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Extending the luxury experience to social media – User-Generated Content co-creation in a branded event

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to provide new insights into social media marketing of luxury fashion. Consequently, this conceptual article addresses the User-Generated Content (UGC) within experiential marketing events. To demonstrate how a branded exhibition can facilitate the co-creation of visual content and its dissemination on social media, the article presents an illustrative visual frame analysis of the UGC. Theoretically, the study presents a new perspective on the dynamics of company-consumer co-creation, and demonstrates the application of a novel methodology for visual analysis of luxury that enables an understanding of the meanings in consumer-generated images. In managerial terms, this study provides new insights into UGC in social media marketing. To this end, experiential marketing event provide brands a platform for co-creating content with customers, and in so doing, engaging them to disseminate the brand value proposition.

1. Introduction

“The most effective advertising is advertising that gets people talking.”
(Keller & Fay, 2012, p. 463)

The market for luxury fashion is changing, with new competitors and customer segments entering the market (Kim & Ko, 2012; Ko, Phau, & Aiello, 2016), and the increasing ubiquity of digital marketing channels (Okonkwo, 2009). In particular, the proliferation of social media has provided luxury marketers with more personal and powerful ways to interact and connect with their customers (Dhaoui, 2014). In so doing, it has given rise to new co-creative methods for content creation and distribution (Hajli et al., 2017). With Burberry leading the way with their ‘Art of the Trench’ campaign, which invited consumers to participate in the creation of branded content as early as 2009 (Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011), many traditional luxury brands are following suit and embracing User-Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) as part of their marketing communications. For instance, Fendi engages millennial consumers with their digital media platform ‘F is for Fendi’, which encourages these digital natives to share brand-related content on Instagram.

Previous studies have demonstrated that brand-related experiences can be used to encourage consumer-to-consumer communications (Klein, Falk, Esch, & Goluknovtsev, 2016), and engage consumers in co-creation (Choi, Ko, & Kim, 2016; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010). However, these studies lack an explicit focus on how these behaviors

relate to social media content generation and provide few insights into the actual process of User-Generated Content. Moreover, extant research has already justified the benefits of social media marketing for the luxury sector (Godeya et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012). Nonetheless, these studies are focused on brand-generated content, and scholarly work on content created by consumers remains limited (see Lee & Watkins, 2016 for an exception). Finally, this co-creative turn in luxury fashion marketing has also raised some concerns with regard to brand integrity and control (Jin, 2012) since social media shifts the power away from marketers, who no longer “unilaterally define and control” the brand experience (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013, p. 1513). In this vein, luxury marketing is still lacking methods for proactive management of consumer-generated media (Shao, Gyrd-Jones, & Grace, 2015; Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2009).

In order to address this lacuna, this article explores the potential of experiential marketing events in encouraging and directing the co-creation of visual, brand-related content (Halliday, 2016). In addition, an illustrative study investigating Instagram postings that depict consumers’ experiences during an experiential marketing event of a French luxury brand, Louis Vuitton, is presented in order to demonstrate how marketing events can facilitate the creation of UGC and its dissemination on social media. To this end, the authors propose that a visual adaptation of Goffman’s (1974) frame analysis (Luhtakallio, 2013) can be applied to these images to provide useful insights into the meanings inherent in these consumer-generated photographs.

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The contribution of this study is four-fold. First, it contributes to the literature on social media marketing of luxury fashion (Godeya et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012). Second, it extends the studies on value co-creation in luxury (Quach & Thaichon, 2017; Tynan et al., 2010). Third, a new visual method for fashion marketing research is introduced. Finally, practical insights into co-creative fashion marketing with ‘networked, empowered, and active consumers’ are provided (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 5).

The study is timely since luxury marketing scholars have acknowledged the value of consumer-generated content in social media (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Quach & Thaichon, 2017). Indeed, three out of four luxury purchases are currently influenced by social media (Hope, 2016), and scholarly research has also demonstrated the positive effect of social media marketing on brand equity (Godeya et al., 2016), customer equity (Kim & Ko, 2012), and consumer behavior (Chu, Kamal, & Kim, 2013; Kim & Ko, 2010).

2. Literature review

2.1. Luxury fashion marketing in social media

Luxury is the most profitable and fastest-growing brand segment within the fashion industry (Miller & Mills, 2012). What is more, despite its relatively small size in terms of companies and its counter-intuitive marketing logic building on its exclusivity and rarity (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), the influence of the luxury industry extends far beyond its boundaries by introducing new practices for marketing (Ko & Megehee, 2012).

A luxury brand has been defined as having high quality, offering authentic value, conveying a prestigious image, being worthy of a premium price, and inspiring a deep connection (Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2017). In this sense, luxury marketing is largely centered around providing customers with unique and authentic experiences (Megehee & Spake, 2012). Traditionally, luxury involves qualities such as status aspiration and power (Kim, Lloyd, & Cervellon, 2016) and has constituted a means of social stratification, as one's rank in society has been illustrated by one's ability to sacrifice productive resources in order to acquire non-productive resources (Bataille and Hurley, 1991, cf. Kapferer, 2012). As a result, it has been a way for the privileged to display their superiority over ‘others’ (Veblen, 1899). Consequently, the consumption of luxury is driven by an individual's desire for self-expression and self-presentation (Jin, 2012).

