (Krueger, 2002).

Participants were selected through convenience sampling, evaluating their availability, knowledge and interest in the topics under investigation.

The sample included eight participants with diverse academic and professional backgrounds (marketing, economics, law, sociology and literature), with a higher presence of women (7 women and 1 man) , all aged between 21 and 25.

Hence, this variety helped in obtaining various and multiple perspectives, which were not only influenced by the participants' personal beliefs, yet also by their academic background and intrinsic established biases, which led to a proactive and dynamic discussion.

Additionally, since some participants had already had previous knowledge of luxury brands and a familiarity with AI , their presence made it possible to support and balance the entire group, with other members less aware, yet willing to embrace and acknowledge new concepts.

This combination helped indeed with the establishment of an equilibrated and natural discussion, in which participants were able to talk not only about a topic they were already aware about, but also develop new streams of thoughts on something they were interested in ,but did not acknowledge.

Additionally, with the participants all coming from different backgrounds, it has been possible to obtain interesting point of views, which often didn't match, yet installed a dynamic and developing discourse, rich of personal experiences and ideas.

From a relational standpoint, some of the participants already knew each other, and this helped creating an enjoyable and safe space in which everyone felt comfortable in expressing their own thoughts.

While other participants instead were external and never met before, they all perfectly and seamlessly blended within the group dynamics, establishing a very natural and comfortable environment, in which the debate flowed naturally, helping with the achievement of relevant and unique insights.

	Gender	Age	Academic background
Participant 1	F	24	Master's degree in strategic management
Participant 2	F	23	Master's degree in data analysis
Participant 3	M	23	Master's degree in law
Participant 4	F	25	Master's degree in marketing
Participant 5	F	25	Master's degree in marketing
Participant 6	F	21	Bachelor's degree in economics and management
Participant 7	F	24	Master's degree in marketing (analytics)
Participant 8	F	24	Bachelor's degree in modern literature

Table X. Focus group participants

The focus group was conducted online via the Teams video meeting platform, a choice that helped combining in one session all the participants, ensuring an effective meeting in which the group needs and requests of time and space were respected, ensuring a secure and private space.

Furthermore, to gather the right amount of information, yet still remaining productive and not taking too much time from participants (Trinity Duke, 2005), the session lasted approximately 120 minutes (2 hours).

The execution of the session on Teams platform, helped taking into account the participants order of speech, managing the sequentiality of the entire discussion, avoiding the overlapping of people and guarantying a fluid and seamless debate, without any issues.

Before starting the discussion, the research objectives and the data usage guidelines were thoroughly outlined, and all participants were asked to sign informed consent forms to proceed with the audio recording of the session and the processing of personal data.

The discussion was led by a single facilitator, who is also the author of this research, whom was responsible for guiding the conversation, acting as a moderator, ensuring that the key topics were covered and promoting active involvement from all participants.

Therefore, to achieve both depth and continuity in the debate, the focus group was structured into different phases, in which various questions were asked in order to solve particular purposes.

Subsequently, the discussion began with a first introduction phase in which participants to “break the ice” and get to know each other while slowly delving into the topic, were asked to present themselves, indicating their age and academic background.

Phase	Activity	Input question
Introduction phase	Participants presentation and ice-breaking moment	<i>Could you each share one luxury brand that you personally feel connected to and why?“</i>
Exploration of general perceptions	Open discussion on the meaning of luxury, authenticity, and pivotal elements embedded in luxury.	<i>When you think of 'luxury', what is the first thing that comes to your mind?" and "What, in your view, makes a luxury brand authentic or trustworthy?"</i>
Campaign analysis	Presentation of AI-driven campaigns (Moncler, Thalie Paris) followed by collective debate. Participants analyzed visuals, copy, and emotional resonance.	<i>What are your first impressions of this campaign? How do you perceive the role of AI in shaping the brand's identity and authenticity?</i>
Reflection and future outlook	Final round-table where participants summarized their perceptions and expressed expectations for the future of AI in luxury.	<i>"How should luxury brands use AI in the future to maintain authenticity, creativity, and emotional engagement with consumers?"</i>

Table X. Summary table of the focus group procedure summarized in phases, activity and input questions

3.7.1 Results analysis

The initial phase was essential to build trust, reliability and confidence within the entire group dynamics, establishing a relaxed, confident and non-judgemental environment, in which participants could feel free to express their thoughts and opinions (Krueger ,2002).

After this initial phase, an additional opening question was asked, with the aim of moving towards the research topic: *“Could you each share one luxury brand that you personally feel connected to and why?“*

Hence, this stimulus generated a first spontaneous stream of thoughts, in which each participant was able to recall a meaningful luxury brand for them, while providing their motivations and reasonings.

Indeed, already in this phase, moments of agreements and consent were expressed between the different members, showcasing common body language and movements, facial expressions which showed joy, excitement in sharing their thoughts, plus agreement with what others were stating (Krueger,2002).

Furthermore, some of the first key elements and common themes started to emerge in this phase, introducing some of the concepts and topics that would have been further discussed, such as authenticity, craftsmanship and innovation, especially within the brands' ways of communicating.

Additionally, an initial curiosity and openness arose, demonstrating how an innovative and unique communication approach could become a valuable support to integrate culture, heritage and future strategies.

Indeed, it was clear that who already knew about the emerging role of AI within luxury processes, was more likely to appreciate and be propositive towards this technology, perceived by consumers not only as a creative tool, yet as an innovative technology which is able to stimulate consumers' mind.

Hence, viewers' astonishment expressed their confusion in determining if the content they had seen was real or not: “*...as stated before by participant x, I believe that AI generated contents are super... so everyone at the beginning wondered will it be real or will it not be real?*”

Subsequently, to gather further insights on participants' associations and what the topic meant to them, an additional question was asked, with the scope of getting nearer to the research question topic: “*When you think of “luxury”, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?*”

Yet, the answers provided left no doubt.

As stated within literature and by previous scholars is still difficult to define a univocal conception of luxury, and yet Gen Z consumers still request and expect pivotal characteristics, such as heritage, quality, experience and care, all interconnected and related to each other.

However, multiple conceptions of luxury still persist, shaped by individuals' lifestyle, cultural backgrounds, and expectations, and inducing luxury to assume diverse and evolving meanings.

Subsequently, the same issue emerged when asked participants *what in their view made a luxury brand authentic or trustworthy?*

While participant 3 stated that authenticity is “*a recurrent element defined by the production process*”, and participant 4 that “*authenticity is the founder, that is defined an icon...since this figures are effectively authentic*”, some participants instead univocally answered that authenticity is an attribute that refers to luxury in a totalitarian way, touching it on 360 degrees.

