DISCOURSES OF FASHION DIFFUSION AND NATIONAL FASHION IDENTITIES IN LUXURY FASHION FIRMS' WEBPAGE COMMUNICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The luxury fashion industry, originally founded on ancient Western traditions rich in symbolic, historic and social capital, has grown with globalization and societal advances to end up entangled in an identity crisis. It has reached a point in development where the conventional foundation stones and management rules no longer apply in their original version. Luxury fashion strategy is therefore currently challenged for several reasons: by increasingly complex diffusion patterns, network societies, extensive market expansion, technological developments and mass commercial interests, just to mention a few.

This study aims to make a contribution to luxury marketing's operational challenges by linking cultural theory of fashion to strategic brand communication online. The theoretical framework builds on conventional interpretative positions of fashion diffusion represented in three paradigms: the top-down, bottom-up and trickle across models. These models were developed during the early and mid 20th century by scholars within different fields of social science, and are still today considered the most recognized approaches to fashion theory. Furthermore, acknowledging the Western prevalence in the global luxury fashion sphere, theories of national fashion identities, shaped by the diffusion paradigms, add to the theoretical field. Among these identities, four cities are particularly prominent: Paris, London, Milan and New York. Both kinds of theory add important insights for communication as they stimulate buying motivation and consumer choices.

Twelve luxury fashion firms' webpage-based brand presentations are analyzed through discourse analysis and put in relation to fashion diffusion models, national identities and prevailing global industrial reality. The discursive analysis takes its stand in social constructivism and is a qualitative analysis consisting of three so-called "building tasks", essential building blocks for creating interpretations of reality expressed in language. These cover: 1) Semiotic Building (the role of text, image, color and layout), 2) World Building (the role of the diffusion paradigms and the international identities), and 3) Political Building (the role of status, power, gender etc.). In essence, these three blocks investigate the mediating role of the cultural theory in text and surrounding context, communicated in the brand messages.

The webpage media is the chosen object of study, as it constitutes a completely accessible resource where the brand is in charge of the communication without consumer influence or

commentaries. The Internet-based media further represents one of the main interruptions for business strategy, as it clearly puts the traditional "personal" approach to consumer communication, firmly tied to the luxury fashion shopping experience, at stake by communicating to the great mass.

There are two main findings regarding the strategic applicability of cultural theory on webpage communication to draw from the study. These have implications for the academic fields in question, as well as for the business environment at large. Firstly, elements of all three cultural paradigms of fashion diffusion are simultaneously applied and mixed in the brand presentations without causing conflict. The brands of the sample create their individual brand image by extracting elements from all models and mixing them into a cocktail where variables such as age, gender and status, are key characteristics. Secondly, among the distinguishing features, the national virtues play a crucial role for determining partly national, but more importantly global affiliation.

The main implication is that both the diffusion paradigms and the national identities are freely and creatively mixed and are not in competition at any level. This brings new knowledge to the study of luxury marketing and diffusion: the models and identities are not only applied for creating individual brand identities by adhering to specific consumer groups or luxury traditions. Rather, they are combined and contrasted for targeting the new industrial challenges by simultaneously communicating *across* consumer categories, national geography, and luxury categories by acquiring a new versatile strategic position shaped by the modern society. Consumers cannot be categorized, but belong to different combinations of the variables offered by the cultural theory. Furthermore, the emphasis put on global affiliation is still limited to Western attributes, which means that the industry, even though applying extended market strategies, still is firmly attached to the Western luxury fashion origin.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The luxury fashion industry today is a multi-billion dollar heavy artillery about to expand its established battlefield in the West to conquer the East and other emerging markets. Luxury firms are world-dominating companies in several fashion related business sectors. The company group LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) is the reigning world champion, whose achievements illustrate the entire industry. In 2011, the group accounted for 27.7 per cent of the total annual revenues of women's clothing stores and the luxury brand Louis Vuitton alone accounted for 69.3 per cent of the total revenue of luggage and leather goods stores. As a consequence, Louis Vuitton exceeded the total revenues of pharmacies and drug stores (Gale Business Insights: Essentials, 2012). As luxury fashion brands give an impression of being privileged a few selected individuals or groups of people (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), this comparison tells us something about LVMH's magnitude. Furthermore, the figures reveal some of the luxury industry's key characteristics; originally made up by independent family brands, the search for synergies has re-structured the industry to what it is today; more easily accessible and to a large extent concentrated to a few giant company groups, managing portfolios of former autonomist brands (e.g. Ijaouane & Kapferer, 2012; Thomas, 2007).

In addition to the consolidated nature that today forms the luxury fashion industry, other unique qualities make it truly interesting. The most prominent feature is that it, unlike other industries, is based on anthropological, sociological and historical dynamics. This genetic composition makes it somewhat old-fashioned, relying on customer relations and personal service, strongly tied to sociological and cultural patterns of consumption and behavior. By extension, the industry does not fit well into traditional mass marketing procedures (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009) and has an adverse relationship to the far-reaching Internet (Gastaldi, 2012; Kapferer, 2012; Okonkwo, 2010). Deeply rooted in Western culture, geographical spots of Western societies symbolize the entire industry and set the global agenda, as they have proven to be particularly favorable for production, partly because of their industrial history, but also thanks to their cultural heritage (Breward, 2010). Adding to the picture that most luxury fashion firms are about to expand their business to emerging markets such as China and the Middle East (Solca, Wing & Rosso, 2010a),

brings me to the conclusion that the contemporary business reality is permeated with strategic challenges and ambiguities.

I develop my conclusion drawing from business strategy. A business model defines a firm's business in terms of market segment, revenue generating mechanisms, value chain structure and competitive strategy (Chesbrough, 2006). Potential disruptions for business strategy are often results of technological developments or identification of new markets (Sako, 2012), which in turn is related to company performance. In the contemporary luxury business reality, processes of commercialization and democratization that started in the 1980s, risk tearing the original qualities of the industry to pieces through extensive company group consolidation, mass hyped luxury brands and products, low-priced accessories and large outlets (Thomas, 2007).

The technological development of the Internet allows for business advances such as online shopping, more sophisticated consumer targeting and a broader reach, even to not yet explored markets. On the other side of the picture, the Internet services risk undermining rarity and challenge the exclusive shopping experience in genuine luxury stores (Solca, Wing & Rosso, 2010b). New markets are already identified and may cause disruptions for business strategy. Counterfeit luxury activities is an impending issue in the Asian markets, as more than 80 per cent of the world supply of fake luxury products are manufactured within the continent, and its dissemination and reach are substantially facilitated by the Internet (Chevalier & Lu, 2011). Consequently, there are several strategic challenges for companies in order to employ new technology efficiently; *Technology alone will never lead to an improvement of an organization's performance.* (Jansen, Steenbakkers & Jägers, 2007, p. 5).

The traditional associations of luxury as something scarce and difficult to access (Kapferer, 2012) are challenged by the fact that the luxury industry increasingly moves towards extended markets and increased accessibility. An impending question is how the luxury fashion firms ended up in this situation. Did they, in a quest for larger profits, drive this development themselves? Or, is it a natural result of societal development and globalization processes? Here, sociological changes are as important as technological and economical ones. The technological breakthrough has developed new organizational structures, economical changes have tied individuals and organizations to networks, and sociological changes have brought identities that no longer build on class societies (Jansen et al., 2007).

The accomplished fact is that the old traditions of luxury fashion firms somehow must meet the contemporary, fast moving, IT-driven and increasingly demanding society. A study based on an Internet survey conducted in Finland in 2007, showed that online communication have positive impacts both on structure and advantage of company reputation (Aula, 2011). Uche Okonkwo (2010), contemporary business strategist specialized in the luxury industry, however points out luxury brands' somewhat reluctant embracement of the Internet in her book *Luxury Online: Styles, Systems, Strategies*. The contradicting forces of reluctant behavior towards the Internet versus vast latent possibilities of online communication, made me interested in investigating how luxury fashion brands make use of the Internet in order to communicate their brand images or reputation in order to create customer appeal and recognition, and do well in the "new" business environment.

For companies to succeed in this manner, communication theory suggests strategies of impression management. Through impression management, individuals or entities use tactics in order to present themselves and create favorable impressions on others in a social context. Most of the conventional definitions of impression management are geared towards self-presentation of individuals (DuBrin, 2011). Accordingly, former studies within the field have mostly covered individual levels of impression management, especially in work related areas of organizations such as résumés (Knouse, 1994), gender and promotion (Singh, Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2002) and CEO profiles (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011). Some definitions of impression management are however applicable for organizational influence on an audience. Bozeman and Kacmar (1997) refer to Rosenfeld, Giaclone and Riordan (1995) when defining impression management; *Impression Management of organizations consists of strategic communications designed to establish, maintain, or protect desired identities.* (p. 9).

As Aula (2011) points out online communications' positive effects on brand reputation, my interest lies in investigating the establishment, maintenance, and protection of desired brand identities in relation to luxury fashion firms' online communications in the present challenging business climate.

1.2 THE STUDY: Purpose and Research Question

The combination of zeitgeist and contemporary impending strategic challenges for luxury fashion firms, which has not yet been studied in relation to impression management in online promotion,

is the foundation for further investigation of these areas. Organizational reputation created online is to a large extent controlled and distributed by stakeholders engaging in different kinds and forums of online communication, rather than by the organization itself (Aula, 2011). In order to minimize the stakeholders' influence, I focus this study on luxury brands' webpages where the brands present information about themselves, and *to an extent* control the image produced.

Efficient branding aims to communicate across different levels of professional status, age, gender, social class, culture, and the like (Jansen et al., 2007). In the well-established luxury fashion world, I argue that key components for building the luxury dream while simultaneously triggering purchase are to be found in cultural models on how fashion is socially spread, and in consumer appeal of national fashion identities, as I aspire to link these cultural theories to business strategy. To my knowledge, this is a new approach to analyzing impression management online. Two camps make up the relationship: cultural theory claims consumers' assumed buying motivation and appeal, while the industry employ business strategy in order to succeed in the fashion commerce. How are these connected?

One the one hand, it is inescapable that the fashion industry's business strategy shapes the diffusion patterns and national identities through implementing gatekeepers and creating ideals exposed in mass media. Through these persuading or even coercing activities, the fashion industry is illustrated as a dictator of fashion trends (Crane, 1999; Okonkwo, 2010; Sproles, 1981). These industrial mechanisms will be further outlined in the industrial profile chapter.

On the other hand, the cultural models suggest ways in which fashion is socially spread and desired among the consumers, which are important guidelines for strategic communication. Many scholars argue that this force is stronger than the former; the fashion industry is simply incapable of managing consumers' preferences (Crane, 1999; Sproles, 1981; Polhemus; 1994). The most efficient way of reaching out to the public is by offering a broad variety of styles from which the consumers choose: *As an alternative to industrial leadership of trends, proponents point to consumers as the chief initiators and propagators of what will become fashionable.* (Sproles, 1981, p. 118). Fashion theory of diffusion proposes different perspectives of how consumers adopt trends from which the industry can draw when designing their strategies. These are attended to in Chapter IV.

Hence, my study focuses primarily on the latter perception: I propose that luxury fashion brands make use of the information hidden in the cultural models in order to strategically communicate

effectively. However, there is also a pinch of industrial leadership included in the management of impression, as the companies are assumed to act advantageously.

The thesis seeks to answer the question:

How do luxury fashion firms apply cultural models of fashion diffusion and national fashion identities when strategically communicating their brands on their websites?

From a business strategic perspective, this understanding is helpful for organizations in order to position themselves to achieve desired ends (DuBrin, 2011). The marketing guru Philip Kotler (2003) points out the strategic importance of promotion, which […] *consists of company messages designed to stimulate awareness of, interest in, and purchase of its various products and services.* (p. 18). Understanding how to use information wisely in the online context is crucial for building solid, long-lasting brand relationships (Aula, 2011; Kozinetz, 1999). When prudently applied, impression management is considered a strong competitive advantage for actors in a specific industry (DuBrin, 2011). In essence, impression management is not only an effective tool for marketing and promotion, but also decisive for company performance.

In the competition among luxury brands, brand image is a particularly important parameter. High price is one of the crucial characteristics of luxury items, and price-based competition is therefore unlikely to occur (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Applied impression management is the art of translating something, such as brand identity, into attributes that are appealing for the reader. In the case of this study, attributes of relevant cultural models will be extracted from online promotion and analyzed through discourse analysis. The specific framework behind the discourse analysis will be presented in the next following chapter on methodology.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THESIS STRUCTURE

In order to investigate how companies through promotion present themselves in advantageous ways in order to attract specific consumer groups, my study is built on three blocks covering the industrial environment, theories on fashion diffusion and national fashion identities, and an analysis of webpage messages designed and created by luxury fashion companies.