In recent years, social media marketing has gained prominence within the luxury industry (Okonkwo, 2009), where it can be used to establish and maintain relationships (Park & Kim, 2015), share brand knowledge (Kim & Ko, 2012), drive sales (Chu et al., 2013), and facilitate the production of User-Generated Content (Phan et al., 2011). To this end, prominent luxury brands are embracing social media to increase the credibility of their marketing and to foster close relationships with their customers. For example, traditional British luxury brand Burberry has successfully utilized social media in their marketing campaigns, resulting in the transformation of their brand image towards innovation (Phan et al., 2011). Moreover, social media has changed the logics of the luxury fashion industry by enabling amateurs, celebrities, and even the whole backstage team to take a lead role in marketing as the new type of media affords users an active role in the creation and dissemination of brand image (Alter, 2016). For example, collaborating with style icons of the younger generation in social media content creation has enabled Dior and Calvin Klein to reach broader audiences and increase their brand awareness in new segments (Scott, 2015). Following this, it has become a common practice among luxury fashion brands to encourage consumers to share their experiences online (Park & Kim, 2015), yet the actual outcomes of this sharing have hardly been addressed.

2.2. Value co-creation in experiences

Value is one of the key concepts in marketing inasmuch as it is fundamental to understanding marketing activities in general, and consumption experiences in particular (Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016). Relatedly, following the service-dominant logic in marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), value stems from the experiences that involve interaction between customers and the company (e.g. Grönroos, 2000; Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009).

These experiences are co-constructed during *encounters* (Payne et al., 2009), involving an interaction between company- and consumer-based *operand* and *operant* resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). *Operand resources* are tangible economic resources such as products or physical spaces that do not entail value per se but are rendered valuable when they are acted upon, for instance when consumers are using products or associating them with brand knowledge (Keller, 2003). *Operant resources*, in turn, are intangible resources such as physical skills, networks of relationships, or cultural schemas (Arnould, Price, & Malshe, 2006) that can be applied to operand resources or other operand resources to create value. Hence, value is co-created in experiences, online and offline, resulting from a company and a consumer interacting directly or indirectly (Anker, Sparks, Moutinho, & Grönroos, 2015).

Similarly, luxury marketing prioritizes authentic, personalized experiences (Megehee & Spake, 2012) that are instrumental in conveying the essence of luxury (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Tynan, McKechnie, & Hartley, 2014) and that enable value co-creation (Tynan et al., 2010). These experiences may occur within a variety of branded environments such as pop-up stores (Klein et al., 2016), retail spaces (Kim et al., 2016), promotional events, art galleries, and exhibitions (Choi et al., 2016). These spaces enable consumers to co-construct experiences by utilizing a variety of company-controlled operand resources (i.e. spatial elements, visual cues, and music) embedded with operant resources (i.e. brand meanings, company heritage) in conjunction with their own operand resources, such as their social relations, cultural understandings, brand knowledge, and situated creativity (Potts et al., 2008). Given that co-creation has even been proposed as a “new brand logic” (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009, p. 330), whereby “the brand is the experience” (Pralhad, 2004), these interactions result in brand meaning co-creation (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013).

Following the previous discussion, value co-creation depicts a participatory process in which individuals and organizations jointly generate and develop meaning (Ind & Coates, 2013). Building on this literature, the present article seeks to extend the literature on the social media marketing of luxury by introducing a new co-creative perspective on User-Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.3. User-Generated Content as co-created

Social media provides consumers with convenient ways of communicating and sharing information with each other (Quach & Thaichon, 2017). In this way, consumers can share their brand-related experiences with other like-minded individuals in real-time, using rich media content such as photography and videos (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay, & Richard, 2017; Payne et al., 2009). These “various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users” are referred to as User-Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). For consumers, the reasons for engaging in this content creation include self-presentation, information dissemination, intrinsic enjoyment, community participation, and social interaction (Belk, 2013; Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012).

UGC has recently become a subject of topical interest in luxury marketing research. For instance, Rokka and Canniford (2016) have studied the selfie practices among consumers to understand how consumer and brand identities intersect in luxury wines, and Lee and Watkins (2016) have demonstrated the positive influence of video

blogging on consumer perceptions of brands. Moreover, the creation of UGC in marketing events has been studied by Klein et al. (2016), who have shown that branded events increase word of mouth, and by Choi et al. (2016), who point out how co-creation encounters influence the interactions between the brand and its customers and lead to increased brand value.

In light of the previous discussions, the production of UGC follows the logic of co-creation (Arnould et al., 2006; Halliday, 2016). Here, the brand value proposition directs – or keys, as will be explained later – the co-creation of UGC as it is a source of resources, which are drawn on in order to co-construct the experience (Arnould et al., 2006), while the resulting images represent these meaning-making activities (Rokka & Canniford, 2016). Hence, this content depicts an experience, not merely one fabricated by the brand, but one which is personal and co-constructed by the consumer, who interacts with the branded environment and the resources within. Consequently, when a consumer digitally associates with certain brands in order to self-present (Schau & Gilly, 2003), or connects with other members of brand communities (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001), they not only repeat the brand narratives composed by marketers, but combine their personal experience of them with their operant resources such as their knowledge base (Berthon et al., 2009), and situated creativity (Potts et al., 2008). Following this, the shared content reproduces a series of value co-creation encounters between consumer and brand (Payne et al., 2009). In this way, through the performance of posting on social media, the brand experience is extended temporally and spatially into the virtual realm (Lucarelli & Hallin, 2015; Lury, 2009).