“*In my opinion, authenticity is exactly something at 360°...it is the path you take to arrive to this world...that bubble that is created and builds that dream...*”

Moreover, when asked about authenticity participant 5 expressed: “*they've taught us that when you buy a brand, a product, you're not really buying the product itself, you're buying a whole set of values. And authenticity is the foundation of those values; it's part of the experience you're purchasing... And that experience goes beyond something technical.*

... *You find authenticity in the brand's history, or in the story of its employees or in the product itself, in how it's made.*

There are so many aspects to consider, it's never just one single thing.”

Furthermore, another group member stated: “*...I would say (authenticity is) coherence between all these aspects we've talked about so far; if you talk about certain values, then you have to respect them. If you talk about a tradition of craftsmanship, then it has to be real... So yes, in the end, I would say coherence between all these aspects.”*

Hence, it was noticed that defining authenticity from the consumers/ viewers' point of view was a very challenging task, since no one gave a response similar to others, yet always integrated additional notions.

Undoubtedly, participants found it profoundly difficult to easily recognize a singular meaning of authenticity, influenced by their personal experiences and thoughts, that resulted in generating varied associations.

Thus, what was considered authentic for some, was not considered the same for others.

Clearly, all the participants were affected by their internal biases and academic backgrounds, yet some of them more than others.

For example, at the beginning participant 3 was strongly tied to its own beliefs, and only after a careful and in-depth analysis we were able to understand what guided that hostility towards luxury authenticity.

It was only after this confront that it was possible to comprehend the vision that the participant had regarding authenticity, guiding him through a conscious and reasoned approach which led him, after a respectful confront, to embrace a new vision of the concept itself, moving from an initial state of closure to a respect and embracement.

However, it is evident that for another type of target, or even age group, authenticity could be related to other specific elements, such as heritage, experience and storytelling that luxury brands pursue not only in their strategy, but as a way of being and expressing their values.

Likewise, just as it was not easy to define what luxury and authenticity are, it became even more challenging to assess the extent to which technology could be integrated within the luxury domain, determining whether such integration represents an advantage rather than a potential threat.

Indeed, it has been punctuated a difference between an AI acceptance within the experiential domain that directly involves consumers and the visual / communicative one.

When asked if participants were aware of luxury brands that integrated AI within the entire process, it immediately emerged the approval and consent in integrating AI, not just in the content creation, yet also to develop personalized and especially unique experiences.

The reason why, stated participant 1 “*is to answer to a real problem...however, it need to be gradual, and needs to be coherent with the brand's DNA.*”

Followed by participant 4 who responded “*...as long as it is as a tool that can help, that's fine... but I don't think that just because now it exists, it necessarily has to replace certain things... The important thing, in my view, is that it doesn't denaturalise everything that has been built.*”

Moreover, an ambivalence between the implementation of AI was showcased:

“In my opinion, there needs to be a distinction between communication and the direct purchasing experience.

If we're talking about communication, then absolutely yes to innovation, technology, and everything that comes with it.

But if we're talking about the purchasing experience, I think the luxury world should be careful not to follow market demand too directly, but rather maintain a somewhat authoritative position in defining its own values.

...In these terms, when it comes to sales and the product, it should always be done in-store, so that the brand can fully control the technological development.

So, I'd say yes to communication, absolutely, also, I repeat, in terms of sustainability and pollution, but when it comes to the experience, I believe luxury is really about the extreme care of the client.”

It was then, following the deep dive within the topic, that the focus group entered as a support tool to the semiotic analysis, moving onto the next phase in which 2 of the 3 text-visual campaign analysed in the previous section were shown to participants, with the aim of getting to know their thoughts on what they were shown.

Firstly, the campaigns were briefly presented and explained, providing the right amount of information that could be needed by participants to elaborate a reasoned discussion.

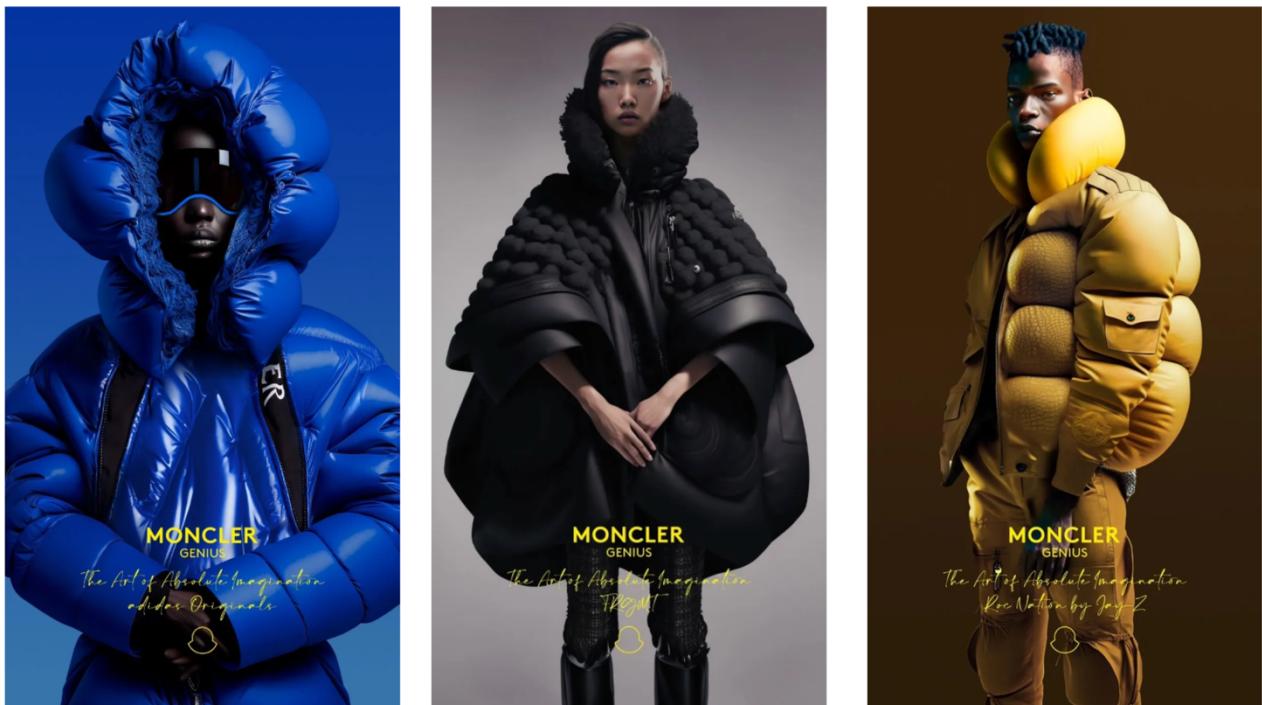
Additionally, to avoid a debate that would have been centered on the identification or not of the AI-generated content, a premise was made: all content that was going to be shown was entirely made with AI and nothing was real.

Hence, the discussion regarding the campaigns started.

Nearly all the participants were able to recognize that the campaigns had been AI-generated, even though this was not the point they were asked to focus on.

Hence, it was then asked to indicate their impressions of the 2 campaigns, analysed separately with the aim of understanding the emotions generated when showed.