The first block relates to the industrial reality of luxury fashion firms. The industrial environment determines the rules of the game and frames the context. This part of the thesis aims at providing

an illustration of the industry's dynamics, development and performance on short and long term. Through applying economist Michael Porter's (2003) theory on competitive forces, all actors of the industry will be approached and explained as well as discussed in terms of power relations.

The second part accounts for how luxury companies perceive their consumers, which make up the target for impression and influence. In order to investigate the role of cultural models when studying strategic communication, the understanding of the audience is here built on the cultural models and ideas of fashion diffusion and national fashion identities, models that from multiple perspectives claim different consumer motivations and international appeal in a simplistic picture of reality. This approach should be distinguished from actual in-depth consumer studies: consumer motivation and appeal are in this academic context drawn from assumptions made in cultural models of fashion, developed over history and time, rather than from extensive analyses and studies of actual consumer behavior.

In the last block the luxury fashion companies are indirectly approached through analyzing twelve different brands' online self-presentations, which make up the empirical part of the thesis.

These three blocks make up the connecting thought throughout the study. Before examining them in further detail, a chapter on methodology outlines the research design and research method that develop the discursive approach of analysis. After surveying the three blocks, the empirical findings and conclusions are summarized and discussed in the very last chapter.

CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

This chapter seeks to clarify the philosophical frame within which my study is carried out, and describes the approach selected for studying how luxury fashion firms apply cultural models when strategically creating favorable impressions on their webpages.

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study is mainly explorative in the sense that the strategic use of cultural models in online communication is relatively unexplored. The specific way in which I design the study is to my knowledge also unexplored. The explorative elements are reflected in the study's aim of discovering business and management ideas and insights and, in order to succeed, considering multiple aspects of the phenomenon of luxury fashion firms' creation of favorable impression. To a certain extent, the study also includes elements of a descriptive design, as it in accordance with most social research covers description of characteristics of groups and narration of facts (Dhawan, 2010).

2.1.1 RESEARCH METHOD: Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is my method of studying how companies make use of impressions when communicating with their audience in appealing ways. Discourse analysis deals with what can be said and is a flexible approach that can be adapted in different ways depending on research question formulation and research object (pictures, music, speech, writing etc.). The analysis can be approached through qualitative or quantitative studies, and in combination with other research methods such as interviews or questionnaires. Flexibility is particularly important when studying medial research objects, such as webpages, as the material not always reveals what you expected it to reveal (Stokes, 2003). The exploratory design of my research therefore allows for changes in the research procedure along the way (Dhawan, 2010).

Discourse deals with the way in which individuals, or in this study companies, talk about and make sense of reality (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). In this sense-making process, Cook (2001) and Jäger (2001) emphasize the interaction between what is being expressed and its context.

The main motives to why impressions of luxury fashion firms are interesting to study in a discourse analysis setting are embedded in the anthropological, sociological and historical heritage of the industry. Textual and contextual analysis allows for studying issues of representation (Stokes, 2003), such as representations of themes of underlying phenomenon. How we talk about fashion is a result of the historical development and formation of identities and social relations (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999).

The analysis of this study aims to detect fashion discourses, which are interpretative positions built on cultural meanings that are reflected in the way people (or entities) talk about fashion. These discourses are shaped by the historical legacy of the sociological dialogue of fashion that has continued for centuries. There is hence no universal interpretation of fashion, but a multitude of different points of view (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). For example, the management rules of luxury fashion reflect the sociology of Western societies, expressed in attributes such as distinction, class differentiation and elite culture (Kapferer, 2012). These sociological themes can be traced to different models of how fashion is socially spread, developed by Western sociologists, anthropologists and economists in the early 20th century and forward (e.g. Simmel, 1904, 1957; Veblen, 1934, 1998; Polhemus, 1994). Making up the cultural theoretical input for the analysis, these paradigms will be explained in further detail in Chapter IV.

In the world of fashion interpretations, national virtues are salient features. A Western focus is today geographically and influentially visible on the global map of fashion, where Paris, London, New York and Milan are examples of well-known international fashion hubs (Breward, 2010). Their prominence is not only explained in what Porter (1990) denominates *national advantage* but, as Chapter IV outlines, is also reflected in the symbolic value of the different national fashion identities that characterize the fashion hubs (Gilbert, 2000). Hence, industrial characteristics as well as cultural and sociological processes have created symbolic value that is strongly tied to fashion discourse.

As discourse analysis is the process of, on various levels, describing and analyzing the interplay between what is being expressed and its context (Cook, 2001; Jäger, 2001), discourses rely on a context of time and place. The context of this study can be defined according to its industrial position, the contemporary luxury fashion industry. The contextual interaction is accounted for as the creation of impression can be interpreted as partly shaped by the industry and its social,

economic and technological developments (Jansen et al., 2007). The discourse analysis of webpages is therefore grounded in a preceding industrial analysis (Stokes, 2003).

The management and creation of impression can be related to *discursive psychology*, which describes how entities strategically use discourse in order to portray themselves and the reality in specific advantageous ways in social interaction, and what social consequences it entails (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). As with impression management and marketing purposes, tactics and strategy are underlying features. Discursive psychology […] *provides the theoretical framework necessary for investigating how interest, motive and stake are dealt with by actors in social settings.* (Whittle and Mueller, 2010, p. 429).

Interest is viewed as an external power situated outside the frames of discourse analysis. The analysis is hence, in accordance with my research question, delimited to *how* interests are dealt with, not what they are (Stokes, 2003; Whittle & Mueller, 2010). The fundamental assumption behind discursive psychology is that language is the key to accessing reality (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999) and a tool for managing and structuring interests (Whittle & Mueller, 2010).

In this study, webpages make up a real-world measure for investigating how impressions are designed. From a discursive perspective, individuals construct images of reality through language, which not only reflect reality, but also create it (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). This phenomenon is denominated reflexivity; […] *the sense of language and context being like two mirrors facing each other and constantly and endlessly reflecting their own images back and forth between each other* […] (Gee, 1999, p. 82). Important to note is however that the study not is limited to text, but also includes images, layout, and the like.

In essence, this study aims to through discourse analysis investigate *what* luxury fashion firms say about fashion. What are the recurring themes ? The study also seeks to answer *how* the companies create impressions. How do the companies portray themselves online in relation to fashion? How does the way fashion firms talk about fashion relate to their audience? How do they manage interests? Are there any common patterns among brands? How are the recurring themes connected to cultural theory?

2.1.2 EPISTEMOLOGY: Social Constructivism

Discourse analysis takes its stand in social constructivism. As already implied, discourse and societal reality are closely related in the sense that discourses structure and enable societal reality. Language plays a central role as mediator of knowledge from which individuals interpret and construct reality (Burr, 1995; Jäger, 2001).

In the assumed socially constructed universe, there is a conceptual difficulty embedded in the veracity of potential research outcomes. Social constructivist research does not deliver one solid truth. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that truth is based on understanding: […] *a sentence is true in a situation when our understanding of the sentence fits our understanding of the situation* (p. 486). Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips (1999) stress that discourse does not describe the world externally, but creates a reality that is *experienced* as true. These interpretations of reality are created and maintained through social interaction. Potter and Hepburn (2005) agree, arguing that discursive psychology does not provide a mirror image of reality, but an *interpretation* of the same.

The fundamental ideas behind social constructivism are strongly related to the creation of impression and theories on marketing, strategy and communication. Promotion is about creating and designing messages, experienced as true for the reader, in order to stimulate certain reactions from the audience (Kotler, 2003). The specific medium of online communications can be used for promotion and to influence stakeholders' assessments of company features such as public image (Aula, 2011). The mechanisms of impression management aim to reproduce parallel universes or create realities experienced as true. *Virtuality* is a salient theme. Luxury fashion management rules take advantage of these mechanisms through the creation of *virtual rarity* when building the "luxury dream". Through communication, luxury fashion firms have the capability of reaching far beyond its actual target. As a consequence, everyone knows about the brand, its products and its prices. And, most importantly, everyone knows this dream only is privileged a few (Kapferer, 2012). Hence, this type of rarity is in reality nothing but an artificial construct designed to create desire.

2.1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: Qualitative Analysis

Building on the aim of discourse analysis and social constructivism of providing an interpretation of reality (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999), this study is fundamentally interpretative. My research approach is hence of qualitative nature. A qualitative interpretative approach to research entails subjective assessment of attitudes and behavior

(Dhawan, 2010), and does not aim to be all-knowing (Stokes, 2003). The research is a function of the researcher's insights, judgment, and interpretations (Dhawan, 2010; Stokes, 2003).

The analysis of this study covers both context and text. Analyzing the interplay between the two, qualitative methods generally have higher significance than quantitative ones, since they allow for a richer explanation of social phenomena, while quantitative methods are useful for description of the same (Jäger, 2001). This study is further geared towards the instrumental dimension of qualitative research, as the aim of this study is to provide an understanding of how companies act, emphasizing its relevance for strategic business interests (Stokes, 2003).

When developing my framework of discourse analysis, I contemplated including elements of quantitative analysis in the form of word frequency registration. A preliminary analysis of the webpage material showed very few, generally two or three, repetitions per word, which I evaluated as too few in terms of validity. It was also a conceptual difficulty of assessing whether similar words could be considered as covering the same theme, and hence repeating the same "message". In essence, single word counting proved, even in combination with elements of qualitative analysis, to say little about the general message of what was being expressed.

2.2 RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

Having clarified the research design, this part explains what I have done, when and why. It illustrates the ideas I have developed in the process of designing and conducting my study. Even though explorative elements dominate my research design, the following account of my research path is divided into the foundation stones of descriptive research (Dhawan, 2010), in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the different steps.

2.2.1 OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

At first, I wanted to focus the analysis of luxury fashion firms entirely on diffusion patterns and its relation to online communication, as I am interested in how companies perceive their markets in the contemporary changing business environment. These diffusion patterns derive from the sociological models of fashion diffusion and reflect the traditional, deeply rooted old-fashioned characteristics of the industry. How do these characteristics apply in the society and business reality built on modern technology? After surveying concerning literature I formulated questions

such as: Do luxury fashion firms favor a specific diffusion model in their communications? What are determinant factors for the adoption of diffusion model?

As I started to formulate the research question in May 2012, I decided to conduct a preliminary study of the material in order to pre-test the data. Through gaining more knowledge about the texts, I wanted to test my hunches and hopefully develop analytical arguments.

The preliminary study showed that companies draw on and mix fragments from *all* diffusion models when promoting their brands. Contemporary fashion diffusion hence derives its nourishment from customs of ancient times, reflected in the different paradigms of fashion diffusion.

After discussing with my supervisor, I decided to link business related theory on strategy and communication with cultural theory on fashion diffusion. I wanted to look at *how* companies target the diffusion paradigms, how representations of different diffusion models are connected to strategic communication, and how companies draw from them in order to appeal to the audience. At this point, the ideas of impression management came into the picture. Impression management is not only an effective tool for marketing and promotion, but also decisive for company performance, which underlines its strategic importance.

2.2.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

So far, we have established that luxury fashion firms' impression management in online communication constitutes the object of analysis. In order to research this object, the primary source of this study consists of webpages of notorious luxury fashion brands. My choice landed on this source for several reasons.

Firstly, my focus was early on the Internet, as I from reviewing literature on luxury branding (e.g. Gastaldi, 2012; Kapferer, 2012; Okonkwo, 2010) learned that there are conceptual contradictions between the Internet and luxury, and that this issue formed an integral part of the strategic challenges and a disruption for applied business models.

Secondly, the webpage is the main tool for creating an emotional relationship with the audience, symbolizing an implicit contract between the brand and the potential buyers (Gastaldi, 2012). The webpage is the only fully accessible forum where companies present themselves without

being contaminated by voices from customers or other potential stakeholders. It is further a forum where the researcher's interpretation possibly could play out the firms' intentions. The specific intentions are not accounted for, as the underlying motives and interests do not form part of the analysis.

Thirdly, except from the corporate webpage, company presentations are most commonly accessible in annual reports. The ownership structure of the industry mainly made up by large company groups or conglomerates (e.g. Ijaouane & Kapferer, 2012; Thomas, 2007), made it difficult to access complete presentations of each brand through annual reports. The company group LVMH manages up to 60 different brands (LVMH, 2012), which means that not all brands are presented and accounted for in detail. The achievements of the company *group* are rather of primary focus. Furthermore, searching for company presentations in business information search engines (e.g. Business Insights: Essentials; Factiva) revealed complex company structure designs where for example one company group owns the clothing brand, while another manages the license of perfume and cosmetics. The brand could hence be featured in multiple annual reports.

In essence, the brand webpage reflects the brand entirely for what it is and what it stands for, regardless of ownership structure or stakeholder opinions. It is a space where the *company* controls the message, but the reader is in charge of interpretation. As the aim of the study is to provide an understanding of how companies create impressions, this is the most appropriate source of investigation.