In this light, the values reflected in these photographs, as well as the role of the brand in its co-creation, can be understood through the concepts of *frame* and *keying* (Goffman, 1974; Luhtakallio, 2013). First, *frames* are used by individuals in the process of *framing*, which involves making sense of their experiences by connecting them with other occasions that bear some resemblance (Goffman, 1974). Consequently, a *frame* refers to the content of the image, the different elements and its context, which are all instrumental in making sense of what is going on in a picture (Luhtakallio, 2013). Second, *keying* is an additional cue that can transform or add an extra layer of interpretation to the situation (Goffman, 1974). Conversely, the role of the brand within the frame keys its interpretation as a means of deciphering what is going on in the photograph and, ultimately, what kind of value it depicts (Luhtakallio, 2013) (see Fig. 1 for the process of UGC co-creation).

In conclusion, UGC is co-created in a given context, and objectifies a mutually observed world and shared knowledge base among members

of a brand community (Berthon et al., 2009). In this vein, the visual posts on social media are products of co-creation and contribute to the further evolution of brand meaning (Kates, 2004).

3. Methods

3.1. Context

In order to demonstrate how branded events can facilitate the co-creation of User-Generated Content and its dissemination in social media, visual postings around a particular brand-related marketing event (Choi et al., 2016) are analyzed. The focal context for this study is the Series 3 exhibition organized by Louis Vuitton, one of the world’s most successful and valuable luxury brands with a brand value of more than 22 million dollars (Interbrand, 2017). In addition, it has a prominent presence in social media with approximately 20 million likes on its official Facebook page and 27 million images generated with the hashtag #louisvuitton on Instagram.

The Series 3 exhibition was organized in London from September 21 to October 18, 2015. It was part of the marketing campaign for the current collection and was open to all customers and aficionados of the brand. The exhibition consisted of ten different rooms that presented the creative process of Nicolas Ghesquière, his inspiration for the women’s Fall/Winter collection, and the heritage and craftsmanship behind the brand. The exhibition was built utilizing a variety of experiential elements and displays of products conveying an art museum-like experience for visitors. The exhibition was the third in a series of ‘Instagram-friendly exhibitions’ communicating the heart and soul of the brand as well as the message of the season (Judah, 2015). During this immersive experience, visitors were encouraged to post photographs of their impressions in social media.

3.2. Data

The data for this study consist of photos uploaded to Instagram, which was chosen as a context due to its prominence among luxury brands and their followers (Scott, 2015). Instagram is a photo- and video-sharing application that can be used over the internet or as a smartphone application that enables its users to post, like, and comment on content uploaded on user profiles (Marwick, 2015). In fall 2017, it had more than 800 million monthly active users and two million advertisers (Balakrishnan & Boorstin, 2017). Compared to other social media, Instagram is more about visual content than textual

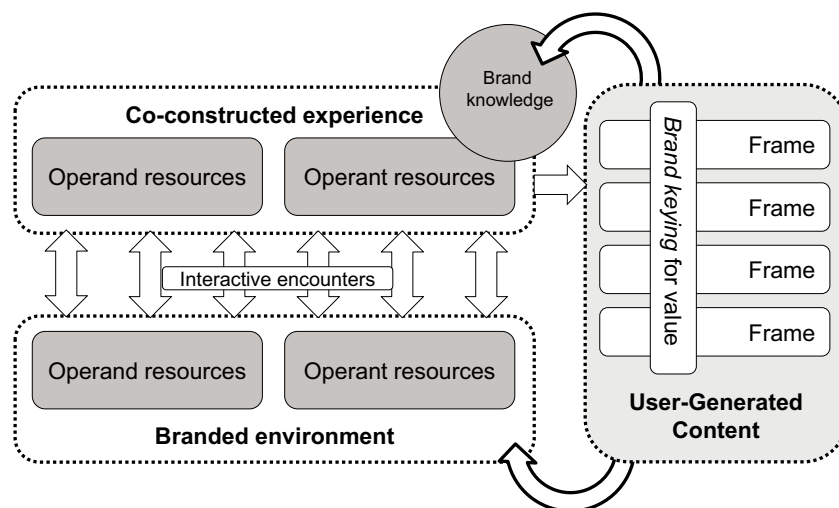


Fig. 1. The process of UGC co-creation.

(Adapted from Arnould et al., 2006; Payne et al., 2009.)

Table 1
Observations of themes and brand keyings.

	Total	Replication	Re-arrangement	Expansion	Re-creation
<i>Luxury</i>	17.2% (172)	30.4% (135)	18.6% (33)	0.9% (2)	1.4% (2)
<i>Art</i>	42.8% (428)	46.6% (207)	26.6% (47)	40.3% (93)	55.1% (81)
<i>High life</i>	13.4% (134)	2.5% (11)	26.6% (47)	20.8% (48)	19.0% (28)
<i>Self</i>	26.6% (266)	20.5% (91)	28.2% (50)	38.0% (88)	24.5% (36)
Total	1000	44.4% (444)	17.7% (177)	23.1% (231)	14.7% (147)

expression or social interaction. The application allows for unidirectional following of content, and posted photographs are classified with hashtags that constitute metadata indicating theme, location, or other relevant information regarding their content.