Firstly, after choosing carefully which of the Moncler's static visuals were ideal to start and develop an insightful debate, the text-visual ads were showed.



Moncler visuals showed during the focus group. Source: Official Instagram account: @moncler

Guided by their marketing biases, most participants were interested in understanding the reasons that led the brand to implement Ai within their communication, wanting to acknowledge what they were trying to communicate with their strategy.

As participant 5 stated: “...as long as I’m just looking at the product, like, for example, that black one in the centre, it doesn’t really help me understand what they want to communicate. I mean, obviously I know the products, so I know what they are, but I can grasp less of what they would like to convey.

...I can’t really get a clear idea of what they want to communicate.”

However, it transpired that the image which focused on the product demonstration, with its centrality expressed by the representation of the figure, installed deeper emotions in participants, who associated the AI-generated visual with the brand’ essence and values.

“...the first visual, maybe because I’m influenced by the colours used, communicates me cold, Moncler puffer jacket, hence it works better; even because many of the puffer jackets which are shown in music videos, campaigns spots are similar to the one showed in the first visual (the left one) ...”

Additionally, another participant supported what previously said: “... this image... is the one that transmits me more emotions, since wearing the ski googles and the jacket hood, it gives me vibes of someone who is going to ski...”

Rather than emotions, which were not a prominent aspect that emerged after watching the campaigns, it was evident that participants, as consumers, appreciated the use of AI as a coherent way of communicating the brand.

One participant stated: “...in my opinion, this visual works since it is coherent with the values of the brand...”

While another one added: “I find in all of the 3 visuals coherence with what is Moncler’s communicative style... The graphics in general are quite realistic, and they try to play a lot with the visualizations of the textures.

So, I think a key element, overall, is Moncler’s positioning.”

Moreover, coming from a marketing background, the same participant noticed the importance of the tagline “The art of absolute imagination”, as a pivotal element that could provide a reasoning to the brand’s choice of using AI:

“I feel like, to kind of take the focus off the fact that these visuals were made with AI, notice also the Art of Absolute Imagination (tagline), they (the brand) sort of lean on the whole idea of art and genius.

It’s almost like they’re saying: this is still art and so in that way, they’re distancing a bit themselves from the fact that it’s actually AI.”

Hence, within this first campaign all the positive aspects of AI implementation emerged, providing the participants with a fertile ground that helped them articulate their perceptions on the topic:

“...And then, from a technical point of view, they have all those advantages like, ok, we can't really make communication mistakes, or mistakes in targeting... since I have protected myself (the brand) using people who don't actually exist... and experimenting a lot with personalisation ...it's very inclusive.”

Following the same person focused also on more relevant and managerial aspect: *“And then also from an economic and sustainability point of view, not producing so many pieces but digitalizing some of them, and then maybe doing a kind of market analysis.*

Like, ok I send out the graphic, and then for the actual production, since it's a luxury product and not on a large scale, I can target it even more based on the feedback I get instantly from the market.

So also on a logistical level, something could really be done with the data analysis from the launch, from those first graphics...”

Furthermore, an interesting concept emerged, related to consumers' interest in understanding what guided the brand's choice, its intentionality and scope within the technological implementation in creative processes.

“It's also important to understand what comes before, I mean, if at the beginning it's explained properly what this project is, that there are these collaborations done on purpose, that it's artificial intelligence... it changes my perception.

...Seeing that is AI-made then you ask yourself: what's the purpose of it?...

I mean, is it a starting point to then create something, or is it, like we were saying before, more about understanding what is AI capable of doing, just at the level of creation, pure creativity, basically?

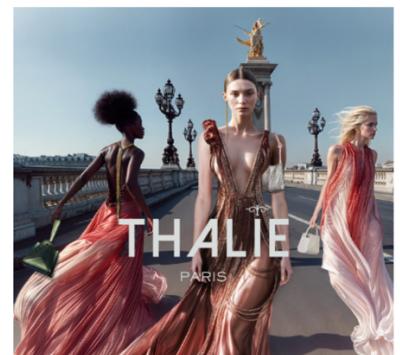
But then the actual production is another thing, I mean, will the final piece actually be realized afterwards?”

Subsequently, during the focus group another campaign was showed, eliciting significantly different reactions, though revealing new perceptions regarding the implementation of Ai within emerging luxury brands, such as Thalie Paris.

Indeed, it clearly emerged a dual vision of AI, based on the luxury brand that implements it and the way through which it is used.

In the previous case, being Moncler a well-known luxury brand, even though it introduced AI-generated visuals, it clearly found the support and acceptance of participants, who underlined the coherence of the visuals with the brand's values.

What appeared instead in this case, was the evident dissent felt by participants after watching Thalie Paris campaign, agreeing on several key points (rather issues) that stood out.



Thalie Paris visuals showed during the focus group. Source: Official Instagram account: @thalieofficial

Firstly, many disturbing elements were identified, such as bright colours, cheap textures and an artificial lighting, that didn't communicate luxury recurring characteristics.

“It gives me the impression of a brand that, maybe because of the scenario, wants to create the idea of being a luxury brand, but it's not actually a luxury brand... maybe for the colours, the dresses are too much... and also the textures”

Additionally, participants as consumers, were critics in disapproving the strategy pursued by the brand, which did not prioritize the product at the centre of the visual, and did not focus on the intrinsic values that could be attributed to the product itself.

One participant stated: *“In my opinion, you can hardly see the bags... I think the bags kind of fade into the background, because you've got such a striking backdrop. With the clothes and the lighting too, they get a bit lost.”*, then followed by another member who added: *“What stands out first are the*

clothes, more than the bags, in all three photos. I mean, they're not really prioritizing their own product...They are represented so small that you can't really appreciate what they are."

Particularly, a recurrent word was presented within this entire discussion, the term “product”, which was frequently repeated, showcasing the importance and centrality that consumers give to the brand’s offering and what they would expect from their communicative style

Hence, it was clear that compared to the first case study (Moncler), Thalie Paris appeared less centred and dedicated to its products, who are not presented centrally as the main focus of the campaign visuals, yet they disappear behind the artificiality of the AI-generated visuals.

Moreover, starting from Moncler visuals, participants were careful to denote the minimalism of the previous campaign, representing “normal people” in common settings, opposed to the pomposity and excessiveness of Thalie campaign.

Thereupon, the perception of authenticity was lost, moving away from a coherent representation of the brand and setting aside some key brand’s characteristics that could have emerged within the narration.

“But you don’t really feel any authenticity. The product isn’t in the spotlight. What are you even selling me? Honestly, I just see a lot of confusion, very little identity, and it all just comes across as cold.”

Followed then by another participant statement: *“You can’t tell that they sell bags, and you can’t tell that they’re sustainable. Maybe they should have chosen a background with a desert, or with a cactus, something completely different.”*

Furthermore, from viewers’ point of view nothing truly new and disruptive guided the choice and use of AI: the only innovative aspect was its implementation itself.