2.2.3 SELECTING THE SAMPLE AND COLLECTING THE DATA

The next decision to take was to determine the size, content and features of the sample. The aim of detecting representations of fashion diffusion and national identity in online communicated messages set the criteria for selecting the webpage material. It was not only a matter of determining size, but also defining appropriateness in terms of usefulness for my specific study. For example, in order to illuminate the prevailing Western influence (Breward, 2010; Gilbert, 2000; Kapferer, 2012) and use of national virtues, I decided to limit the sample to include French, English, Italian and American brands. As a starting point for selecting the sample, I formulated a criteria based on different parameters of interest.

Parameters of Interest

- Brand within the luxury fashion categories defined by *Altagamma*, the trade association of the Italian luxury industry: womenswear, menswear, leather goods, shoes, watches and jewelry, and perfumes and cosmetics (Solca et al., 2010a), preferably focusing on one or more of the four first categories.
- Brand of French, English, Italian or American origin.
- Webpage available in English.
- Webpage providing company profile, company information, "About Us", or similar.

The search for webpages was guided by my own knowledge about luxury fashion brands, but also by looking at webpages from different fashion weeks (e.g. http://mbfashionweek.com), in order to see what brands that hold fashion shows in the seasonal events. This pragmatic approach of selection according to appropriateness is labeled deliberate sampling or judgment sampling, an approach often applied in qualitative, smaller, individual studies that, in accordance with my study, does not aim at generalizing conclusions and occupy a finite amount of time and money (Dhawan, 2010). *In this type of sampling, items for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher; his choice concerning the items remains supreme.* (Dhawan, 2010, p. 76). Consequently, I do not claim that these brands are representative for all luxury brands' online communications, but I argue that they are meaningful for this study. They are assembled because they illuminate the themes of this thesis, which makes them worthy of analysis.

Applying the operational criteria made me sift out many notorious brands, particularly of French origin, mostly because they did not provide any information about the brand or because they did not have webpages available in English.

In the end, my choice landed on a pragmatically selected sample of twelve luxury fashion brands that complied with the operational criteria. I decided that twelve brands was an appropriate size of the sample in terms of manageability and ability to balance between width and depth of analysis. The selected sample size allows for broad points in the analytical discussion.

During July and August I took a break from the thesis writing in order to work for two months. The complete sample was established in September 2012, after having replaced three brands from the first selection round in May that turned out to be deficient. The complete sample is summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Brand Sample According to National Origin

French Brands

Givenchy	**Lanvin**	**Nina Ricci**
Year of Establishment: 1955 Shareholder: Bernard Arnault & Family Turnover 2011 (th USD): 150,758 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear, Leather Goods, Shoes, Perfume	Year of Establishment: 1909 Shareholder: MME WANG SHAW-LAN Turnover 2010 (th USD): 239,376 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear, Leather Goods, Shoes, Perfume	Year of Establishment: 1932 Shareholder: Exea Empresarial SL Turnover 2010 (th USD): 39,248 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear, Leather Goods, Shoes, Perfume

British Brands

Aspinal of London	**Aquascutum**	**Stella McCartney**
Year of Establishment: 2004 Shareholder: Aspinal of London Group Limited Turnover 2011 (th USD): 6,764 Category: Leather Goods	Year of Establishment: 1851 Shareholder: YGM Trading Limited Turnover 2011 (th USD): 1,261 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear	Year of Establishment: 2001 Shareholder: Famille Pinault Turnover 2011 (th USD): 32,448 Categories: Womenswear, Leather Goods, Shoes, Perfume

Italian Brands

Salvatore Ferragamo	**Valentino**	**Versace**
Year of Establishment: 1927 Shareholder: Ferragamo Finanziaria SPA Turnover 2011 (th USD): 1,280 Categories: Leather Goods, Shoes, Watches and Jewelry, Perfume	Year of Establishment: 1959 Shareholder: Permira Holdings Limited Turnover 2008 (th USD): 3,039 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear, Leather Goods, Shoes, Perfume	Year of Establishment: 1978 Shareholder: Givi Holding SPA Turnover 2011 (th USD): 477,247 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear, Leather Goods, Shoes, Watches and Jewelry, Perfume

American Brands

Coach	**Proenza Schouler**	**Vera Wang**
Year of Establishment: 1941 Shareholder: Coach Inc. Turnover 2011 (th USD): 4,159 Categories: Womenswear, Menswear, Leather Goods, Shoes	Year of Establishment: 2002 Shareholder: Permira Holdings Limited Turnover 2011 (th USD): 3,100 Categories: Womenswear, Leather Goods, Shoes	Year of Establishment: 1990 Shareholder: Vera Wang Bridal House, LTD Turnover 2010 (th USD): 28,800 Caegories: Womenswear, Shoes, Perfume

Table 2.1. Sources: Aspinal of London, 2012; Aquascutum, 2012; Coach, 2012; Givenchy, 2012; Lanvin, 2012; Nina Ricci, 2012; Orbis, 2012; Proenza Schouler, 2012; Salvatore Ferragamo, 2012; Stella McCartney, 2012; Valentino, 2012; Vera Wang, 2012; Versace 2012a.

Most of the data is collected from the webpages in May (200512-220512) and was followed up on in September (060912-190912) when I collected the "screenshots", or webpage images, of analysis. All brands appeared to have unchanged content in their websites, except Vera Wang, which had the same text but had changed the color and layout substantially. As I collected image material for the analysis I was bounded to go for the new design. As already mentioned, three brands of the initial sample (Ralph Lauren, Asprey and Fendi) were replaced in September (110912-190912) by Proenza Schouler, Stella McCartney and Valentino, as these brands represented better material in terms of manageability and overall contribution to the study.

2.2.4 PROCESSING AND ANALYZING THE DATA

Having established and motivated my sample of investigation, I will now continue to my method for extracting and analyzing representations of the fashion diffusion paradigms and national virtues in online communicated messages. My chosen method is inspired by Gee (1999) who suggests that every act of speech or writing simultaneously build areas, so-called *building tasks*, of what people experience or interpret as reality.

This kind of "reality-building" is the foundation stone of two-way communication between business and customer (B2C communication). The business designs and sends a message through a selected channel of communication, in this case the webpage, directed towards the customer (Ellwood, 2002). The structure of the communication channel determines the conditions of the transmission and the extent of the effects. Mass medial communication is most effective for spreading information and creating awareness about products, whereas interpersonal communication is to prefer for individual persuasion (Rogers, 2003). The Internet provides an interesting fusion between both types of communication. The webpage medium however, has an intrinsic characteristic that naturally makes the message less controllable by the business, as it is up to the customer to interpret the meaning of the message.

There are in total six different building tasks for creating interpretations. However, my analysis focuses on the three of them that are most applicable on my specific research problem and which can be adapted to my purposes. In terms of the validity of the study, it is crucial to cover more than just one of these building tasks (Gee, 1999). Before presenting the three building tasks into detail, there are some concepts that need to be explained, defined and related to other theory.

Gee (1999) points out the role that *cultural models* play in building interpretations of reality, as they mediate between the different building tasks. These models reflect thoughts about what is typical or normal, and are based on social class or socio-cultural memberships, which means that they, just like discourses, change with time, through changes in society and influence from social groups and media. In business communication terms, this is what Ellwood (2002) refers to as consumer culture; *The modern consumer culture of westernized countries forms a filter to many of our daily activities and communication.* (p. 67). Cultural models are, like most theories, simplifications of the world and therefore leave out many complexities. Given their social origin and influence, the models can incorporate a myriad of diverse and contradicting social and cultural values,

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conflicting messages and values deriving from a certain group of people. *Cultural models, though they are theories (explanations), need not be complete, fully formed, or consistent.* (Gee, 1999, p. 70).

Among the strategic possibilities offered by the Internet, sophisticated consumer targeting is pointed out as particularly vital for luxury fashion firms (Kozinetz, 1999; Kotler, 2003; Solca et al., 2010b). According to New Oxford American Dictionary (2013), sophisticated means *having, revealing, or proceeding from a great deal of worldly experience and knowledge of fashion and culture* and *appealing to people with such knowledge.* Hence, drawing from cultural models of fashion diffusion in order to appeal to people is one of the key mechanisms behind effective luxury webpage messages.

The cultural models I will apply in my inquiry are, as implied, the three most prominent sociological models of fashion diffusion: the top-down, bottom-up and trickle across model. The fashion diffusion process can be defined as […] *the collective movement of styles through a social system.* (Forsythe, Butler & Kim, 1991, p. 8). It is the social act of communicating and spreading fashion in the form of information and influence. The three paradigms of fashion diffusion can be pointed out for, to a certain extent, understanding the diffusion process, which goes in line with the definition of cultural models; they are *simplifications*. It is important to keep in mind that these sociological models originate from different time periods, where societal structure clearly influenced the description of, and determining factors for, dissemination. However, one of the main characteristics of cultural models is that they change with time and societal development (Gee, 1999), which indicates their continual presence and influence. In Chapter IV, the three diffusion models will be explained in detail and operationalized in order to point out what they represent in a contemporary context, how they are related to consumer culture, and how they differ.

The direction of diffusion varies between the three models; vertically top-down on the social ladder, vertically bottom-up age wise, or horizontally across all status levels and subcultures. The power-relations shift between suppliers and buyers. Crucial determinants for each model are hence what Gee (1999) denominates social goods; […] *anything that a group of people believes to be a source of power, status or worth* […] (p. 2), such as control, possessions, looks, age, knowledge, morality, gender, race or class, just to mention a few. In communication research, these are treated as meta-topics of consumer culture, and are vital as they convey associative meanings beyond the text. Meaning derives both from verbal symbols and words, and non-verbal symbols

and images, often referred to as semiotics. Difficulties arise if the meanings associated with word and images in the message do not match the intended ones (Ellwood, 2002).

The safest and easiest way to deliver a consistent message, in line with assumed consumer expectations, is to know the consumer culture of shared meanings and social identity from which the audience draws when determining value and meaning (Ellwood, 2002). The cultural models suggest such underlying ideas.

The last concept important to clarify before presenting the framework of analysis is *situated meaning*, which refers to the fact that words, acts or concepts have different meanings depending on the specific context in which they are enacted. They can be attached to time, place, or artifacts (Gee, 1999). Cultural models are mediators that connect and integrate different situated meanings (Ellwood, 2002; Gee, 1999).

Situated meaning can in other words relate to context in several ways. Situated meanings bound to place and time will be specifically illuminated in Chapter IV, where I present and discuss the symbolic value of different international fashion hubs, which in a process of globalization and industrial development have come to represent different sources of international appeal and meaning attached to fashion. Polhemus (2005) argues that these meanings are inescapable: *Place continues to convey meaning and such meanings – however clichéd, stereotyped, fanciful and unsubstained – continue to motivate us, influencing our consumer choices* […] (p.85).

The analytic framework for detecting representations of cultural models of fashion diffusion and situated meanings, such as national symbolic value, in messages builds on the three building tasks *Semiotic Building*, *World Building*, and *Political Building*. For each building task I have developed questions similar to those suggested by Gee (1999), however adapted to fit my purposes. These questions guide the analysis of the messages communicated by luxury fashion brands on their webpages. The analytical framework is summarized in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Questions to Ask According to Building Tasks
Semiotic Building
• What signs and systems (e.g. text, images, color, layout) are relevant in the situation and why?
World Building
• What are the situated meanings of some of the words and phrases that seem important in the situation? (E.g. what situated meanings do national references have?)
• What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, artifacts and institutions relevant to this situation?
• What cultural models seem to be at play in connecting and integrating these situated meanings to each other?
Political Building
• What social goods (e.g. status, power, aspects of gender, race and class) are relevant in the situation?
• How are these social goods connected to cultural models?
• Is it possible to locate competing or conflicting cultural models?

Figure 2.2. Source: Own elaboration, inspired by Gee (1999).

2.2.5 REPORTING THE FINDINGS

The data is analyzed and discussed in relation to each building task of each brand in Chapter V, which aims at revealing the relevance and representation of the three overarching cultural paradigms. The analytic procedure of the brands' webpages is structured according to national origin, beginning with the French brands, followed by British, Italian and American brands.

The findings from the discourse analysis in Chapter V are further discussed in Chapter VI in relation to business strategy and industrial reality. The discussion aims to contribute to the bigger picture and understanding of how luxury fashion companies draw from cultural models of fashion diffusion and national fashion identities when strategically presenting themselves in advantageous ways on their webpages.

2.3 CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Before continuing to the critical assessment I would like to point out that discursive analyses not should be considered subjective or interpreted solely as the researcher's opinion. The data must be analyzed somehow, and the way in which the researcher chooses to interpret it makes the analysis meaningful for certain purposes, and for others not (Gee, 1999). *A discursive analysis argues that certain data support a given theme or point* […] (Gee, 1999, p. 96). Therefore, I have made my best in applying a research design and method that fits my purposes and allows for making arguments. Assessing qualitative studies requires a point of view where openness and clearness are emphasized in order to allow the reader to individually evaluate the study.

