# Chapter 12
# Managing Integrated Brand Communication Strategies in the Online Era:
## New Marketing Frontiers for Luxury Goods

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## ABSTRACT

*Since the spread of digital environments has certainly helped to broaden the spectrum of possibilities for managing channels, while opening new areas of competitive confrontation, is to assume that new technologies have contributed to the definition of a hybrid environment in which pre- and post-digital-revolution habits coexist. The aim of the present chapter is to show how this kind of hybrid channels, want to meet the two requirements to communicate and sell - through the use of media platforms that appeal to each other, meet and complement each other – is nowadays managed and how it can be used in the future to reach business and awareness goals in luxury markets. The analysis has been based on ways through which global luxury goods firms integrate their communication and selling tools each other, by focusing the attention on web and social strategies.*

## INTRODUCTION

Spaces and environments are places of consumption, but they also provide communication opportunities to the final consumer who, in turn, uses consumption as a communication system that is expressed through a variety of languages (Mosca et al., 2013). The more layers there are in a society, which brings many different linguistic expressions, the more complex it is to analyze consumption dynamics. This is particularly true for luxury goods (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012) that are sold and communicated in markets that are difficult to define, but in which it is possible to find various layers of media attitudes.

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In fact, it is possible to say that the traditional consideration whereby businesses serve as the exclusive source of communication messages and brand-related content, designed to influence the behavior of consumers and create brand equity, is overtaken. This is due to the fact that marketing and communication strategies, together with the instruments and actors involved in their planning processes, need to take into account the evolution of technology**,** the transformation of consumer behavior and media attitudes**,** the fact that stakeholders constantly communicate each others and this kind of communication is difficult to manage by firms. The communication works in attracting people's interest toward a certain brand, but, at the same time, it works as shield for the corporate reputation and a springboard for spreading corporate values**.**

As a topic that is largely discussed in various areas of interest, it is important to underline that in the last 10 years, technological evolution has been leading mass media to a decline in their ability to attract people's (audiences') attention. Of course, this is due, above all, to changes in the attitudes of generation Y toward the media, together with the growing interest in new media content generated by people (mostly young individuals) – the so-called user-generated content (UGC), such as blogging, podcasting, online videos (eg: YouTube, Vimeo), and social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google Plus). So, even when we talk about luxury players, it is fundamental to understand that the Internet is now the real "backbone of the media system" (CENSIS, 2013).

In order to respond to the aforementioned trends, organizations are generally dealing with developing a communication plan that can integrate all those tools with which they intend to interface with their stakeholders (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn, 1993; Romano, 1988; Krugman et al., 1994; Collesei, 2002; Duncan & Mulhern, 2004; Aiello & Donvito, 2005; Collesei & Ravà, 2008; Belch & Belch, 1998, 2009). Moreover, in order to reach their target audience, the concept of integrated communication becomes inseparable from common value sharing with stakeholders; people are more worried about values and how responsible a given firm is. This is supposed to assume an attitude of protection toward the environment (geographical, economic, and social), upon which a firm should intend to develop its strategic action. Globalization, the fast development of communication technologies, the continuous research of information by people, and the economic and financial global crisis that started in 2008 represent some of the primary factors that have contributed to the increase in stakeholders' expectations and their awareness toward goods and services. Customers, above all, feel more involved in purchases; they pay attention to the product process, when they can, and they want to be notified about everything concerning the firm through which they are buying products. As a consequence, companies have to rethink their offers, as well as their social and environmental impacts, and build a new system of values that respond to the reference community and to society at large. According to the 2013 Consumer Trend Report (2), nowadays, products are being asked to give back a specific set of expected and shared values. Porter and Kramer refer to the fact that firms and stakeholders can co-create value (2011); they regard the sharing of values between the business community and the organization as the main key to holding a competitive advantage.

Turning to the changes made in technology, as well as taking into account the macro-environment factors considered above, we discover that stakeholders (from the luxury goods and players' perspectives) are willing to share values; they want to participate in the content generation of every firm's story. They aim to be a part of an exclusive group; this sentiment has been stronger in the last few years, especially since these individuals have lived in a period of crisis. This is increasingly felt as we talk about the digital age. It is the digital age that is pushing these aforementioned trends; for luxury products, their success can come only when two conditions are fulfilled: personalized identification and provision of a

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