Specifically, the visuals implemented largely echoed past campaign, relying on repetitive and anachronistic models, distant ideals, that reflected a notion of luxury rooted in the past, yet far removed from contemporary conceptions (e.g. J’adore Dior campaign and Charlize Teron showcased as a golden goddess).

Hence, some interesting points returned even within this campaign: the intentionality behind the brand’s use of AI and the pivotal role of the human component.

“...So, it also depends on what their goal was with this campaign. I mean, were they trying to show and communicate the product, or were they trying to communicate an ideal?”

...It's all a matter of intentions."

Thus, it was evident that there is a missing added value within the entire campaign: human creativity and the rational component, which has been replaced by a non-reasoned and non-detailed prompt which resulted in a sterile AI-generated output.

"Okay, they focused on the technique, because I really like the images, but they're missing that whole part that a real, human person should have compared to artificial intelligence. For example, put the bag in the foreground, I'm selling this, tell me it's sustainable, put it in a background like this. So, the human part of artificial intelligence is missing."

Therefore, the existential role of AI is unfolded, expressing the real meaning and purpose and defining it as an "*extension of our creativity*", rather than a replacement.

"...You use it (AI) to create, because it has intelligence, an even higher level of intelligence, and can easily create bigger things.

So, you (brands) should use it as an extra component, to bring to life ideas you have that you wouldn't be able to realize on your own as a human..."

3.7.2 Recurring themes

Within the entire debate, a clear and evident unity between participants' responses emerged, making it possible to develop recurring key themes, which would become useful to decode the focus group and identify common characteristics expressed by participants.

While individual contributions were indeed assertive, sometimes highlighted diverse nuances, and the discussion as a whole revealed convergences around specific concepts, values, and concerns.

Therefore, the process of identifying these themes followed a methodological path consistent with qualitative research practices: after transcription, the material was carefully coded to highlight recurrent expressions, shared concerns, and recurring symbolic references. This collective dimension enabled the transformation of fragmented insights into broader analytical categories, allowing the complexity of the debate to be systematized.

This coding process was not limited to a simple categorization of content but involved a more interpretative effort, aimed at recognizing patterns that cut across different interventions and

backgrounds. In particular, attention was paid to moments of convergence, identifying tensions or contradictions that shed light on participants' expectations toward luxury and AI.

By distilling these recurring elements, it became possible to structure the findings into coherent clusters that reflect how consumers articulate notions of authenticity, innovation, sustainability, and brand coherence in the age of technological transformation.

Since the opening question of the focus group, it was possible to identify the elements and themes considered most relevant by consumers, which subsequently guided the discussion in greater depth. Three primary themes emerged consistently across the conversation:

- i. *Authenticity*, perceived as a dynamic and shifting concept that permeates multiple facets of luxury. Participants emphasized that authenticity extends beyond the tangible qualities of products to encompass the heritage, values, processes and experiences that a brand conveys.
- ii. *Innovation*, particularly within communication, emerged as a central concern, with participants highlighting the need for coherent and guided use of AI. Innovation was appreciated when it enhanced the brand narrative without undermining traditional practices or human creativity, leading to a conscious implementation of technologies.
- iii. *Craftsmanship*, closely tied to production processes, was consistently valued. Participants demonstrated an acute awareness of the human skill, dedication, and care embedded in luxury items, signalling a demand for transparency and acknowledgment of these productive processes.

Beyond these core elements, as new meanings of luxury have started to spread within modern consumers, two additional concepts consistently resonated throughout the discussion: transparency and responsibility.

Participants linked these values to the “intelligent implementation” of AI, framing technology not as a substitute for human creativity but as a tool to surpass traditional constraints, enabling a more conscious, accountable, and ethically grounded form of luxury.

Another salient theme was the importance of *iconic figures* within luxury brands.

Participants emphasized the pivotal role of the creative director, founder, or other key brand figures who embody the brand's vision and values, guiding the brand's narration and becoming a personification and expression of the brand itself.

Iconicity indeed was expressed through multiple elements. Iconicity perceived as the pivotal figure of the brand creator, creative director which narrates its story throughout the brand, adding its personal touch in creations (designs), communication (socials and visuals) ...

Moreover, iconicity was also associated with real human ambassadors and pop culture icons, whose presence enhanced consumer identification, brand recall, and emotional engagement. Through these figures, participants reported a sense of closeness to the brand, strengthened by the interplay of nostalgia and heritage, which ties contemporary luxury consumption to past experiences and memories.

Overall, these themes, authenticity, innovation, craftsmanship, transparency, responsibility, and iconicity, offered a nuanced understanding of how modern consumers, particularly Generation Z, interpret luxury. They highlight the ways in which luxury brands can strategically integrate AI while maintaining human-centered values and symbolic resonance, ensuring that technology complements rather than replaces the experiential and narrative richness of the brand.

However, alongside the positive and aspirational dimensions of luxury, participants were equally attentive to denote its potential negative sides, particularly those related to ethical concerns.

For some participants, especially those who had a legal and sociological background, craftsmanship, often celebrated as a symbol of authenticity and cultural legitimacy, carried an underlying ambivalence.

While it symbolized human expertise and tradition, it may also conceal problematic dynamics of underpaid labour, limited recognition of artisans, and unsustainable working conditions.

More broadly, participants raised questions about exclusivity, sustainability, and the environmental and social costs of production. The very processes that enable luxury to maintain its aura of rarity and refinement, meticulous, time-consuming methods, reliance on scarce materials, and highly curated distribution, were also seen as sources of waste, inefficiency, and ethical dilemmas.

Therefore, this duality underscored what can be described as the *duplicate nature of luxury*: a domain that simultaneously fascinates through its narratives of artistry and excellence, while also provoking

critique for its implications of excess, inequality, and environmental strain. time-consuming production processes

Additionally, the careful analysis of the two visuals campaigns, conducted from participants' perspective, revealed several key points that were considered favourable insights for the implementation of AI within luxury communication strategies.

These themes indeed not only reflected consumers' expectations, but also provided concrete guidelines for how AI could be powerfully integrated into future campaigns.

Firstly, personalization was emphasized as one of the most promising potentials of AI.

Participants suggested that AI-driven visuals could allow brands to create more tailored and targeted messages, adapting to different audiences while maintaining brand integrity. This dimension was seen as particularly relevant for Gen Z consumers who increasingly value experiences and narratives that resonate with their individuality, surpassing AI intrinsic biases and fashion luxury stereotypes.

Therefore, related to what emerged, inclusivity arose as a recurrent positive theme. Participants noted that AI-generated campaigns, if guided by ethical and conscious creative input, could foster broader representation across cultures, body types, and identities. In this way, AI was perceived as an opportunity to challenge traditional notions of exclusivity, offering a more open and diverse interpretation of luxury, and becoming more inclusive than previous narratives.

Fourth, *sustainability* was identified as a key advantage.