Language is an important aspect for this study as it analyzes communication where American, British, French and Italian brands constitute the sample of investigation. As English is the language of focus, neither I, nor some brands of the sample, operate in our mother tongues. One can however justify English arguing that it is a globally official language, while French and Italian are smaller in extent.

The level of knowledge in English limits the completeness of the study, as our intentions versus interpretations are limited by the discourses we know of. What can be said is limited to the access of discourse, which may vary over time and among cultures. The way individuals interpret reality today may for example be more nuanced in relation to how individuals viewed reality hundreds of years ago (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). Furthermore, not all cultures understand a situation in the same way, making cross-cultural differences crucial in comprehending experiences via language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

However, it would not have been sufficient resources and time within the scope of this thesis for applying the original languages for all brands. In either case, cross-cultural differences are difficult to account for. Due to the limited market of luxury fashion production and consumption, mainly concentrated to the United States, Japan and Western Europe (Solca et al., 2010a), one can assume that the communication is targeted mainly to the Western world, which on some level have shared values. Without entering more deeply into the cultural discussion, I acknowledge that it is impossible to account for regional cultural differences in interpretation and understanding that may exist *between* countries or regions within the Western society. Therefore, I argue that English is the best possible way to approach fairness, yet accounting for cultural diversity by

including brands of different nationalities. As for the time aspect, discourses evolve and adjust with time (Gee, 1999), which is the reason to why for example fashion discourses originating a hundred years ago are "alive" even today, yet in a developed version.

There are limitations of what communication in text, images and the like can reveal about the mechanisms behind fashion firms' communication. My study aims to reveal as much as can be interpreted from applying the cultural models of fashion diffusion. These models are the theory that structures my thinking about the research object, even though they do not provide the complete picture, since they are socially constructed simplifications of the world. However, the study does provide insights about communication in relation to these specific theories. These insights can further be applied to related data, in order to widen the perspective. Single projects of discourse analysis do not cover the entire picture, but are valuable since they provide reliable knowledge on certain discursive areas (Jäger, 2001). Knowledge can hence be valid both for its own sake, and for what it can contribute to practical concerns (Dhawan, 2010).

One of the epistemological consequences of a social constructivism framework is the dilemma of defining truth. Burr (1995) emphasizes *reflexivity* as an important feature of quality evaluation, arguing that the epistemology recognizes everything as socially constructed, including itself as a body of theory and knowledge. *A discourse analysis cannot therefore be taken to reveal a 'truth' lying within a text, and must acknowledge its own research findings as open to other, potentially equally valid, readings.* (p. 180). However, as long as the researcher is aware of the pitfalls, discourse analysis is not less suited for social research than any other method (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999), and discourse analyses as well as other types of studies are all open to further discussion and question (Gee, 1999).

CHAPTER III

INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT:
LUXURY FASHION

The environment sets the context of the webpage communication and provides the backdrop for the empirical analysis. This chapter seeks to outline the environmental conditions of the global luxury fashion industry. Defining the relevant industry is crucial for company strategy, as a clear definition can reveal business opportunities and help both managers and investors to assess the industry and its structural behavior, on both short- and long term (Porter, 2008).

3.1 SHORT TERM PERSPECTIVE: INDUSTRY ATTRACTIVENESS

Luxury has a global demand of more than €150 billion per year and is considered an attractive industry due to its bright future resting upon growth possibilities through mega-brand domination, emerging market potential and propitious socio-demographic factors such as ageing population, increased incomes and a larger proportion of working women, in developed as well as emerging markets (Solca et al., 2010a). The industry attractiveness is further reflected in acquisitions and advances of luxury brands in Asia and the Middle East during 2011, where Brazil, India, Russia and China provide great opportunities (Kapferer, 2012). In essence, these aspects all build upon estimated future growth in gross domestic product (GDP), which means that the luxury industry is cyclical (Solca et al., 2010a).

3.2 LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE: COMPETITIVE FORCES ANALYSIS

Having established the short-term attractiveness of the industry, we will now apply a wider lens. According to Porter (2008), determining whether an industry is attractive or not, is not as important as understanding the underlying determining factors of competition and profitability on the *longer term*, which can be revealed through analyzing the *five competitive forces*: 1) the threat of new entrants, 2) the threat of substitute products or services, 3) the bargaining power of suppliers, 4) the bargaining power of buyers, and 5) the rivalry among the existing competitors. The analysis also includes an introduction of the different industrial players.

3.2.1 NEW ENTRANTS

Potential entrants to the industry are new performers in the environment. They can be young fashion designing firms, in the sense that many traditional luxury fashion firms have a long history within the industry. New entrants may also be designers working for a specific luxury fashion house, but who decides to leave the firm in order to start an own fashion brand.

When assessing *the threat of new entrants*, the barriers to entry the industry, or the advantage that long-established firms have in relation to new entrants, are crucial. In many production industries, long-established firms benefit from supply-side economies of scale, which reduces the cost per unit through the production of larger volumes (Porter, 2008). This is not applicable on the luxury fashion industry, as the inherent difficulty of access and scarcity speaks against mass production. Furthermore, maintaining high average prices is one of the foundation stones of the luxury business model (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Supply-side economies of scale are therefore not considered a barrier to entry, but opens up for rather small, upcoming fashion firms to compete with incumbents.

Demand-side benefits of scale increases the value of a good as more and more people buy or use the product. This consequence is only one of several possible effects in the luxury fashion industry. American economist Harvey Leibenstein (1950) suggests three possible outcomes of different consumer behavior. In *the bandwagon effect*, a buyer's willingness to pay for a specific brand's product is likely to increase with brand recognition among the public; fashion consumers buy items partly because others do (Leibenstein, 1950; Morgenstern, 1948). The industrial mechanism of opinion leadership builds on this effect, as it aims at increasing demand through the exposure of celebrities or other powerful role models in relation to the brand (Kawamura, 2004). To dress people for the red carpet is not only the most effective, but also the cheapest way for luxury brands in terms of advertisement (Thomas, 2007), promotion (Kotler, 2003) and reputation (DuBrin, 2011). Important to note is that this effect only produce demand economies of scale as long as the willingness to buy increases with public recognition. However, the effect may also work in the opposite direction; the willingness to buy decreases with public reluctance to buy. To run with the stream is hence the rationale behind the conduct. In *the snob effect*, consumers' willingness to buy decreases as a style is widely adopted among the public. Rather than adhering to the mass, this kind of consumer values to be different through possessing exclusive or rare items, which by extension motivates brands to offer a limited supply (Leibenstein, 1950; Robinson, 1961). Lastly, *the Veblen effect* of conspicuous consumption suggests

that individuals buy expensive items in order to display their economic wealth, which motivates high prices (Leibenstein, 1950). Depending on the expected outcome, there are hence several demand effects for new entrants to make use of, even though long-established firms should have a lead in terms of the bandwagon effect's positive influence on demand. Furthermore, one effect does not exclude the other; the real market effect may consist of one or a mixture of several effects (Leibenstein, 1950).

Long-established firms possess further advantages, independent of size, in the form of cost and quality (Porter, 2008). These luxury firms usually build their expertise upon old traditions, high quality, long experience and craftsmanship, advantages that are impossible for new entrants to reproduce on short term. Kapferer (2012) however notes that craftsmanship is about to loose its pervasive force, as art is becoming an important reference for luxury fashion brands. Here, designers with strong personalities and avant-garde influences appeal only to a selected elite of followers, marking its exclusivity. Further advantages of new entrants are new thinking abilities, such as openness to technological developments and an innovative approach to new materials (Porter, 2008). In the luxury fashion industry, new materials, such as exclusive fake fur, are possible innovations that may gain a new type of customers that incumbents have difficulties to reach.

The threat of new entrants from emerging markets is expected to be modest. Asian consumers in general and Chinese consumers in particular tend to adhere strongly to leading, well-known Western brands, as these brands traditionally symbolize success and social standing (Chevalier & Lu, 2011; Kapferer, 2012).

3.2.2 SUBSTITUTE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

The *substitutes* for luxury goods can be defined from various perspectives. According to Porter (2008), *A substitute performs the same or similar function as an industry's product by a different means*. (p. 84). Solca et al. (2010a) argue that only luxury goods together with art, music, movies, etc., can provide the "deeper meaning" associated with this type of goods. Here, also other luxury categories, such as cruise lines and hotels, are possible substitutes. From another perspective, industrial fashion items can be considered substitutes in terms of covering the basic Maslow needs, such as utilitarian aspects, even though they can never compete on the higher levels of the pyramid. Hence, there are two camps; substitute products or services versus substitute feelings or experiences.

Also *the threat of substitutes* can be discussed from multiple perspectives. In terms of substitutes as products, the rise of China can pose a threat since the country is one of the largest contributors to counterfeit luxury industry, which impose challenges for international firms in terms of legal actions and expenditures for protecting brand image (Chevalier & Lu, 2011).

Industrial fashion firms or mass-fashion brands inspired by luxury fashion houses are also potential providers of cheaper, more easily accessed items that are very similar to the original designs. Raising the price level just a bit, affordable luxuries are in turn substitutes for more expensive luxury goods, as they even though they are cheaper, still have the ability to create a sense of luxury. Kapferer (2012) names this phenomenon the lipstick effect, as buying a lipstick from a prestigious brand is an illustrative example of this mechanism. The question whether these products convey the same "deeper meaning" as the true originals or not, remains untouched.

When talking about substitutes, it is also important to mention the effect of complementary products and services. *Complements are products or services used together with an industry's product. Complements arise when the customer benefit of two products combined is greater than the sum of each product's value in isolation* (Porter, 2008, p. 86). The luxury industry can for example benefit from Western youth trends, which increasingly entails mixing and matching luxury accessories with casual, less expensive, clothing (Crane, 1999; Kapferer, 2012).

New, substitutive service facilities can pose a threat to the traditional business pattern. In the report *European General Retail & Luxury Goods: Online – Opportunity or Threat?*, Solca, Wing and Rosso (2010b) discuss potential effects of the Internet on luxury fashion. The Internet technology has made online shopping possible, which is a substitute to visiting a store with individual service from a salesperson. The online market for luxury companies in the EU and the US is however still relatively limited compared with mass-fashion brands, due to the inherent characteristics of luxury goods where the personal shopping experience plays a crucial role. Even though, the threat is considered impending as the number of luxury online stores is escalating rapidly, a tendency that may be explained by new favorable EU legislation and an increased market maturity that opens up for benchmarking (Solca et al., 2010b). At the same time, many luxury brands apply strategies of store-expansion as they enter new markets (Kapferer, 2012). In summary, online stores could therefore be viewed both as complements and substitutes to real stores.

Furthermore, online communication has introduced new tools for broadening brand appeal through social media, particularly for mega-brands. The Internet may here be used for more sophisticated consumer targeting (Kozinetz, 1999; Kotler, 2003; Solca et al., 2010b). Regarding advertising, luxury brands still adhere to advertising in print (Solca et al., 2010b), even though promotion, which is the subject of investigation of this study, is deeply rooted in the online communication (Kapferer, 2012; Kotler, 2003).

The real impacts of the Internet are still difficult to establish, as the process is in its infancy (Solca et al., 2010b). On the one hand, the Internet has brought substitutes for conducting business within the industry, which, if not quickly enough embraced, can pose a threat to the traditional ways of doing business, since new technology clearly enhances efficiency. On the other hand, the rise of new technology undermines personal service, which is one of the foundation stones for luxury. Therefore, personal service may be even more desirable and exclusive in relation to Internet-based services in the future.

3.2.3 SUPPLIERS

The *suppliers* of the luxury fashion industry are the firms that produce, market and sell the different products.

The bargaining power of suppliers is maybe the strongest of all forces of the luxury fashion industry, as the suppliers' ability to preserve traditional luxury versus modernize the industrial structure is of importance for all other forces. Modernization can be significant for coping with the globalization and new consumer demands, while adhering to the traditional traits makes luxury items even more exclusive and desirable. The bargaining power of the luxury fashion firms is enforced by the fact that there are few substitutes in terms of products and services, as discussed in the previous paragraph.

The general business model of luxury fashion firms consists of a number of steps that in several ways differ to strategies of other businesses. These are for example: to not delocalize production, to not advertise in order to sell, to communicate also to non-targets, to maintain full control of the value chain and distribution, and to not issue licenses (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

After years of reformation, the luxury industry today favors measurements that speak against the traditional mode of procedure for creating profitability and resilience within the industry. For

example, the current industry tendencies point towards favoring *licensing agreements*, a movement that has continued for decades and that has shaped the industry substantially as items have become more easily accessible (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Product licensing, or brand extension, is about extending the range of products by applying the brand on related products and license the production to another company. The main rationales for licensing of products are to increase incomes, communicate the brand values, enlarge the consumer base, and enforce the process of branding (Tungate, 2005). Brand extension can in relation to bargaining power be interpreted as product differentiation. Diversification is a means of minimizing risk and maximizing return while gaining power.