A total of 22,161 photographs from Instagram marked with the official hashtag of the Series 3 exhibition were downloaded. From this material, we chose 1000 consecutive photos, excluding duplicates, official brand marketing images, videos, and photographs that were not directly related to the exhibition, as a sample for the analysis. This figure was deemed appropriate as, after analyzing this sample, the analysis had reached a point of ‘saturation’, whereby no new information or themes were observed in the data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

3.3. Visual frame analysis of co-created UGC

Aesthetics are central to luxury and fashion. In this sense, it is only natural that visual analysis has been gaining ground as a research method. For instance, consumer-generated images have been used as data (Megehee & Spake, 2012; Rokka & Canniford, 2016), and advertising images have been employed as a stimulus (Kim et al., 2016) in fashion marketing research. Furthermore, visual semiotics are commonly used to explore the meanings within advertising imagery (Freire, 2014; Larraufie & Kourdoughli, 2014). However, the challenge vis-à-vis the current methods is that they either only allow the study of limited data, or tend to overlook the meanings in such images. Moreover, while these methods emphasize what is directly seen in the photographs, they ignore the consumers' processes of making sense of them.

In order to analyze the co-created brand meanings performed by sharing the pictures, we utilized a visual adaptation of frame analysis, which is suitable for analyzing large sets of images while still maintaining a “sensitive reading” of these representations (Luhtakallio, 2013). Frame analysis was originally developed to investigate the structures of social life through recognizing the foundational *framings* that people use to make sense of their social situations (Goffman, 1974). In this vein, Visual Frame Analysis can be used to examine the “visually experienced ‘situations’ of everyday life” that both objectify the social processes such as value and meaning co-creation as well as contribute to them (Luhtakallio, 2013, p. 35). Previously, this method has been used and developed for deciphering the meanings within images used in the media (Luhtakallio, 2013) and in advertising imagery (Perjo, 2013).

Following this, we studied the photographs as they were interpreted (and produced) – taking the process of interpretation as the starting point for the analysis. Here, we assumed that the photographs could be decoded/interpreted, and that this interpretation was shared among fashion consumers with a relatively similar knowledge base (Berthon et al., 2009). In essence, the analysis aimed to recognize *dominant frames*, which are the primary means of making sense of what is going on in a picture, and *keyings* that duly direct or even transform the meaning of a visual frame (Luhtakallio, 2013).

In practice, we started the analysis by browsing through the images chosen for the sample, while simultaneously transcribing the main elements in the photos into an Excel spreadsheet and making notes on spontaneous interpretations. This involved an iterative process of going back and forth between representations and making notes under the

emergent categories to explore what was happening in the photographs – looking for both similarities and differences between images (Luhtakallio, 2013). Based on these transcriptions, the dominant frames were then identified and the photos were labeled accordingly. The photographs were then organized into thematic categories, and viewed in the context of other pictures within the same category to ascertain how different *keyings* directed and transformed the interpretation of meaning within the images. Author 1 was mainly responsible for conducting the frame analysis of the images. For triangulation purposes, the authors reviewed the themes together, reflecting on the data. No major differences of opinion emerged, yet these discussions were useful in further refining the descriptions of the *frames* and *keyings*.

4. Findings and discussion

This study set out to explore how consumer snapshots shared in social media can enhance our understanding of the values co-created at an experiential marketing event. In the following section, the findings from an exploratory Visual Frame Analysis of UGC relating to the Louis Vuitton Series 3 exhibition are utilized to demonstrate its application as a tool for understanding the co-creation of value.

Four dominant *frames*, and the role of the brand as a *keying* to direct the interpretation of these frames, have been selected for analysis (see Table 1 for an overview of the data).

4.1. Dominant frames for co-creation

The dominant frames comprise *luxury*, *art*, *high life* and *self*, the characteristics of which are discussed below.

4.1.1. *Luxury*

This dominant frame draws on the cultural schema of luxury. Hence, the photographs depict a variety of objects and settings that are generally considered luxurious. An example of this frame was a still life including a bottle of Dom Pérignon champagne, a Louis Vuitton bag, and an invitation to the exhibition. What is more, despite luxury not being about the use-value of the products (Tynan et al., 2010), this frame depicted the impeccable craftsmanship and exquisite level of detail in the products. For instance, a typical scene in this frame displayed French craftswomen making LV's signature bags while showing some details on the workbench.

4.1.2. *Art*

Fashion has been referred to as wearable art (Venkatesh, Joy, Sherry, & Deschenes, 2010). Similarly, this frame reflects this parallel between art and luxury fashion either by showing scenes indexical to art galleries, or by representing the exhibition space and the objects in an art-like manner. The first type includes photographs that emphasized the resemblance between the space and an art gallery by showing the museum-like displays of products as well as the sculptures and other carefully designed elements in the exhibition space. The latter type consists of images that utilized a variety of photographic techniques such as composition and the application of filters to transform and distort the representation of the objects into an abstraction. As a result, the exhibition venue and its spatial design are focal objects in the

images, but the photographer also has an important, yet more contextual role as the subject using his or her situated creativity to assemble the image (Potts et al., 2008).