The use of AI to create and test visuals was seen as a method to limit overproduction, reduce material waste, and optimize logistics. This dimension resonated strongly with participants' calls for greater responsibility in luxury, positioning AI as a potential enabler of environmentally conscious practices

Hence, from an economic point of view, AI was regarded as a powerful tool to optimize resources and reduce costs in campaign development. By testing visual prototypes digitally before committing to large-scale production, brands could minimize unnecessary investments while ensuring a more efficient allocation of creative and financial capital.

Finally, coherence was considered essential to the successful integration of AI in luxury campaigns. Participants stressed that innovation should not undermine the symbolic universe of luxury, but rather reinforce the consistency of brand values, heritage, and storytelling. Coherence thus functions as the

guiding principle that ensures AI remains an enhancer of creativity and authenticity, rather than a disruptive or alienating element.

Taken together, these insights highlight how consumers envision AI not as a replacement of traditional luxury codes, but as a complementary tool to enrich personalization, foster inclusivity, reduce waste, and ensure strategic coherence within brand communication.

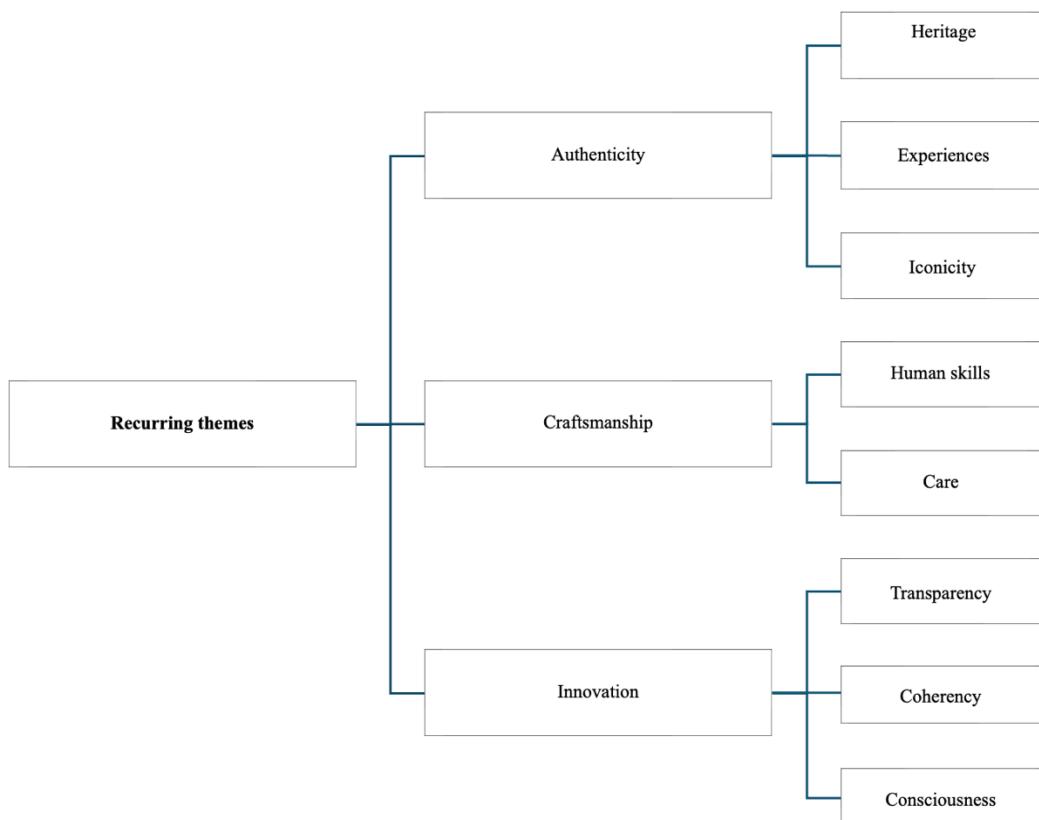


Table X. Diagram illustrating the main recurring themes identified throughout the focus group analysis, showcasing Gen Z's perceptions on artificial intelligence and its implementation in luxury brand communication

3.7.3 Key insights

Based on the questions and the direction in which the debate went, it has been possible to reveal some key insights and tensions that could become relevant for future managerial and theoretical implications, highlighting the delicate balance between innovation and tradition in the digital age of luxury.

A first key finding concerns the *dual perception of AI* depending on its area of application. Participants clearly distinguished between the use of AI in advertising and communication versus its role in production and distribution processes, valuing differently its implementation.

While its adoption in advertising was often appreciated as an enhancer of creativity, enabling efficiency and social responsiveness, its introduction into production and distribution sparked more critical views.

In particular, participants emphasized that luxury's customer experience, which have been historically marked by rituals, myths, and symbolic practices such as waitlists (also named wish list), exclusivity, and desirability, cannot be stripped of its traditional character.

Here, technology should enter to facilitate processes without undermining the symbolic and cultural foundations that have always defined luxury.

As one participant noted, the risk is that over-automation may “denaturalize” luxury, reducing it to something more akin to mass-market fashion rather than preserving its aura of experience and care.

This dualism indeed points directly to a second recurring theme: the centrality of exclusivity and inaccessibility. Unlike fast-fashion brands, which are built around immediacy, accessibility, and speed, luxury thrives on the opposite, delayed gratification, storytelling, and ritualized practices. Participants stressed that technological innovation cannot override this value system; rather, it should be integrated selectively and strategically, reinforcing rather than dissolving the codes of exclusivity.

Additionally, another relevant insight concerns the *relationship between the brand communication and the one pursued by the founder /creative direction*.

Several participants highlighted how they appreciate campaigns and brand narratives when they are closely aligned with the vision and voice of the creative director.

For instance, as one participant observed: “... *I believe it is very nice how he (the creative director) uses the brand's social page as if it were his personal one, inserting many contents...*”, supported by another member who stated: “*And so it's really interesting to see what he has done from the very beginning, either simply for the aesthetics or because it feels so deeply connected. I've been following him right from the start, from the founder's story, from the creative director(history), who tied everything back to his childhood, to Provence, and to that guiding thread running through it all.*”

Hence, this suggests that consumers perceive authenticity not only in products but also in the coherence between the brand's heritage discourse and the personal imprint of its creative figures.

This finding ties directly to the semiotic concept of syncretism, in which different enunciative voices (e.g., brand, creative director, ambassadors, artisans) converge into a unified narrative.

From this perspective, AI does not replace human creativity but rather *supports and amplifies it*, acting as an additional layer that enriches the brand's storytelling, and makes consumers appreciate more the entire narrative.

Indeed, what emerges is a form of hybridization between the real and the virtual, mediated across different platforms and media, where technological innovation strengthens and supports human-centered narratives instead of eclipsing them.

Furthermore, participants revealed a strong appreciation for behind-the-scenes storytelling. Consumers indeed value content that unveils the creative and artisanal process found behind luxury products, interpreting such transparency as a sign of authenticity and care.