Brand extension is a result of processes of *democratization* that have restructured the luxury industry since the 1980s (Thomas, 2007). During this period, some of today's largest company groups were established. LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) is the global leader with a total revenue of €23.7 billion in 2011, generated from its wide brand portfolio in different luxury categories (LVMH, 2012). In a multiple case study of the luxury conglomerates LVMH, PPR and Richemont-Cartier, Ijaouane and Kapferer (2012) explored value creation in luxury groups. Synergies are limited by the autonomy of the brands, as brand identity and symbolic capital are important features to preserve. Company groups can however benefit from cross-business growth synergies such as know-how transfer, which can facilitate entrance of new markets, trend forecasting, and access to scarce resources (Ijaouane & Kapferer, 2012). In essence, the consolidated power concentrates large profits and power to a few actors. This is an impediment for new entrants and also affects rivalry (Porter, 2008), which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

3.2.4 BUYERS

The *buyers* can be divided into two categories. End-buyers are the buying customers, while intermediate customers are the retailers, who buy from the fashion firms and have the power to exert an influence on the end-customers. This discussion and study focuses primarily on the end-buyers, which is the main target for firms in their webpage communications.

The bargaining power of buyers, especially end-buyers, has increased during the last decades and is today strong with potential to increase even more (Crane, 1999; Polhemus, 1994). Powerful customers are, according to Porter (2008) not desirable for industry performance as higher demands in terms of quality or service drive up costs. Consumers can put more pressure on the

firms today, as the Internet has brought social forums where they can make their voices heard and easily communicate with other consumers, a possibility that did not exist before. The technological development has therefore made consumers more powerful in relation to marketers (Kozinetz, 1999). In the specific context of luxury however, it is part of the business idea to maintain the consumer influence modest and clearly mark out the brands' sovereignty (Kapferer, 2012).

Crane (1999) and Polhemus (1994) point out that fashion firms today offer a variation of trends, rather than dictate fashions. It is then up to the consumer to choose what trends to adopt and how to feature them. The consumer is hence an increasingly important *diffusion agent*. The same may be applied on the intermediate buyers, as they as stylists and promoters choose what styles to emphasize. The American sociologist Herbert Blumer (1969) early observed the phenomenon of selection in all stages of fashion dissemination, which resulted in his theory on collective selection. Here, he seeks to explain why similar ideas and appeal, so-called collective tastes, are developed among many people. The process of collective selection is not only visible on the consumer level, but also among purchasers, fashion magazines and designers, which develop similar preferences by sharing the same sources of inspiration offered by the fashion world.

Entering new, emerging markets will consolidate the consumers' bargaining power. The present geographic scope is in the process of becoming extended to include non-Western markets such as Brazil (LVMH, 2012; PRADA Group, 2012), China, and the Middle East (Solca et al., 2010a), where the demand may differ both between the new markets, but also in relation to the Western demand. The market potential can be illustrated in the figures of the PPR Group's luxury division, which generated 38 per cent of total revenues in 2011 in emerging markets (PPR, 2012). The exact effect is however difficult to establish. As already mentioned, Chinese and Asian consumers prefer leading Western brands (Chevalier & Lu, 2011; Kapferer, 2012), which points towards increased, rather than differentiated demand.

Differences in demand however do exist to some extent today. Solca et al. (2010a) divide the leading luxury fashion brands into three different price ranges: accessible luxury brands (e.g. Burberry, Coach, Ralph Lauren), aspirational luxury brands (e.g. Gucci, Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo) and elitist luxury brands (e.g. Hermés, Chanel). Applying the different brand categories on global consumption, their investigation shows that accessible brands dominate the U.S. consumption, accounting for 80 per cent of total luxury consumption. The markets of Japan

and Europe have a balanced distribution between accessible and aspirational or elitist luxury brands. The rising markets of China and the Middle East stands out in the sense that 80 per cent of the consumption is geared towards elitist and aspirational brands, and 20 per cent towards accessible luxury brands. Market immaturity is pointed out as the main reason for this distribution, which is expected to level as the markets mature (Solca et al., 2010a). The Chinese demand for high-end luxury brands is hence a crucial factor for buyers' bargaining power, as it influences the luxury fashion companies' strategies for expansion.

3.2.5 COMPETITORS

The internal *competitors* of the luxury fashion industry are the suppliers. All firms do however not compete with each other, as there are different luxury goods and price categories within the industry. The true competitors are the firms that compete on the same conditions such as product-, price-, and quality-segment.

The internal *rivalry* of the luxury fashion industry is today principally concentrated to the Western world, but as the firms extend their markets, the rivalry will broaden its geographic covering. This process may increase rivalry in terms of first mover and late mover advantages versus disadvantages. Porter (2008) argues that the profitability of an industry is limited by rivalry, and that the intensity of the rivalry and the basis on which companies compete determine to what the degree rivalry diminishes profitability. Rivalry is intensive when it occurs between companies that are roughly equal in size and power, which is the case of the large luxury fashion company groups. With no clear leader of the industry, desirable enforcements of the industry are unlikely to occur, as no one takes the leading steps for enforcing industry practices.

At the same time, large company groups that come together and compete on the same dimension possess the ability to influence profitability (Porter, 2008). As high price is one of the determinants for luxury items (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), competition is more likely to occur on other dimensions than price, such as product features, support services or brand image. This kind of competition is desirable for the industry as it more likely improves customer value and support higher prices (Porter, 2008). The power of the applied mechanisms of *opinion leadership,* as displayed by celebrities and other public individuals (Crane, 1999; Davis, 1992; Kawamura, 2004), and *diffusion agents* such as fashion designers (Kapferer, 2012) and fashion publicists (Kawamura, 2004) illustrates this competition, as the right kind of exposure is crucial for brand image. The

quest for featuring the right celebrity or being exposed in the right fashion magazine can hence influence rivalry.

Lastly, competitors that aim to serve the needs of different customer segments, responding to different preferences in prices, products or brand identities, are likely to create a positive sum rivalry for the industry (Porter, 2008). Targeted competition according to the different product segments suggested by Solca et al. (2010a), could hence support higher average profitability and even expand the industry through better meeting different consumer needs. For this reason, consumer appeal and motivation, which will be discussed in the next following chapter, are vital for luxury firms to reveal.

3.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

In summary, some forces of the luxury fashion industry are stronger in relation to others and their relative power is important to estimate in order to arrive at strategic insights (Porter, 2008). A few aspects are particularly important to recognize:

Firstly, microeconomic effects of variation in supply and demand are difficult to establish for luxury goods. Supply economies of scale are inexistent as price is no determining factor, while demand economies of scale are tricky to estimate. The outcome hangs in the balance between several external effects that influence consumer behavior differently, for example the three effects suggested by Leibenstein (1950).

Secondly, when mapping out the forces of the diamond, there is a continuous discussion about possible consumer effects based on the notions of exclusivity and desirability. Given the different consumer demand effects, exclusivity or scarcity is not automatically positively related to desirability, and vice versa, even though that assumption fits certain situations. The widely adopted concept of product licensing for example, builds on the idea that *accessibility*, rather than scarcity, increases desirability.

Lastly, acknowledging brand image as one of the key domains for competition, the imaginary continuum of trendsetting forces ranging from industrial leadership to consumer leadership seems to be most important for strategic communication and business success. Industrial

leadership influences profit making positively, while consumer leadership creates advantageous rivalry. Hence, the most favorable brand image strategy is positioned somewhere in between.

CHAPTER IV

THEORIES OF

ASSUMED CONSUMER MOTIVATION

AND NATIONAL BRAND APPEAL

So far, we have outlined the industrial environment of luxury fashion, and will now turn to the theoretical ground for determining consumer preferences, which is key for efficient communication of brand attitudes. Successful external brand communication stimulates competition and rivalry, which in turn increases industry performance.

Recalling the limited effect of supply and demand adjustments on fashion consumer behavior betrays the industries' complex and unique features rich in social, cultural and symbolic capital. Therefore, leaving economic models behind, this chapter focuses on how consumers and their buying motivations can be interpreted and outlined according to cultural theory in the form of fashion diffusion paradigms. In addition, the importance of situated meanings bound to time and place, shaped by the cultural models, is illustrated in the international appeal of different fashion hubs. The three diffusion archetypes are according to Sproles (1981) strategic guidelines for taking consumer leadership into account and are by many scholars (e.g. Crane, 1999; Davis, 1992; Field, 1970; Polhemus, 1994; Sproles, 1981) considered the most relevant theories of fashion.

4.1 THE PROCESS OF FASHION DIFFUSION

Contemporary diffusion theory of fashion (or any other product or practice) builds on theories on diffusion and adoption of innovation, highly promoted by the American communication scholar and sociologist Everett M. Rogers. The classical model of diffusion begins with an innovation, in the form of an idea, practice or object. The innovation is spread through certain channels of communication, over time and among members of a social system. Rogers however criticizes the classic model for lacking process orientation, arguing that the time aspect and emergent characteristics of communication not are sufficiently emphasized (Rogers, 1976).

In conformity with Rogers, the American cultural sociologist Fred Davis (1992) advocates viewing fashion diffusion from a process perspective. Davis focuses on the underlying motives of fashion diffusion that he considers embedded in identity ambivalences of Western society. He defines the fashion process as […] *the complex of influences, interactions, exchanges, adjustments, and accommodations among persons, organizations and institutions that animates the cycle from its inception to its demise.* (Davis, 1992, p. 103).

Before introducing the models of fashion diffusion, there are some vital questions to ask. Acknowledging the complex nature of the diffusion process described above, is it really possible to conceptualize this course of action into theoretical models? The answer is yes, but the developed models are as already implied simplifications. Nevertheless, the models provide important insights and comprehensive overall pictures of patterns and motivations for buying.

Another question important to account for is related to the time aspect. First developed a hundred years ago, what status do these models encompass in contemporary diffusion? Crane (1999) argues that all models are relevant for explaining how fashions emanate and diffuse, but to varying extent, as they are re-interpreted in the contemporary context.

The top-down diffusion model is the oldest one at hand, developed in a society built on class differentiation, illustrating a process where styles trickle down from the limited elite to eventually enter the second-rate mass of much lower class (Simmel, 1904, 1957). Even though class societies are remote in contemporary Western times, the top-down model's features still permeate luxury fashion diffusion. Okonkwo (2010) points out that there is a human need to differentiate oneself from others through possessions, in Western as well as Asian markets. As Kapferer and Bastien (2009) put it, luxury was from the beginning a consequence of social stratification, whereas it today *creates* social stratification. Furthermore, top-down directed diffusion is apparent in the sense that many consumers look up to luxury brands and get inspired by their creations (Okonkwo, 2010) and that luxury fashion designers come up with ideas of new styles, which later are introduced to the market by respected fashion magazines, celebrities or society women, and at last are adopted by the great mass (Crane, 1999). Apparently, modernized versions of the top-down diffusion model have come to partly replace the original edition.

The second and third models, the bottom-up and trickle-across models, were developed in the mid 20th century, which indicates a stronger tie to modern times. In the former, mainly

adolescents in subcultures are initiators of trends (Crane, 1999; Field, 1970), a tendency Kapferer (2012) observes in luxury fashion still today. The latter is a loosely structured model with a fast-changing nature (Polhemus, 1994) aiming directly to the mass (Sproles, 1981). The model illustrates a timeless way of sampling and mixing fragments of subcultures and styles from the past, and in that way expressing something new.

4.2 ASSUMED CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS OF DIFFUSION MODELS

We have now established that there are three focal sociological models aiming at describing fashion diffusion, developed in Western societies of the past. Today, modern representations of *all* models are applicable on fashion diffusion. With this in mind, I will now present the historical and ideological backgrounds of each model. Each description ends with an extraction of attributes of assumed consumer motivations, in order to visualize the overarching themes of each model and allow for comparisons in consumer behavior and buying motivation.

4.2.1 THE TOP-DOWN MODEL

The top-down model is regarded the main classic explanation of fashion diffusion and is historically associated with the upper social classes and luxury fashion. The German sociologist and philosopher George Simmel (1904, 1957) advocates a trickle down diffusion pattern based on the two counter-tendencies of sameness and distinction. Individuals of the upper class initiate a new fashion in order to unite their social group and to distinguish themselves from other social groups of lower rank. As a counter-reaction to the class distinction of the upper class, the lower social classes mass imitate the elite. By the time that a fashion is imitated by the mass, it goes out of fashion and the elite initiates a new fashion. This way, fashion is only a matter of the upper class (Simmel, 1904, 1957). Similarly, the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1934, 1998), links fashion to the upper social classes, focusing primarily on woman's dress. He argues that social rank is built on success, which only can be displayed in dress. Dress functions […] *as an index of the wealth of its wearer* […] (p. 67).