4.1.3. High life

This dominant frame depicts the sought-after lifestyle of people in the fashion industry – and the “aspirational producers” mimicking them (Marwick, 2015). In this vein, this frame includes representations of exclusivity, status, and opulence that relate to the meaning of luxury as a marker of social stratification (Kapferer, 2012). The images in this frame depict either the fashion world or a socialite lifestyle. For instance, photographs showed a blogger in an elegant fitting room, a stylish woman arriving at an exhibition in a private car, and a picture of a famous actor/model at a vernissage.

4.1.4. Self

One of the most common dominant frames on Instagram is the consumer ‘selfie’ (Kedzior, Allen, & Schroeder, 2016), which is “an image of oneself taken by oneself using a digital camera especially for posting on social networks” (Merriam-Webster, 2017). This frame has gained vast popularity, as shown by a recent study according to which 77% of respondents claimed to take selfies at least once a month (Diefenbach & Christoforakos, 2017). These snapshots can be taken through a mirror, by utilizing the selfie lens found on most smartphones, or with the assistance of a fellow patron. Nevertheless, while the technique may vary, the main focus of the photographs remains fixed on the self, coupled with digitally associated symbols, persons, material objects, and places (Schau & Gilly 2003). For instance, the consumer might express him- or herself either bodily through facial expressions and postures, or by using the exhibition space, and the objects and people within it, as stage and props for their creative identity play.

4.2. Brand as the keying of the frame

Brand value proposition keys the meaning of an image. Based on the

analysis of the data, we propose that the *brand keyings* of user-generated visual content can be presented in the form of a matrix with two dimensions: (1) the position of the brand within the image and (2) the extent of creative production (Fig. 2). First, the role of the brand can be either focal or contextual (Presi, Maehle, & Kleppe, 2016). The brand can appear as either a central element, an explicit logo or a recognizable design that dominates the composition, or implicitly through the staging of the image and other visual cues recognizable to individuals with a shared knowledge base (Berthon et al., 2009). The second dimension involves the degree of creativity in composing the image (Potts et al., 2008). This dimension determines whether the construction of the image enforces the value proposition by replicating operant and operant resources provided in the exhibition, or extends it by drawing on the consumer's own repository of physical, social, and cultural resources (Arnould et al., 2006).

Based on the matrix, a typology of four *brand keyings of replication, expansion, re-arrangement, and re-creation* is formulated. First, *replication* involves the consumer drawing on the company-provided resources in creating the image, and choosing a focal position for these. The extent of creative production is low and these pictures duly convey the brand meanings precisely as the brand intended. Second, the *expansion*-keyed images display the brand only contextually, and their meaning follows the intended brand identity. Third, *re-arrangement* resembles bricolage (Firat & Dholakia, 2006) as it involves improvisation and re-arrangement of resources that are available to consumers (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Consequently, the brand is depicted as a focal object with the consumer's own interpretation of it. Here, the brand meaning is altered or extended through the creative deployment of consumer resources. In other words, these images create a novel interpretation of the brand. Finally, in *re-creation*, the brand is present only contextually, and its meaning is extended through the creative efforts of consumers. In this respect, the consumers deploy operant resources in creative ways to stage an alternative presentation of themselves or the brand. For instance, photographic skills can be used to abstract the objects into a new representation of value. In this keying, the value proposition does not limit the process of UGC, and the consumer's improvisation and

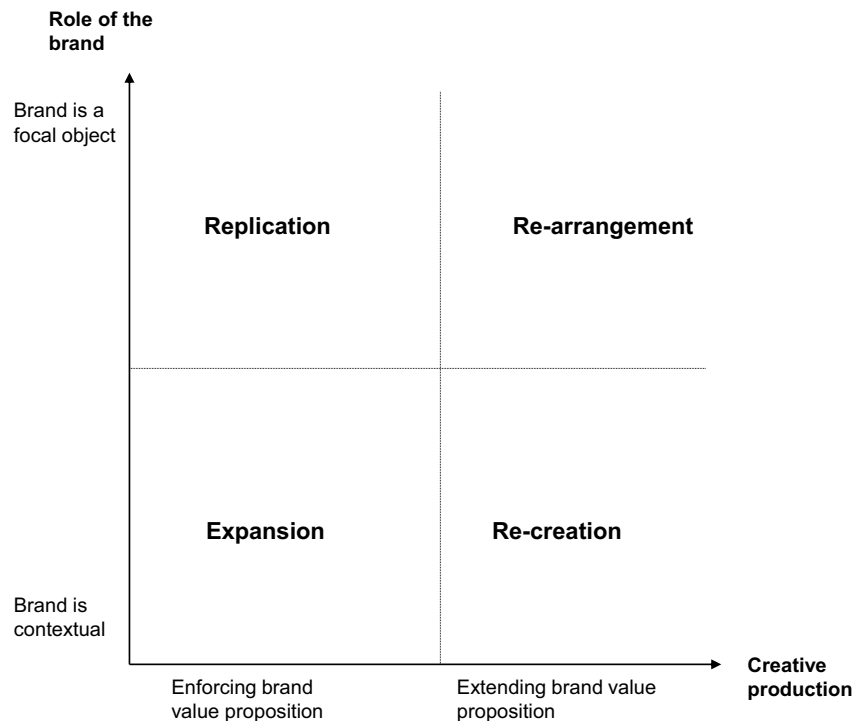


Fig. 2. Two-dimensional matrix of brand keyings. (Adapted from Presi et al., 2016; Potts et al., 2008.)