Consumers enjoy having a glimpse in the creation process and as one participant expressed: “*... even if I don't buy luxury, I really enjoy seeing what's behind it, how things are made...*”, then followed by another member point of view: “*I think it's interesting to assign a face to that process, to know that behind a pair of shoes, or a bag that I wear and use every day, there's still the work of a person, could be a young person, could be someone older, but that have made personal their work, and there's a whole culture behind it.*”

Hence, these perceptions underlined the importance of highlighting and identifying the craftsmanship and human effort, attributing clear authorship to individuals who are involved in the process and put their efforts and skills.

Finally, it emerged how participants noted the relevance of brand ambassadors and pop-cultural figures in enhancing brand recall. Linking campaigns to recognizable personalities and cultural moments not only reinforces brand values but also situates luxury houses within wider social and cultural conversations, generating powerful associations within consumers' mind.

This interconnection of AI-enhanced visuals, human ambassadors, and cultural references illustrates once again the importance of consistency and continuity with heritage, iconic elements, and established brand practices.

Therefore, taken together, these insights indicate that Gen Z expects AI to be integrated into luxury communication, yet in a way that is conscious, gradual, and meaningful, bringing and added value to the entire discourse.

“In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges... is still preserving the personal idea, not relying 100% on artificial intelligence.

And it's connected to the company's ability to communicate to its consumers that AI mainly serves to enhance creativity, not to replace the human sensitivity required to develop an idea from scratch. So, it's really about the creative flair that is typical of humans."

Ultimately, consumers welcome innovation when it complements heritage, enhances symbolic richness, and preserves the central role of human creativity.

By contrast, if technology risks eroding rituals of exclusivity or authenticity, it is met with scepticism.

CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSIONS

The fourth chapter outlines the main theoretical, managerial and future implications gained throughout the conducted research.

Starting from the semiotic analysis of the AI-driven campaigns by Moncler, Valentino and Thalie Paris, and following their empirical validation through the focus group, a redefinition of traditional luxury brands narratives within the Artificial intelligence era has been developed.

The results have highlighted tree key main insights: *the development of new conceptions of authenticity, the symbolic role of individualism and the existence of a syncretism of languages.*

4.1 Results and Discussion

The overall analysis, developed through the semiotic examination of luxury brands' campaigns and a focus group, has provided valuable insights into what artificial intelligence applied within the luxury domain represents for contemporary consumers and younger generations.

What emerged is that luxury, already difficult to define due to its inherently subjective and evolving nature, acquires new layers of meaning when intersecting with AI, creating a fertile land for consumers' interpretations.

Indeed, consumers perceive this encounter not only in functional or technological terms, but also through symbolic and cultural codes that shape their perception of authenticity, exclusivity, and intrinsic meanings.

AI-generated content, for instance, is not perceived as a neutral tool, but as an entity playing a narrative role, a helper within a broader narrative where notions of heritage, innovation, and creativity are continuously negotiated and in which an intentionality of meanings starts to be present.

Within this framework, the research highlights the symbolic importance attributed to individualism, understood not only as the consumer's desire of brands' self-expression, but also as the pivotal role that individuals, such as craftsmen, creatives, and designers play within the creative process.

Their visibility, intentionality, and personal imprint remain fundamental to how consumers evaluate authenticity and connect emotionally with a brand.

Consumers increasingly want to “know the people behind the product,” making individuality itself a key semiotic code of contemporary luxury.

Alongside this, the syncretism of languages, where visual, digital, and cultural sign systems converge, further enriches the interpretative landscape, requiring brands to navigate simultaneously multiple registers of meaning.

The intentionality of meanings, as expressed through Moncler, Valentino and Thalie Paris campaigns becomes essential: the way messages are framed and the codes they employ significantly influence whether consumers perceive them as authentic or artificial, as aligned with heritage or detached from it.

Artificial intelligence, in this sense, emerges not as a substitute for human creativity or craftsmanship, but as an enhancer of authenticity and artisanal value.

Its application across the different phases of luxury—from design to production—reveals a willingness on the part of brands to safeguard the role of craftsmen, while simultaneously capitalizing on technology in a conscious and human-centered way. Such an approach opens the door to more responsible production models, where the quantity and type of products are no longer rigidly predetermined, but instead adjusted according to consumers’ responses to AI-generated visual campaigns.

Ultimately, the research highlights AI’s pivotal role in the domain of communication.

As emerged throughout the qualitative analysis, within communication and advertising, AI is positively valued when it enhances storytelling, transparency, and symbolic innovation.

In contrast, within experiential dimensions, such as virtual try-ons and personalized services, its potential often diminishes when left to the inexperience of users, leading to fragmented or superficial experiences.

This duality suggests that brands must adopt a differentiated strategy, where advertising leverages AI for symbolic depth and cultural storytelling, while experiential applications remain carefully guided and brand-driven to avoid diluting meaning or consumer trust.

When strategically employed, artificial intelligence enables luxury brands to foreground key values such as transparency, sustainability, and efficiency, transforming technologies from a potential threat into a signifier of progress and innovation.

Consequently, through these semiotic dynamics, individualism, syncretism, and intentionality, AI becomes not only a tool for optimization, but also a symbolic resource that redefines the cultural codes of luxury for a new era of consumers.

4.2 Theoretical implications

The findings of this research contribute to theoretical debates at the intersection of luxury studies, consumer behaviour theory, and the emerging discussions on artificial intelligence in branding.

The results emerged indeed confirm that artificial intelligence cannot be conceived merely as a technological object or neutral tool, rather, it must be understood as part of an intricate, constantly evolving process that actively reshapes the symbolic and semiotic logics of luxury branding (Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020).

As illustrated in Chapter 3, within contemporary luxury narratives AI does not remain confined to the role of an auxiliary instrument but emerges as both helper and sender, enriching the narratives and reinforcing the creative visions of marketers and designers.

Therefore, the introduction of AI does not simply add a technological layer to this system but actively reshapes the symbolic codes through which luxury is constructed, perceived, and consumed.

Within this framework, authenticity, long regarded as a foundational trait of luxury, emerges as a shifting and layered concept.

On one side, it retains its hereditary dimension, rooted in craftsmanship, heritage, iconicity, and sensorial experience.

On the other, it acquires a more human-centered dimension, tied to the individuality and resonance of those who shape luxury: creatives, tailors, and artisans whose passion and skills constitute the living essence of the brand (Bhaduri et Stanforth, 2017).

Therefore, this duality suggests that in the age of AI, authenticity is not diluted but reformulated through the interplay between tradition and innovation, echoing Holt's (2004) concept of cultural branding, where authenticity derives from the alignment of brands with cultural tensions and individual expression.

In this perspective, a second theoretical contribution emerges, highlighting the pivotal role of individualism, which consumers perceive as central to their understanding of authenticity.