Both emphasizing the upper class and trickle-down diffusion, Simmel and Veblen do not share the same approach to fashion. Simmel (1904, 1957) views fashion as a product of the process of distinction and sameness, within and between social groups of different rank. This process feeds upon novelty and change. Veblen (1934, 1998) argues the other way around; novelty and change are both products of the process of conspicuous consumption, and are displayed in fashion.

Consequently, the top-down model originally build on class differences and focuses on the elite or upper class. The assumed consumer motivations behind the model are summarized in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Assumed Consumer Motivations of Top-Down Diffusion	
Motivation	Brief Description
Aspiration	Hope or ambition to becoming part of the luxurious world.
Distinction	Distinguish one self from others through possessions.
Sameness	Resemble one self with others.
Show Off	Make a deliberate or pretentious display of one's abilities or accomplishments.
Recognition	Appreciation or acclaim for an achievement or ability.
Popularity	Being liked and admired.
Womanhood/Femininity	Display of qualities considered being natural or characteristic of a woman.
Imitation	Jump on the bandwagon supporting something likely to become successful.

Table 4.1.

4.2.2 THE BOTTOM-UP MODEL

Fashions initiated by other social groupings than the elite class, were for a long time objects of criticism and therefore ignored. In the 70s however, these sub-cultural innovations started to gain acceptance as the development of youth culture created reactions against fashion that was imposed from above, and encouraged people to develop individual styles. In the model of upward diffusion of innovation, fashions first appear in lower-status groups, and gradually become adopted by higher-status groups (Fields, 1970).

Within this model, the American anthropologist Ted Polhemus (1994) focuses on trends initiated by the youth, fashions that reflect authenticity, diversity, creativity and democracy. When this diffusion model pioneered, the mass-market fashion industry still copied the luxury designers, but the difference lied in the main source of inspiration of the exclusive fashion houses: styles derived from the creative energy of the street, expressed in so called tribal styles. The tribal styles, still present today, have two main missions: to resist change and to mark membership in a social group. Style tribes remove the role of social status and rather focus on age as a determining factor for directing the diffusion.

Even though most studies of the bottom-up diffusion discuss youth fashions, Field (1970) adds other examples of what he denominates *the Status Float Phenomenon*. By the late 19th century, ready-to-wear clothing entered the middle- and upper classes as a consequence of the economic depression, after until then only having been produced for different working groups such as sailors, miners and soldiers. The same was evident in the diffusion of styles that moved from ethnic and racial minorities, via music-, dance- and youth culture, to eventually reach the upper status levels. Furthermore, Field, with the gender perspective of that time, also regarded women's fashions' influence on male clothing an *upward influence on the status hierarchy*. (p. 51).

Recognizing the different types of bottom-up directed diffusion decided by different social goods, the typical example is a fashion that originates from a suburban street style generated by adolescents, which later becomes popular also in other contexts and groups of people (Crane, 1999; Field, 1970). The bottom-up process may be explained as the exact opposite to the top-down process; by the time that a trend reaches the upper levels, youths have already abandoned it (Field, 1970). Catwalk trends originating from the street can therefore be seen as an abuse of street style creativity that undermines, rather than consolidates, the status of these styles on the street level (Polhemus, 1994).

In summary, according to the bottom up model, different parameters such as age, class, gender or race, are determinant factors for initiating fashion diffusion. The main characteristics of the consumers are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Assumed Consumer Motivations of Bottom-Up Diffusion

Motivation	Brief Description
Freedom of Opinion	The right to express opinions without restraint.
Authenticity	Expression of originality.
Diversity	Expression of variety.
Democracy	Social equality, classlessness.
Urbanity	Urban life and city pulse.
Membership	Having the right personal and social qualities to be a member of a group.
Solidarity	Unity among individuals with a common interest.
Youth	The state or quality of being young.

Table 4.2.

4.2.3 THE TRICKLE ACROSS MODEL

In contrast to the vertical diffusion flow of the top-down and bottom-up models, many contemporary sociologists advocate a horizontal diffusion model favoring complete access, in an attempt to capture the complex paths of contemporary fashion diffusion. Sproles (1981) denominates this paradigm *the Mass Market Theory*, emphasizing that […] *mass production combined with mass communications make new styles and information about new styles available simultaneously to all socioeconomic classes.* (p. 119). Similarly, Davis (1992) emphasizes horizontal dissemination across all status levels and within a wide range of taste subcultures.

In the trickle across model, fashion leadership is visible on different levels in the society. Davis (1992) stresses today's improvisatory freedom where nothing is considered right or wrong, and where the consumers mix and match their styles according to individual taste. Similarly, Crane (1999) illuminates individuality and describes the contemporary fashion market as consumer driven, pointing out that new fashions originate from multiple sources and diffuse in different ways depending on the different publics. Polhemus (1994) names this phenomenon *the Supermarket of Style*, which allows for individual freedom when picking and choosing from all styles and fashions there are.

Rising in the 1980s, individuality replaced the sense of belonging to a subculture; the focus of inspiration was clearly on the consumer (Polhemus, 1994). Malcolm Gladwell (1997), sociologist and journalist, illustrates the early 1990s America, when designers of sneakers employed coolhunters in order to find out what American cool kids in the street were thinking, doing and buying. They went out to the field with prototypes of upcoming models and asked the kids what they liked and disliked about them, and returned to their offices with useful insights and feedback.

Individuality and freedom are hence the recurring themes in the trickle across model, which aspire to provide an understanding of the contemporary movement of styles. The motivations for mixing and matching individual styles, drawing from previous and contemporary trends, are summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Assumed Consumer Motivations of Trickle-Across Diffusion

Motivation	Brief Description
Freedom	The state of not being affected by others when creating styles.
Individuality	Personal quality or character that distinguishes one individual from others.
Independence	The state of being independent when choosing and matching styles.
Timelessness	Not affected by time or changes in fashion. Old can become new.
Creativity	Use of imagination or original ideas. Drawing on old styles, developing new ones.
Innovation	The process of innovating and creating something new.
Flexibility	The ability of being easily modified to respond to varying circumstances and needs.

Table 4.3.

4.3 NATIONAL ADVANTAGE

We have now learned how fashion diffusion among social systems may be explained. But why is it that the production and consumption of luxury fashion, as visible in the industry analysis, are firmly attached to the Western world? How are the cultural models related to the situational meaning of international fashion hubs?

Porter (1990) has one possible answer to these questions. He argues that nations' success in a certain industry is *created* rather than inherited. He further stresses that: *Differences in national values, culture, economic structures, institutions and histories all contribute to competitive success.* (p. 74). The nation-specific values and tastes are unique, but will sooner or later be exported to other nations through media, political influence, and other globally reaching mechanisms. Differences in culture, history and values, are hence contributing factors to national success in a certain industry, but are however not the only triggers for industrial development. A nation's capacity to innovate and upgrade is the main driver for success, which requires pressure and challenge from the industrial environment. This capacity is according to Porter decided through assessing four broad qualities of a nation: factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and firm strategy, structure and rivalry. The interaction between these attributes constitutes what Porter denominates *the diamond model of national advantage*.

When taking a closer look at the luxury fashion industry, several acts of innovation have made nations achieve competitive advantages. These are achievements of new technology or new ways of doing things. They are also results of new approaches to products or marketing.

Starting with Paris, the world leading fashion city, there is no surprise that it has reached its global recognition when looking at all fashion related innovations that the city has given birth to, as a result of a continual process of experimentation. Paris pioneered in the craft of hand-sewn dressmaking and haute couture fashion (custom-made items), which created crucial factor conditions. The Parisian environment also developed new approaches to presentation, advertising, distribution and sales. The trend of licensing agreements started in Paris, when Christian Dior introduced the practice in the 1960s. Paris's couture designers were leading when developing recognized luxury goods such as perfume, jewelry, handbags, scarves and travel goods. Trend forecasting companies first emerged in Paris, as well as the art of presenting clothes on authentic models (Elzingre & Hodgson, 2010).

Secondly, London, a fashion city that developed its identity in the 1960s drawing from an environment built on popular culture, youth, subcultures, and ethnic and racial mix. Young entrepreneurs and people working creatively in music, art, design, publishing or fashion, started the transformation and took the lead. The aim was to target their own generation with classless fashion, and the styles they came up with were youth focused, informal and body conscious, which was revolutionary as former fashions generally were designed for the British upper-middle classes. Before the World War II, London's expertise was concentrated to tailoring, particularly for men. With the introduction of an innovative, younger generation of designers, London got the international reputation of being a fashion city where modernity coexisted with tradition (Ehrman, 2010).

In Italy, intense cooperation between designers and the clothing and textile industries in Milan created a favorable environment for developing new production technologies and factor conditions. This resulted in the introduction of industrially produced ready-to-wear lines, or prêt-à-porter, on the global market (Merlo & Polese, 2010). These lines were revolutionary in the 1970s as this model of production and consumption introduced the ability to produce industrial quantities of designed fashion (Segre Reinach, 2010). This innovation was crucial for Milan's recognition as a fashion capital and changed the production patterns of many established brands of other nationalities (Merlo & Polese, 2010).

Lastly, American innovations important for the nation's international success in fashion are for example the establishment of the fashion magazine Vogue in 1892 and the invention of materials such as nylon and lycra in the mid 20th century (Arnold, 2010). The American label Ralph Lauren

invented a new approach to marketing, which pioneered in the 1980s, introducing the concept of lifestyle merchandising. The dominating market strategy in Europe at that time was to draw on heritage and tradition, but as the American firms entered the fashion world much later, they could not emphasize historical legacy in their marketing. Therefore, Ralph Lauren came up with the idea to market a complete lifestyle through his label (Tungate, 2005). Today, Ralph Lauren is associated with the entire Anglo-Saxon American culture, and the lifestyle concept has been adopted also by other brands, such as Donna Karan and Calvin Klein. American creative industries have also brought Hollywood and the celebrity culture to the fashion world (Arnold, 2010). New York has become the fashion city of America and also an important spot on the world map. The city is associated with dynamism and futurism, and therefore challenges more traditional attributes of other fashion cities (Breward, 2010).

When reading between the lines, these innovations clearly are products of, or reasons for, the patterns of fashion diffusion as illustrated in the models. It is an obvious fact that Parisian fashion brings associations to the top-down diffusion pattern, whereas British fashion initiated the bottom-up movement in the 1960s. Italian and American designs rose later, and draw from different models.

4.4 INTERNATIONAL APPEAL OF FASHION HUBS

Apart from the industrial roots, both cultural heritage and values are mirrored in the most prominent cities on the fashion map. International media attention steadily reinforces the status of these hotspots, which have made them well established and powerful quality marks of fashion.

The urban geographer David Gilbert (2000) argues that the global exposure has made these fashion hubs […] *among the strongest and longest-established of global brands.* (p. 9). According to Polhemus (2005), these global brands thrive and are even too individually strong to allow for a unified monolithic West. Teunissen (2005) on the other hand, postulates that national branding also is a form of exploiting national origin, as the national identities are created stereotypes. Therefore, he argues that non-Western or exotic images are about to threaten the Western sovereignty in the fashion world.

Stereotypes or not, the national identities do have profound impacts: the symbolic value of e.g. Paris or New York is so powerful that the cities themselves are perceived as synonyms of fashion

and people travel there with the belief to experience fashion in real life (Gilbert, 2000; Polhemus, 2005). In fact, the European luxury fashion hubs are among the most visited tourist destinations in the world (Solca et al., 2010a). The identities do not only affect travel positively, but also have additional economic impacts: they are strongly linked to consumer appeal since they convey meaning that stimulates motivation and consumer choice. This relationship is especially prominent in the fashion industry, which, except from tourism, is the industry most interlinked with national branding today (Polhemus, 2005).

The following text describes the national identities of four of the most important fashion hubs; Paris, London, Milan and New York. Table 4.4 summarizes the hubs' national appeals.

4.4.1 PARIS

Paris is often portrayed as a symbol for luxury consumption or as the place of origin of elite luxury and design (Breward, 2010). Elzingre and Hodgson (2010) underline the feminine associations, describing the typical Parisienne character of the 19th century as *an icon of the femininity, charm and self-awareness displayed by all women from all levels of society*. At the time when French haute couture predominated the fashion world, it was attributed with luxury, fame and sophistication. Paris has for a long time been a city of artists and people of the art, such as sculptures, poets, photographers and filmmakers (Elzingre & Hodgson, 2010). History, together with exclusivity and traditional French craftsmanship are crucial parameters for French fashions still today (Chrisman-Campbell, 2010).

4.4.2 LONDON

As opposed to the feminine references to Paris, London was by the late 19th century the city of traditional gentleman tailoring. Later on, the mid 1960s' swinging London brought associations to democratic street fashion and trendy young designers (Breward, 2010). Ehrman (2010) summarizes the London approach to fashion as traditional yet open for innovation, representing a large number of young designers. Today, British clothing has an exceptional global reputation and its long and celebrated history is represented by several brands, such as Burberry and Aquascutum that have operated for more than a hundred years. Together, iconic British brands have developed an image of British traditional style associated with outdoor country activities or smart urban living, which has an impressive international appeal (O'Byrne, 2009).