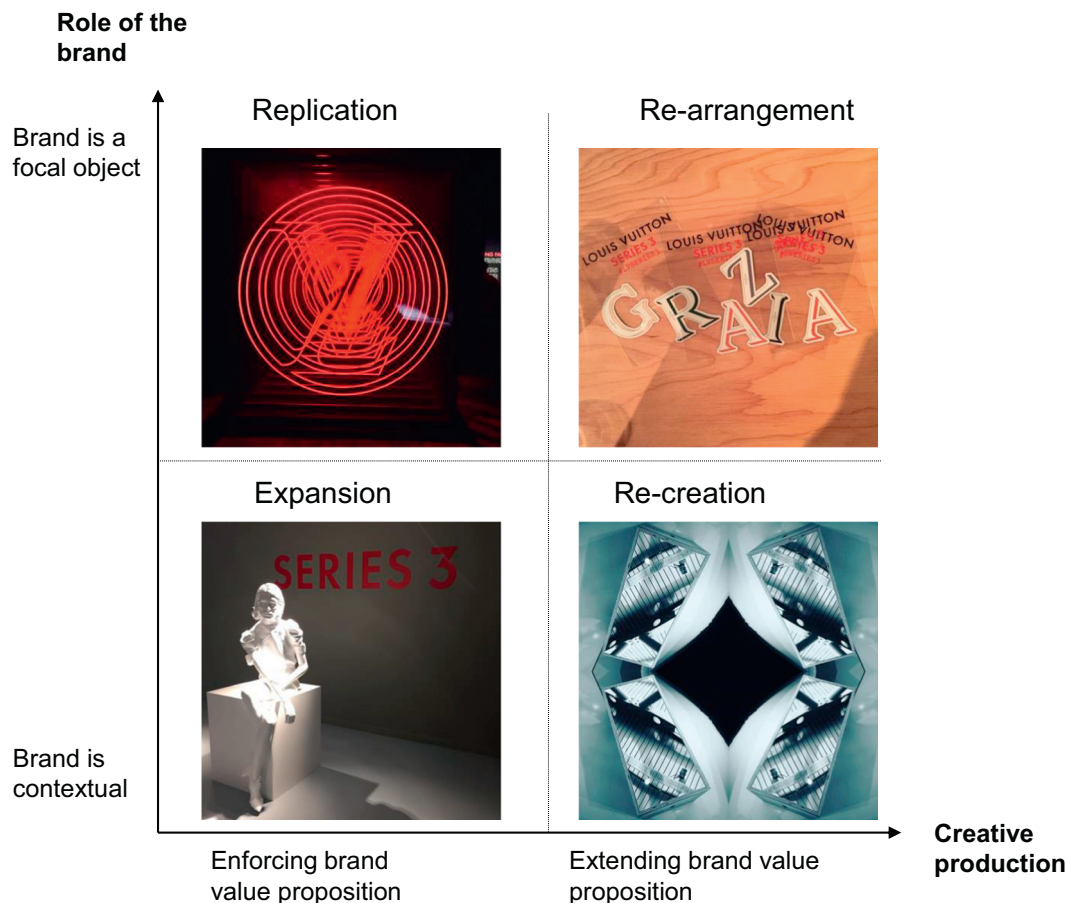


Fig. 3. Brand role matrix and illustration of brand keyings in the dominant frame of art.

contribution to imaginative resources result in imagery that departs from the original intent of the brand.

All four *keyings* were present in the data (see Fig. 3 for illustrations of *brand keyings* in the dominant frame of *Art*). Of these, the most common keying was replication, implying that these immersive experiences have a way of compelling consumers and encouraging the sharing of brand imagery.

First, *replication* involves photographs that are characterized by explicit logos and relatively tight cropping of the image, and which entail little to no editing. These photographs also demonstrate how the space and the brand can control value co-creation, as even in the frame of *Self*, people were posing in a very similar manner to each other, as if they were following a code. To this end, these photographs enable digital association with the brand (Schau & Gilly 2003), and the consumer extends their digital self with the brand (Belk, 2013).

Second, the *expansion*-keyed images are quite traditional museum photographs. For anyone that does not share the same knowledge base (Berthon et al., 2009), they may resemble photographs from any contemporary art gallery or museum. In this vein, the photographs taken by different individuals do look quite similar to each other as their creation was directed by the exhibition space and wide angle of the photography. Consequently, even those photographs in the frame of *Self* are quite impersonal as the focal person blends in with the exhibition and brand identity. Here, the consumer stages an alternative self-fashioning (Murray, 2015) through the methods of simulation and adaptation of posing styles from the catwalk, rendering the brand more prominent than their own identity.

Third, the frames keyed by *re-arrangement* include compositions with brand prominence such as still lifes of branded objects, or expressive poses with distinguishable elements from the exhibition. In this keying, the brand remains focal although its meaning is extended by its

creative representation, and by combining it with unexpected elements.

Finally, in the *re-creation keying*, we can observe how visitors deploy operant resources in creative ways to stage an alternative presentation of themselves or the brand. In the frame of *Art*, for instance, photographic skills are used to abstract the objects into a new representation of value. In this keying, the value proposition does not limit the process of UGC, and the consumer's improvisation and contribution to imaginative resources result in imagery that departs from the original intent of the brand.