Individualism manifests in two ways: first, through the recognition of outstanding creative figures, such as founders, designers, craftsmen, whose unique vision and talent have historically shaped luxury houses; and second, through consumers' desire to acknowledge and engage with the individuals behind the creative process, deeply entering within their creations.

This act of recognition not only brings consumers closer to the brand but also strengthens authenticity, as it establishes a relational bridge between production and consumption.

Consequently, closely related to this concept of individuals it is tied the iconicity dimension.

Iconic figures indeed function as semiotic anchors that consolidate brand identity while shaping consumer expectations, not being limited just to the present but often reconnecting the past through nostalgia.

Hence, as consumers appreciate the revival of past elements through modern discourses, this type of communication serves as points of connection between luxury and personal or collective life memories.

Ultimately, the analysis underlines the existence of a syncretism of languages in contemporary luxury communication.

With AI-driven campaigns that merge visual, textual, and digital codes into hybrid narratives, consumers interpret not only aesthetically but also ethically and symbolically, developing new worlds of meanings.

This blending of registers reflects indeed the multidimensional nature of contemporary luxury discourse, where heritage signs, technological aesthetics, and cultural codes coexist and interact, enriching not only the consumer experience but also presenting luxury as a dynamic cultural system, capable of absorbing and rearticulating diverse symbolic inputs.

Taken together, these implications suggest that AI is not simply layered onto existing luxury practices but rather functions as a catalyst that reshapes the semiotic infrastructure of authenticity, individualism, iconicity, and symbolic expression.

Crucially, the study emphasizes the role of intentionality: consumers evaluate campaigns not solely on their technological novelty but rather on the perceived purpose behind their creation, whether AI

is used to enhance heritage, sustainability, and creativity, or whether it appears as a superficial experiment detached from brand's identity.

This aligns with the concept of veridiction, highlighting how the communication of authenticity and trust depends on the coherent integration of AI within a brand's cultural and symbolic framework, throughout visuals that resemble authentic representations of the real.

As Gen Z rises as the main audience of luxury communication, the study underlines that their expectations extend beyond traditional markers of wealth and quality, and the ways through which they are spoken to is what makes the difference between a luxury brand and another, marking the start of a proper evolution.

As one focus group participant noted: *"There is always, or even more, a focus that shifts from luxury that equals wealth and quality to luxury that equals responsibility, and especially sustainability."*

Therefore, it is clear that particularly following the luxury crisis, consumers increasingly demand transparency, ethical responsibility and conscious engagement, seeking to understand the processes that underpin luxury production and distribution.

Hence, this heightened attention to sustainability and ethical practices can serve as a powerful incentive for consumers to engage with luxury brands, follow their narratives on social media, and make informed, deliberate purchasing decisions that align with their values, actively opposing overconsumption, environmental harm, and the practices of fast fashion.

Ultimately, rather than replacing these values, AI reconfigures their articulation by creating new opportunities for dialogue between tradition and innovation.

Luxury can thus be understood as a dynamic field of meaning, where stability, embodied in heritage, craftsmanship, and exclusivity, and change, manifested through digital innovation and AI-driven creativity—coexist in productive tension.

In sum, this research extends theoretical discussions by showing how AI becomes embedded within the semiotic and cultural logics of luxury, functioning not as a neutral tool but as a symbolic mediator that reshapes authenticity, individualism, and the semiotic codes of brand communication.

By doing so, AI enables luxury brands to respond to evolving consumer expectations while preserving coherence, emotional resonance, and cultural relevance in an increasingly complex digital landscape.

4.3 Managerial implications

The results of this study provide several strategic insights for managers and marketers operating in the luxury sector, highlighting how artificial intelligence can be effectively integrated into luxury brand communication and consumer experience.

Indeed, what emerged is not a rejection of AI, but the need of an intentional, coherent and value-driven implementation.

Firstly, Artificial intelligence should not be perceived as a substitute for the brand's essence and individuals' capabilities, but as a tool to amplify existing strengths.

Therefore, brands should not cut the essential resources which are capable to guide the creative process but employ in a rational and guided way artificial intelligence and innovative technologies.

Luxury houses should ensure that AI-generated visuals emphasize the creative process rather than constraining it, developing coherent narratives which remain resonant with the brand.

For example, a luxury house known for its sustainable practices should ensure that its visuals embrace that eco-conscious narrative (sustainability, materials, production choices and ethical sourcing) in order to reveal meaning and pertinence within their discourses.

Additionally, as emerged within the focus group, technologies have a greater impact on consumers and are perceived more authentic if employed to generate something innovative and groundbreaking, rather than recycling ideas already pursued in the past.

Hence, the issue within AI implementation is related not to the creation of contents through AI, yet the incorrect focus given within the entire communication.

Managers must therefore approach AI not as a tool for replication, but as a driver of innovation, capable of pushing boundaries in storytelling, aesthetics, and consumer engagement.

What consumers expect is not the mere presence of AI but its meaningful and transparent use, where the intentionality behind its implementation is clearly communicated.

As shown by the qualitative data collected, Generation Z consumers do not resist AI implementation, yet they demand a consistent and meaningful integration.

In this sense, AI-generated campaigns should be developed from clear and purposeful creative briefs, ensuring that outputs are guided toward novel symbolic territories rather than reproducing past visual tropes and relying on sterile narratives.

Crucially, findings showed that these campaigns are most effective when the product remains at the centre of the narrative, elevated through impactful and distinctive representations that highlight the technology uniqueness without being overshadowed by excessive visual experimentation.

Moreover, since consumers value being informed about the rationale behind AI usage, it emerged that the brand's alignment with its heritage, values and purpose confirm the AI effectiveness in expressing authenticity.

In this sense, this confirms that the power of AI in luxury communication is ultimately *a matter of intentions*, where clarity of purposes translates into stronger symbolic resonance, that loudly resonate in consumers' mind.

Finally, based on what stated previously and the emerging categories identified, the integration of AI should be considered as part of a long-term strategy of symbolic innovation, enabling brands to expand their cultural relevance and strengthen their role as meaning-makers in a rapidly evolving digital context.

As stated by one of participants within the focus group: "*if implemented to really create something new, interesting and impactful... there AI becomes the extension of what creativity really is.*"

Only by combining innovation, transparency, product centrality, and intentionality luxury brands can harness AI's full potential without compromising their heritage or authenticity.

4.4 Limitations of the study

Despite its findings, this study presents several limitations that must be acknowledged in order to properly contextualize the results obtained.

Firstly, the analysis was conducted with participants who were only occasionally buyers of luxury products.

While they demonstrated a strong interest in the underlying dynamics and procedures of the luxury sector, their purchasing behaviour and level of engagement with luxury brands cannot be considered representative of the broader luxury consumer base.

Furthermore, the research was limited to a specific geographical area and did not incorporate sufficient diversification in terms of culture, social expectations, shopping habits, or income levels. This necessarily constrained the generalizability of the results to other cultural or market contexts.