4.4.3 MILAN

Milan was acknowledged one of the influential international fashion cities first in the 1970s, the decade when several Italian designers, such as Gianni Versace and Giorgio Armani, entered the global market. Despite the late recognition, the Milanese fashion miracle was founded on long-lived traditions of craftsmanship (Breward, 2010). When the city rose as a true competitor to Paris in the 1980s, Italian fashion was praised for its wearability and high quality, together with a more modern and sporty approach compared to the French one. The fashion city Milan is associated with creativity, outstanding design, cultural open-mindedness, and experimentation (Segre Reinach, 2010).

4.4.4 NEW YORK

New York fashion is associated with dynamism and futurism (Breward, 2010). The internationalization of markets during the late 20th century made luxury more accessible and opened up for worldwide market opportunities. In this favorable environment, American brands such as Coach and Proenza Schouler successfully entered the high-end luxury market. The new luxury setting entailed a new type of luxury client, who not only viewed luxury with desire, but as an important part of their lifestyles (Okonkwo, 2010).

Table 4.4: International Appeal of Fashion Hubs			
Paris/France	London/Great Britain	Milan/Italy	New York/USA
Tradition	Youth	Innovation	Lifestyle
Quality	Creativity	Tradition	Glamour
Luxury	Gentleman tailoring	Craftsmanship	Dynamism
Femininity	Tradition	Quality	Futurism
Sophistication	Outdoor activity	Sport	Accessibility
Art	Urbanity	Experimentation	
Craftsmanship			

Table 4.4.

CHAPTER V

LUXURY FASHION MESSAGES:

WEBPAGE ANALYSIS

After having outlined the industrial context and introduced the cultural models of fashion diffusion, this chapter analyses webpage-based self-presentations of twelve different luxury brands in terms of semiotic-, world- and political building, aiming to map the applicability of cultural paradigms on contemporary strategic communication. It is important to note that the selected texts not should be interpreted as representing the complete picture of all luxury firms' brand presentations, but is a summary of the brands of this specific sample. Transcriptions of the full sample texts are accessible in the appendices.

5.1 FRENCH BRANDS

5.1.1 GIVENCHY

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the "History" section of the homepage, where the company's founder Hubert de Givenchy and the present creative director, Riccardo Tisci, are presented. The section has a simple design with white text on dark background accompanied by a black and white photo of Hubert de Givenchy, and another one of Riccardo Tisci.

The text is written as a fairy tail classically beginning with *Once upon a time*, which draws attention and makes it interesting to read. The use of color and layout is not as exciting, as it focuses on different shades of black and grey, which makes the webpage somewhat tricky to navigate, as it is difficult to read thin, black text on a dark grey background. Both images are somewhat neutral, even though they do reflect the masculinity of the designers.
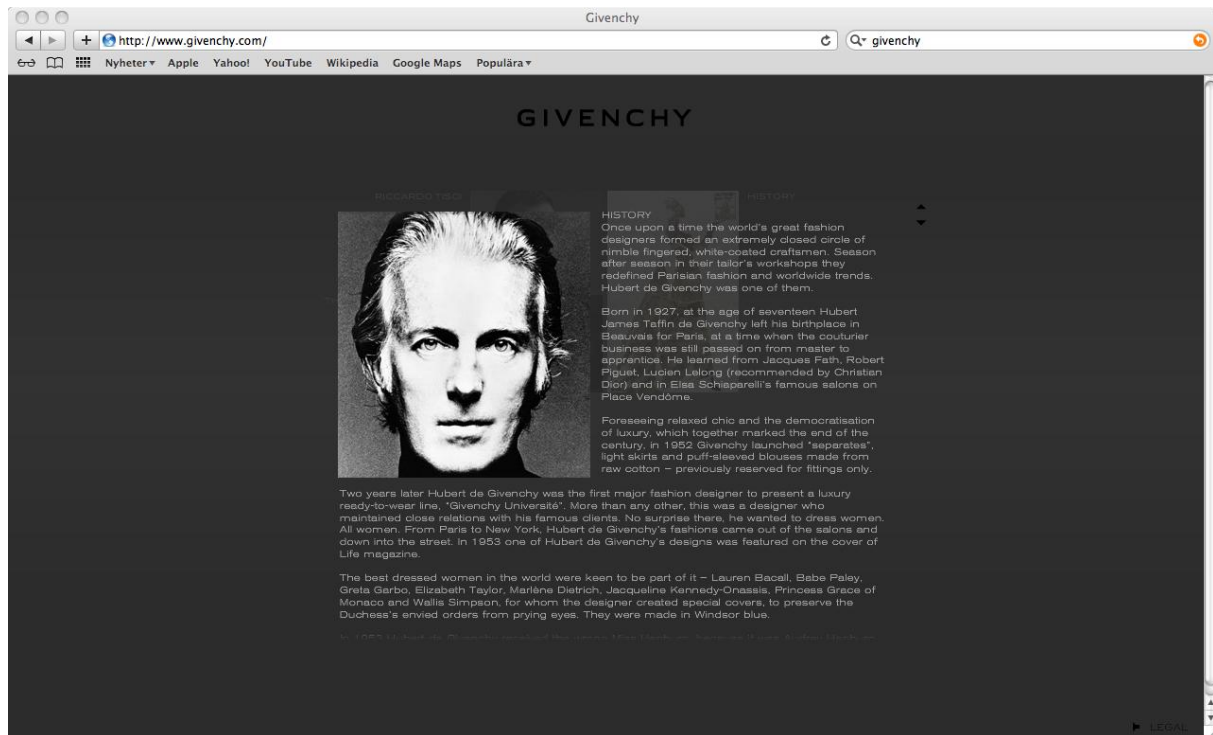
Figure 5.1. *Givenchy Webpage.* Source: Givenchy, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"Once upon a time the world's great fashion designers formed an extremely closed circle of nimble fingered, white-coated craftsmen. Season after season in their tailor's workshops they redefined Parisian fashion and worldwide trends. Hubert de Givenchy was one of them."	Exclusivity, craftsmanship, tradition, Paris
	"The best dressed women in the world were keen to be part of it – Lauren Bacall, Babe Paley, Greta Garbo, Elizabeth Taylor, Marlène Dietrich, Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis, Princess Grace of Monaco and Wallis Simpson, for whom the designer created special covers, to preserve the Duchess's envied orders from prying eyes."	Glamour, class
	"By avoiding the pitfalls of fashion and seasonal trends, Riccardo Tisci has tenaciously built a coherent, modern universe at Givenchy, firmly anchored in the company's illustrious heritage, but determinedly forward-looking."	Modernity, heritage
	"Foreseeing relaxed chic and the democratization of luxury, which together marked the end of the century, in 1952 Givenchy launched "separates", light skirts and puff-sleeved blouses made from raw cotton – previously reserved for fittings only."	Luxury, exclusivity
	"…Hubert de Givenchy was the first major designer to present a luxury ready-to-wear line, "Givenchy Université"."	Exclusivity, new thinking
	"…he wanted to dress women. All women. From Paris to New York, Hubert de Givenchy's fashions came out of the salons and down to the street."	Femininity, class distinction

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"Hepburn entered the circle of the world's smartest women and Hubert de Givenchy's fame spread worldwide. Together the designer and his muse defined a new kind of beauty: exhaustive perfection of lines, narrow hips, willowy body and swan's neck…"	Exclusivity
"Success was enormous, with American market immediately won over. This was when the designer's clientele became almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon."	Global recognition
"The information era made Hubert de Givenchy a superstar fashion designer (…) his supreme elegance became in 1973 the ideal example for his men's fashion line, "Gentleman Givenchy". Even today that look remains a benchmark."	Exclusivity, masculinity
"Aristocratic and distinctive, sober and sensual, the Givenchy woman's style reflects the path Riccardo Tisci has taken: far-reaching."	Aristocracy, distinctiveness, femininity

(Givenchy, 2012)

Attributes of the top-down model clearly dominate the message, while only a few references to new thinking abilities are the exceptions, rather adhering to the trickle across model. Social goods such as status, power and class are insinuated through situated meanings like exclusivity, aristocracy, class distinction, heritage and luxury, all belonging to the top-down paradigm. The aspects of gender include both feminine and masculine references, even though the women seem to be most important to the former and present designer.

Situated meanings bound to place are not concentrated to Paris and France, but recognizes international success by illustrating the British actress Audrey Hepburn's role for winning the American market, which seem more significant than the French market. Neither the celebrities that are pointed out are French, but international.

Overall, the top-down paradigm and international success permeate the whole message, which is summarized in the sentence *From Paris to New York, Hubert de Givenchy's fashions came out of the salons and down to the street.*

5.1.2 LANVIN

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the "Lanvin House" section of the homepage, where the company's founder Jeanne Lanvin is portrayed in text and images. The section has a clean design with text and background in different shades of blue. The selected section contains different images, photos and sketches connected to Lanvin and her designs. The images have sliding effects and some sections also include black and white video clips accompanied by instrumental, soft piano and violin music.

The text is descriptive, covering the life and achievements of the designer Jeanne Lanvin, revealing little about what the brand looks like today. The text is hence situated in the past. Accordingly, the images and music enforce the sense of heritage and class, attributes of the top-down paradigm. Similarly, the color blue brings associations to exclusiveness and the images of women and Jeanne Lanvin designs bring out femininity. The overall layout is however elegant and well composed, which rather indicates modernity as represented by the trickle across model.
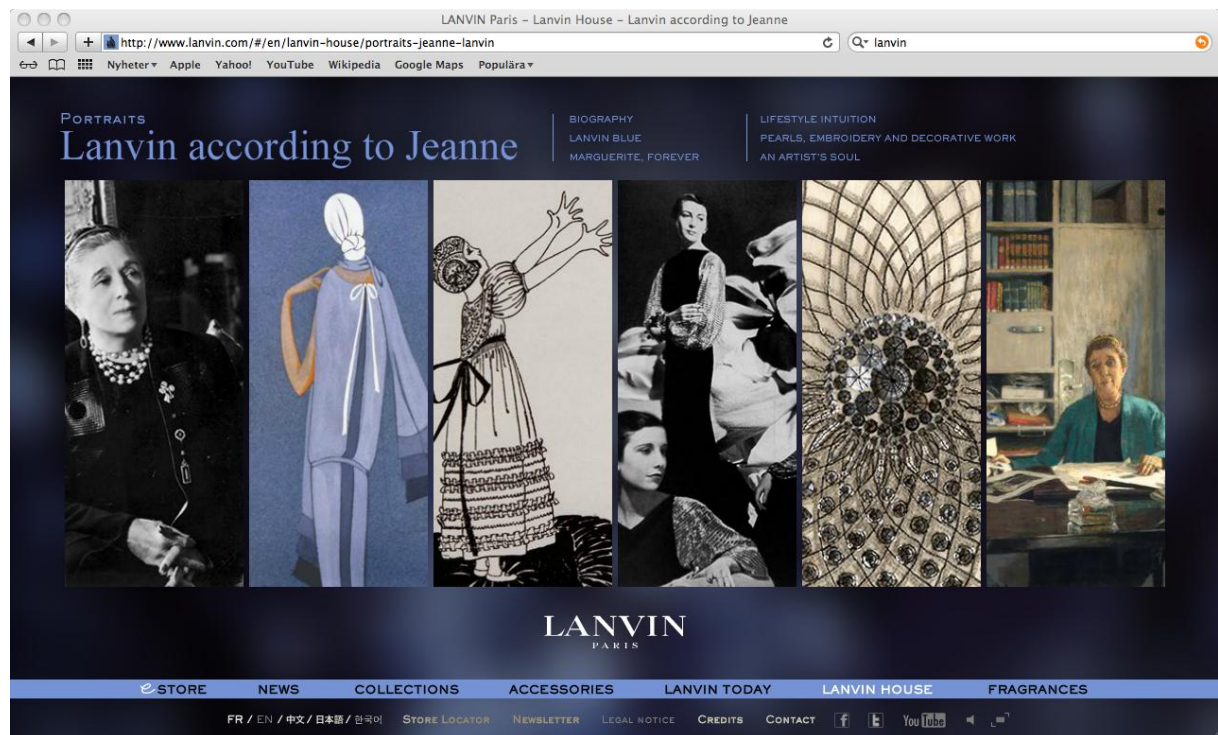

Figure 5.2. *Lanvin Webpage.* Source: Lanvin, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"…her curiosity for contemporary arts, new forms, and the cultures of the world."	Newness, innovation
	"Indeed, Jeanne Lanvin was truly exceptional in combining motherhood and her career. She stayed away from society events and their games of seduction, remaining discreet and apart, listening only to her own ambitions and feelings."	Classlessness, independence

"Her vision and dedication have carried the House into its second century."	Go-ahead spirit
"An unprecedented lifespan, made possible by the way in which the essence of Lanvin has been passed down, ensuring that the company today is exactly what Jeanne Lanvin herself would have made it."	Heritage, legacy
"Her unconditional love for her daughter fired her creativity. In creating highly sophisticated outfits for her daughter, she invented child fashion."	Authenticity, creativity, innovation, sophistication
"Jeanne Lanvin was the first designer to see fashion as a lifestyle. Clothes-making alone was not enough; she saw her creations as a part of a wider dynamic that encompassed a wide range of fields…"	Lifestyle, brand extension
"Her peerless artistic sensitivity and unerring sense of volume, composition and colour association have been universally acclaimed. For Jeanne Lanvin, art and fashion are one."	Exclusivity, expertise

(Lanvin, 2012)

The text centers on concepts typical for the trickle across model, such as creativity, newness and innovation. The power of these situated meanings is however reduced by the fact that the whole text is written in past tense. Pioneering *at that time* is one thing, but what does the brand stand for today? The situated meanings are hence bound to past times. Heritage, exclusivity and sophistication are more prominent, which adhere to the top-down model.