4.3. Value depicted in the UGC

Two instances of value co-creation are present in the images. First, the photographs capture the value created within the co-created experience as performed (Lury, 2009). These values are reflected in the dominant frames and can be further keyed by the position of the brand within the photograph. Here, the consumer extends their digital self with the brand (Belk, 2013), and the keying determines whether the expressive value is based on digital association of the brand with self (Schau & Gilly 2003) or de-territorialization of the brand meaning (Presi et al., 2016). Second, the act of creating and sharing the picture adds a new spatio-temporal dimension to the experience, and in so doing creates value (Murray, 2015). This value can either derive from intrinsic enjoyment (Christodoulides et al., 2012), brand community participation (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), or impression management and self-branding (Belk, 2013; Rokka & Canniford, 2016).

These values are reflected in each of the dominant frames (see Table 2 for an overview of the themes, keyings and the values depicted in the UGC). For instance, the dominant frame of *self* reflects the symbolic/expressive value of the brand. However, the position of the brand determines whether the expressive value is based on digital

Table 2
Frames, keyings, and values depicted in UGC stemming from Louis Vuitton Series 3 brand exhibition.

	Replication	Re-arrangement	Expansion	Re-creation	Primary value depicted in experience (Tynan et al., 2010)
Description	Utilizing the provided resources within space in a manner intended by the brand. Brand is explicitly visible in the photo through logos or recognizable products.	Re-arranging the provided resources and amending them with additional elements or creative effort. Brand is explicitly visible in the photo through logos or recognizable products.	Utilizing the provided resources within space in a manner intended by the brand. Brand is not visible or it is present only implicitly.	Re-arranging the provided resources and amending them with additional elements or creative effort. Brand is not visible or it is present only implicitly.	
<i>Luxury</i>	Details of the branded products, or depicting the manufacturing process.	Branded products in locations outside the exhibition, collages of the exhibition, exhibition elements combined with other luxury objects.	Non-branded luxury objects portrayed within the context of exhibition venue.	Non-branded luxury objects.	Utilitarian value: High quality, details and craftsmanship displayed in products (Ko et al., 2017)
<i>Art</i>	Brand logos, exhibition elements with branded products depicting them as art	Creative depictions of branded exhibition elements with cropping and filters, combining the exhibition elements in new ways.	Untouched photos of exhibition spaces and elements without explicit logos or branded products.	Creative depictions of branded exhibition elements with cropping, perspectives and filters without explicit logos or branded products.	Experiential/hedonic: Aesthetic value of the experience and products (Joy & Sherry, 2003), Art infusion (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008)
<i>High life</i>	Celebrity photos in designated photo locations (i.e. logowall). Brand is explicitly visible.	Celebrity photos with brand explicitly visible.	Untouched photos of celebrities within the exhibition, no brand explicitly visible.	Edited or creatively staged photos of celebrities, opening party or famous lifestyle, no brand explicitly visible.	Cost/sacrifice: Exclusivity and rarity (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009)
<i>Self</i>	Photos of self that are taken in the designated selfie spots within the exhibition (i.e. white mannequins, photowall). Brand is explicitly visible.	Photos of self that are taken within the exhibition demonstrating creativity through unconventional posing, choice of location, or application of photographic techniques. Brand is explicitly visible.	Photos of self that are taken within the public exhibition venue. Brand is not explicitly visible.	Photos of self that are taken within the exhibition demonstrating creativity through unconventional posing, choice of location, or application of photographic techniques. Brand is not explicitly visible.	Relational: Brand relationship value (Payne et al., 2009), consumer brand relationship (Fournier, 1998)
					Symbolic expressive: Status (Kim et al., 2016), Conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1899)

association of the brand with self (Schau & Gilly 2003) or de-territorialization of the brand meaning (Presi et al., 2016).

5. Conclusions and implications

The findings of the study illustrate that experiential brand exhibitions enable value co-creation and stimulate UGC (Halliday, 2016). Specifically, these events act as platforms for experiential value co-creation, which is then reflected in the creative production of content.

This illustration has implications for both the theory and practice of social media marketing of luxury fashion.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The contribution of this study is three-fold. First, it contributes new insights to the literature on luxury fashion marketing in social media (Godeya et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012) by showing how branded events stimulate the creation of visual UGC (Halliday, 2016). In line with Klein et al. (2016), the study suggests that experiential marketing can encourage content creation by providing consumers with resources to creatively self-present and participate in brand communities. What is more, a typology of brand keyings, built on existing theories and supported by empirical evidence, suggests that the brand value proposition directs this creation of visual content.

Second, the extant studies on value co-creation in the luxury industry (Choi et al., 2016; Quach & Thaichon, 2017; Tynan et al., 2010) are appended with new insights into the dynamics of value co-creation in a new context. Consequently, the examination of consumer-generated images as reproductions of value co-creation encounters (Payne et al., 2009) offers insights into resource interaction and value re-materialization within a branded environment. Based on this, the researchers present a process of UGC co-creation, which illustrates the reciprocal relationship between brand experience and UGC, and the two instances of value co-creation.

Finally, the study contributes to the emergent stream of visual studies in luxury and fashion marketing (Freire, 2014; Kim et al., 2016; Megehee & Spake, 2012) by introducing a novel methodology of Visual Frame Analysis (Luhtakallio, 2013) and demonstrating its application. This method enables the examination of a wide array of visual materials, while supporting a systematic and sensitive reading of the meaning contained in the images.