Additionally, as expected, the focus group, although valuable for exploring perceptions in depth, carried intrinsic methodological biases, which deeply affected participants answers. As highlighted in marketing and qualitative research literature, group dynamics can influence individual responses through mechanisms such as social desirability bias, groupthink, or social confirmation effects, where participants align their answers with dominant opinions rather than expressing divergent views (Smithson,2000; Bristol et Fern, 2003).

Moreover, the presence of academic backgrounds among participants introduced specific interpretative biases: individuals with legal or sociological expertise tended to emphasize ethical and regulatory issues in luxury, such as sustainability, transparency, and labour ethics, while others prioritized aesthetic or experiential dimensions.

These biases, while enriching the debate with multiple perspectives, may have simultaneously narrowed its scope by filtering discussions through pre-existing intellectual and sociological frameworks.

Finally, the focus group format itself presented well-documented constraints.

Participants may self-censored due to perceived group pressures, with the discussions disproportionately shaped by more dominant voices.

Additionally, the artificiality of the research setting, even though genuine interactions are installed, may reduce findings' validity compared to natural consumer decision-making contexts (Paulson,1958).

For these reasons, while the findings provide valuable insights into the semiotic and symbolic implications of AI in luxury communication, they should be interpreted as exploratory rather than universally generalizable.

4.5 Gaps for future research - Risks and challenges

The findings highlight several risks and challenges associated with the implementation of artificial intelligence in luxury communication, which simultaneously open meaningful avenues for future research.

Firstly, as emerged within the entire discussion there is a need to further investigate how luxury brands can construct clear and coherent narratives, aligning them with their heritage, values and long-term positioning (Reinartz et Saffert, 2013).

A major risk, indeed, lies in campaigns that, as seen in the Thalie analysis, loose the central focus on the product, conveying a diminished sense of authenticity, and ultimately leading to consumer loss of estimation.

Subsequently, an additional tension was presented within the discourse: the gap between innovation and imitation.

While brands are now given the possibility to integrate these new technological tools, there is no necessity to adopt them uniformly or replicate competitors' strategies.

Consequently, it is important that marketers and creative directors understand that they do not need to homologate with other brands' cliques but need focus on innovative ways of presenting their values, visuals and creativity, while enhancing them with elements of innovation.

Future research should therefore analyse how brands can avoid homogenization and instead use AI to foster genuine creativity and differentiation.

Thirdly, the consumer-facing applications of AI (e.g., virtual try-ons, automated support systems) present the risk of depersonalization when technologies are left unguided in the hands of consumers, potentially affecting exclusivity, experiential richness, and perceived authenticity.

This raises the need to research how to balance consumer empowerment with brand control in the digital luxury experience, integrating innovative technologies without losing the brand's identity.

Finally, authenticity itself emerges as a shifting and evolving construct, moving beyond its traditional association with craftsmanship and heritage, toward a dynamic value encompassing transparency, coherence, and intentionality.

Future research should thus examine how this evolving conception of authenticity can be operationalized and communicated in a rapidly changing cultural and technological environment, ensuring that innovation does not compromise luxury symbolic heritage and threaten consumers' experience.

Hence the main challenge is to be innovators in a continuously shifting environment, while remaining unique and safeguarding the authenticity that lies at the very essence of luxury.

4.6 Future research

From the outlined limitations and challenges, future research could further explore the economic and sustainable implications highlighted during the discussion, with a particular focus on the potential of AI-driven visualizations to reduce overproduction in luxury and optimize resource allocation.

As participants noted, the use of digital AI visuals could allow brands to test consumer responses before committing to physical production, developing first creative visuals and then moving onto the creative production processes, thereby limiting waste and optimizing logistics.

This perspective opens a promising avenue for examining how real-time, data-driven feedback from AI-generated campaigns can reshape supply chain strategies, product launches, and consumer targeting in the luxury sector.

Therefore, examining this intersection between technological innovation, sustainability, and consumer engagement could provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of luxury brand management and understand better consumers' expectations.

From a semiotic perspective, these digital prototypes would function not only as pragmatic tools for anticipative market testing but also as cultural signs that expand upon innovation, exclusivity, and environmental responsibility.

By analyzing how consumers interpret and respond to these signs, especially when luxury brands use AI to test reactions before physical production, scholars may gain deeper insights into how meaning, value, and desirability are constructed in the digital age.

Therefore, exploring this intersection between semiotics, sustainability, and consumer perception could enrich our understanding of how luxury brands redefine their narratives while responding to contemporary demands for efficiency, authenticity and responsibility.

Additionally, future research should broaden the consumer base under analysis.

While this study focused on occasional luxury buyers, it would be relevant to investigate the perspectives of frequent and loyal consumers, whose perceptions are likely shaped by lifestyle, social networks, and education.

Comparing these two groups could reveal differences in how authenticity, innovation, and AI integration are perceived, providing a more nuanced understanding of consumer heterogeneity in luxury markets.

Finally, given the emerging tension between communication and experiential applications of AI, future research should also examine the distinct ways consumers evaluate these two domains. While

AI in communication is largely assessed in terms of symbolic coherence and product centrality, being profoundly accepted by the focus group sample, experiential applications such as virtual try-ons or AI-driven personalization raise questions about consumer agency, exclusivity, and brand control.

Hence, addressing this gap could help define best practices for brands seeking to balance innovation with the preservation of luxury's symbolic elements.

4.7 Conclusion

Artificial intelligence should not be conceived as a substitute for human creativity, nor as a mean to replicate traditional narratives of the past, resulting in the production of anachronistic and redundant outputs.

Instead, AI must be considered as an enhancer of innovation, a tool that when guided by human intentionality, enriches storytelling, aesthetics and consumer engagement.

Ai indeed, is neither an enemy or a saviour, yet a catalyst, whose value entirely depends on how intelligently and intentionally humans use it.

Hence, its role is not to replace, but to amplify the creativity, skills and cultural sensitivity of craftsmen, designers and marketers who deeply define the luxury sector.

Crucially, integrating AI within creative processes does not imply cutting on traditional resources. On the contrary, creatives and marketers remain indispensable, since they possess the cultural knowledge, technical expertise, and experiential sensitivity required to provide the right inputs, prompts, and interpretive frameworks through which AI can generate meaningful and coherent outputs.

The main challenge, therefore, lies in ensuring that AI is used rationally and methodically, as an additional layer of value rather than a replacement, preserving the irreplaceable human elements of intuition, passion, and symbolic vision, that no algorithm can replicate.

If integrated coherently, AI can strengthen brand authenticity, support sustainability by reducing waste and overproduction, and enhance inclusivity by making luxury narratives more accessible while retaining their exclusivity.

Yet this requires a careful balance: brands must safeguard their heritage and individuality while experimenting with AI's potential to open new symbolic and creative horizons.

In this sense, the future of luxury lies not in choosing between tradition and technology, but in orchestrating their coexistence, where AI becomes a catalyst for innovation without eroding the cultural depth, uniqueness, and human intentionality that make luxury meaningful.

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