5.2. Limitations of the study and further research

The current study is limited to just one luxury brand and its consumers. More research should therefore be conducted into a variety of luxury brands and consumer experiences in different contexts in order to better understand the contextual and situational factors related to value co-creation. Furthermore, while the visual method chosen for this study provided insights into the dynamics of UGC, a quantitative method would allow for the building and validation of a model of the co-created values, their antecedents and outcomes, as well as the factors that influence sharing.

Another limitation of the study involves the sources of data. Currently, only visual content posted on Instagram was analyzed due to practical reasons related to access and availability. Other types of social media could have been studied to gain a broader perspective of the phenomenon. Moreover, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the consumer reactions to the exhibition and their influence on the co-creation of user-generated visual content, gathering interview data from consumers in situ is suggested to shed light on the phenomenon of sharing visual content.

Finally, despite studying UGC as co-created, this study provided only a one-sided view of consumers, purposively neglecting the view of the brand. In this vein, complementing the consumer view with a more thorough consideration of the objectives of experiential marketing

could provide a more holistic overview of the phenomenon. Aligned with this, adopting a brand management perspective would allow for further understanding of the different strategies that are adopted by brands to cultivate brand communities and to inspire their value co-creation and content generation.

5.3. Managerial implications

In managerial terms, the topic is an important one since social media exerts a significant influence on the structure of the luxury fashion industry, customer segments, and practices of marketing and retail. Indeed, the decision for luxury brands is no longer whether they should be online or not, but rather how to do it right (Heine & Berghaus, 2014). For some, this broader approach has raised concerns about the control of the brand image as well as how to balance between increased exposure and exclusivity – how to remain exclusive while being available for the masses (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). However, since the “desirability of a luxury brand is correlated with the difference between brand awareness and brand penetration” (Kapferer, 2012, p. 459), it is also important to raise brand awareness among non-customers of the brand. Similarly, inviting all comers from loyal fans to curious non-customers to experience the brand in a branded event provides an opportunity to reach and seduce new customer segments and effectively stimulate consumer-to-consumer communications since new customers are more prone to sharing brand content as their networks are not yet saturated with information (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009).

In line with previous studies (Hajli et al., 2017; Klein et al., 2016; Godes & Mayzlin 2009), this study indicates that experiential marketing, in the form of branded events that combine art and digital technology (Choi et al., 2016), can be used to proactively manage and encourage UGC. To this end, brands can use experiential marketing to recruit and engage consumers as brand ambassadors. In this vein, with regard to the challenge of brand integrity in social media (Jin, 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), a strong brand identity and core values are key means of directing the production of UGC (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008) as consumers have a tendency to appropriate and mimic the styles and logics of marketing (Muñiz & Schau, 2011; Shao et al., 2015). Therefore, these experiential environments can provide an effective way of defining the nature of brand co-creation and consumer-to-consumer communications in line with brand governance objectives. However, consumers tend to be more involved with brands that enable them to express themselves (Christodoulides et al., 2012) and render their own interpretations of them (Shao et al., 2015). Following the theatre metaphor (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), consumers should be allowed to improvise their own play by using the branded environment and its elements as props. In practice, this concerns designing the exhibition displays in such a way that they enable rich self-presentation and creative production together with the brand. For instance, the photographs depicted a variety of alternative self-presentations from visitors. Here, the consumers are enabled to creatively compose a photograph and use it in their self-presentation practices, yet this co-created image still follows the communicative intent of the brand.

The case of the Series 3 exhibition provides important insights into the proximity of luxury fashion and art. Aligned with this, ‘art infusion’, the method of using art to create favorable evaluations of a brand (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008), has been shown to facilitate brand extensions and downplay the importance of qualities related to use-value (Kapferer, 2012).

By placing the products in a gallery-like space, they are positioned as pieces of contemporary art (Kapferer, 2012), associating them with meanings such as exclusivity and sophistication (Kim, Ko, & Lee, 2012). Similarly, LV has utilized art through collaborations with contemporary artists such as Takashi Murakami and Yayoi Kusama in its marketing communications, store designs, and fashion shows to enhance its brand image (Choi et al., 2016).

In order to evoke positive brand attitudes, luxury brand managers need insights into consumer behavior (Jin, 2012). For example, an understanding of the common “rules” and themes in UGC can help in developing better practices for its management (Muñiz & Schau, 2011). Consequently, images in social media provide a window for understanding issues pertaining to consumer behavior and branding (Kedzior et al., 2016; Megehee & Spake, 2012). Here, studying selfies is proposed as a method of understanding consumer-brand experiences and brand-image dynamics in the marketplace (Presi et al., 2016). In this way, by utilizing Visual Frame Analysis (Luhtakallio, 2013), managers can gain insights into the meanings their customers associate with the brand and how it is perceived by them. Moreover, as the theory of mutual knowledge posits, the “meaning ascribed to a given communication is a function of both the communication and the recipient’s knowledge base” (Berthon et al., 2009, p. 356). In this light, analyzing these images can shed light on the kind of mutually shared knowledge base that these meanings stem from. This information can then be used to increase the efficiency of targeted advertising, and to support value and advertising co-creation.

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