In terms of geographic location, the message has few references to France or Paris, but rather emphasize inspiration from cultural dynamism, universal acclaim and lifestyle, attributes more typical for American brands.

Social goods are visible both in terms of age and gender. There are overall feminine associations, if not even feministic, that pictures Jeanne Lanvin as a strong, independent and goal-oriented woman with a child. This symbolizes both the femininity and elegance of the top-down model, and the authenticity of the bottom-up model, yet not in a conflicting manner. Age is restricted to children and adults.

In essence, the top-down model dominates the message, even though there are fragments of the bottom-up and trickle across models that make the mix interesting and unique.

5.1.3 NINA RICCI

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the section "the House of Nina Ricci", where the company and its current creative director, Peter Copping, are presented. The selected section has a white background and thin dark grey and black text in small letters. A photo illustrating a Nina Ricci store, a well-lit, light and graceful building by night, accompanies the text about the fashion house, while a black and white photo portraying Peter Copping accompanies the text about the same. Instrumental pop/rock "drum and guitar music" is playing in the background.

The text is a descriptive story about Nina Ricci as individual and brand, and also about the current creative director. The layout is elegant, built on different shades of light colors such as beige, gold and white, which bring feminine and exclusive associations. The image of a Nina Ricci store is urban and reminds the reader about the actual stores and their exclusiveness. The black and white portrait of Peter Copping is rather neutral and empty. The music reveals a modern approach, even though the constant repeat is somewhat annoying.
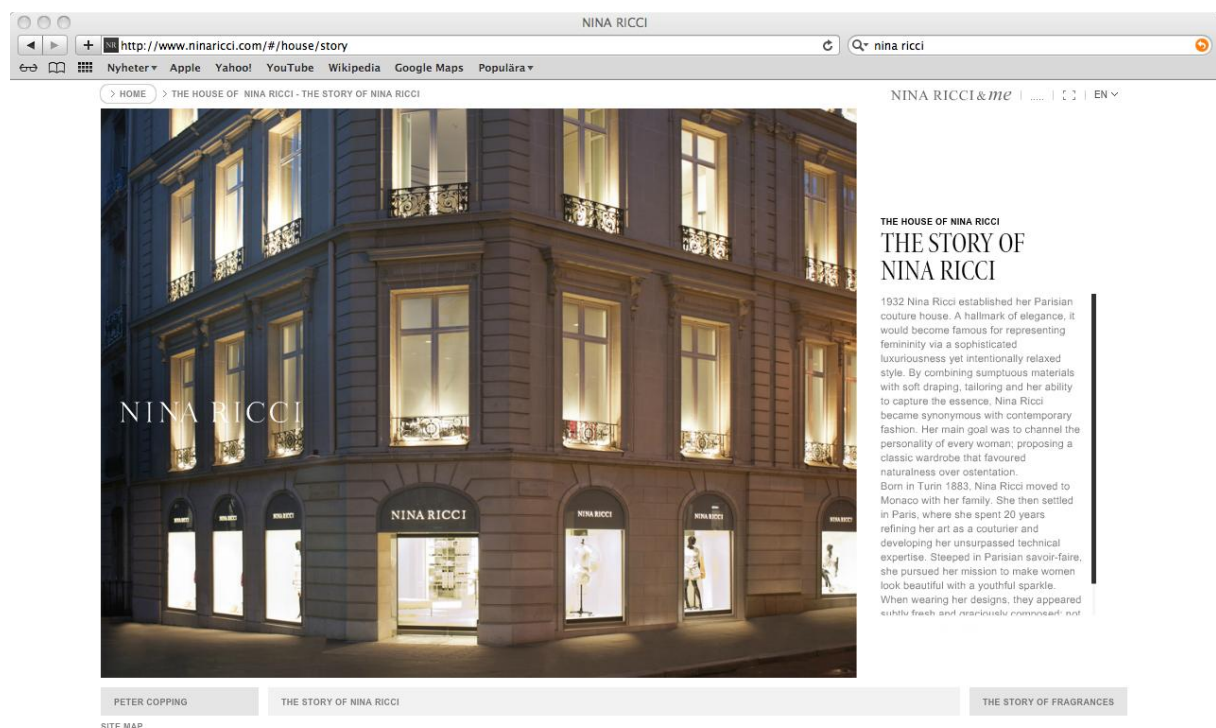

Figure 5.3. *Nina Ricci Webpage.* Source: Nina Ricci, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"A hallmark of elegance, it would become famous for representing femininity via a sophisticated luxuriousness yet internationally relaxed style."	Exclusivity, femininity, luxury, internationality
	"By combining sumptuous materials with soft draping, tailoring and her ability to capture the essence, Nina Ricci became synonymous with contemporary fashion."	Expertise, exclusivity, modernity

"Her main goal was to channel the personality of every woman; proposing a classic wardrobe that favoured naturalness over ostentation."	Femininity, utility, authenticity
"…she spent 20 years refining her art as a couturier and developing her unsurpassed technical expertise."	Art, expertise
"…capture the ultra-feminine side of the modern wardrobe."	Modernity, femininity
"Steeped in Parisian savoir-faire, she pursued her mission to make women look beautiful with a youthful sparkle."	Youth, luxury, expertise
"In his quest for excellence, Peter Copping has introduced a range of powdery hues that evoke the sensual and satin aspects of the skin, evoking the world of dreams and merging the image of the Nina Ricci woman with a vision of spontaneous authenticity."	Excellence, magic, exclusivity, authenticity

(Nina Ricci, 2012)

The top-down paradigm provides the overarching themes of expertise, excellence, femininity and exclusivity. These are mixed with elements of the bottom-up model, represented in the form of authenticity and youth. Expressions like *relaxed style*, *naturalness* and *spontaneous authenticity* provides a picture of comfortable, less sober luxury items. Ultimately, modernity, internationality and utility add attributes from the trickle across model.

Situated meanings bound to place are represented by a few references to France and Paris, which in no way are sovereign in the message. In addition to the national virtues, internationality is also explicitly expressed.

The overarching social good is the feminine gender, which permeates the entire message, emphasized both in text and layout. The relaxed approach to luxury however does not reveal any indications about age, class or power.

In essence, all cultural models are applied, and there is no obvious contradiction between them. Even though the top-down model dominates the message, its rigidness is challenged by the down-to-earth approach to luxury, leaving out superlatives.

5.2 BRITISH BRANDS

5.2.1. ASPINAL OF LONDON

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the "About Us" section of the webpage, where the chairman Iain Burton presents the company in a letter to the customer. The section "About Us" has a simple design with marine text on white background. Two photos illustrating a typical Aspinal of London store accompany the text.

The text, the main object of analysis, brings out authenticity since it appears to be written by the chairman of the company himself. This fact sets the tone of the complete text, written in the form of a letter. The setting gives clues about several aspects. It does not appear as Aspinal of London has a specific pronounced designer who personifies the brand. Featuring the chairman as author brings out seriousness and associations to annual reports of figures, rather than to trends and designs. However, what the letter essentially is about is to welcome and attend to the customer.
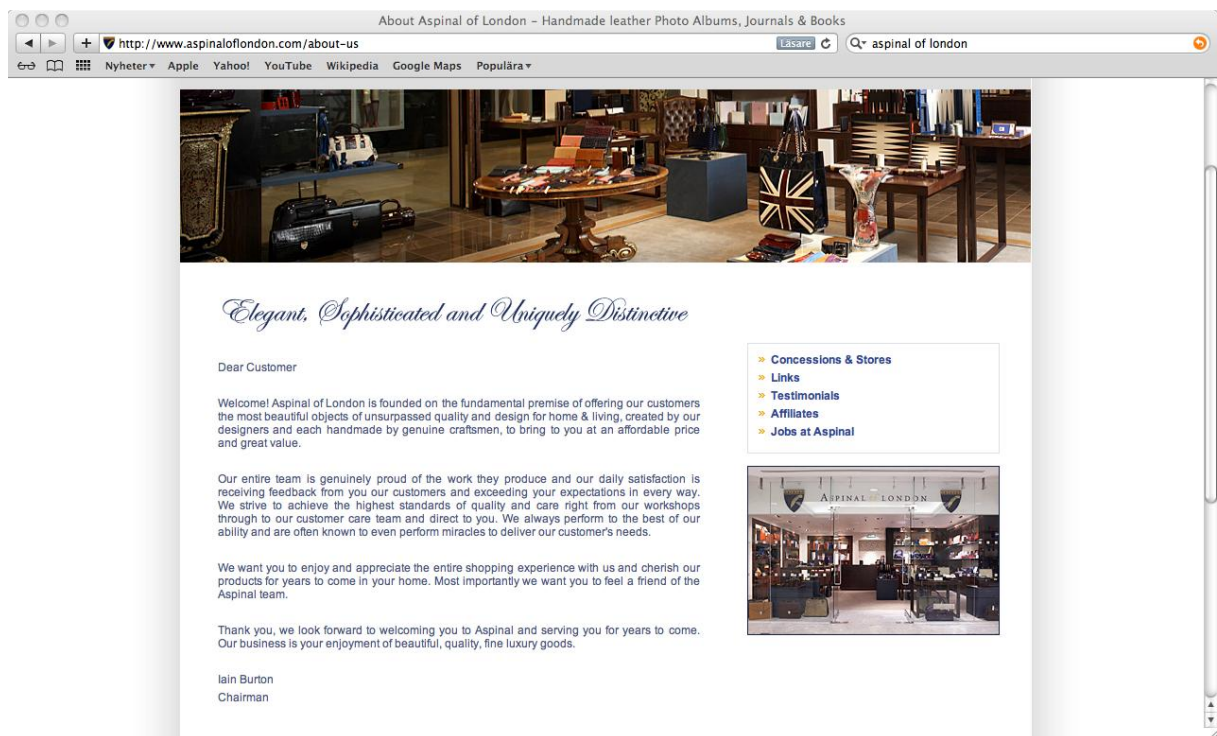

Figure 5.4. *Aspinal of London Webpage.* Source: Aspinal of London, 2012.

Neither the layout brings out associations to design and style, but rather simplicity and sophistication, leaving out superfluous visual effects. There is something classic British about the combination of white background and marine blue text. The British associations however might

be unconscious as one of the images displays a bag designed as the Union Jack and the word London is included in the brand name.

The images remind the reader of the authentic stores, as opposed to the virtual context in which they are published. They bring out elegance of dark furbished furniture, but also familiarity, as the store creates associations to a living room.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"Elegant, Sophisticated and Uniquely Distinctive"	Exclusivity, distinctiveness
	"…offering our customers the most beautiful objects of unsurpassed quality and design…"	Aesthetics, quality
	"…created by our designers and each handmade by genuine craftsmen…"	Expertise, exclusivity
	"We strive to achieve the highest standards of quality…"	Quality
	"We want you to enjoy the entire shopping experience with us…"	Customer experience
	"Most importantly we want you to feel a friend of the Aspinal team."	Spirit of community
	"Our business is your enjoyment of beautiful, quality, fine luxury goods."	Aesthetics, quality, luxury

(Aspinal of London, 2012)

The overarching cultural model that connects and integrates these situated meanings is the top-down model of fashion diffusion, as the text emphasizes themes such as exclusivity, distinction, aesthetics and superior quality. Notions of the trickle across model are also detectable. The letter creates an atmosphere of timelessness, as the situated meanings identified in the quotations do not explicitly appear to be connected to certain times or places. Even though notions of membership are pointed out, it does not have the same situational meaning of sense of belonging among groups of individuals as the bottom-up model suggests, but rather invites the customer to make friends with the brand.

Social goods are not frequently referred to, but there are a few examples. The images reflect class and there are further insinuations of hierarchy and class embedded in the text. These clearly adhere to the top-down model. The craftsmen are subordinated the designers and the goods are described as *beautiful, quality, fine luxury goods*, which could not emphasize the exclusiveness more.

In essence, the top down model is the cultural model shaping the general message the most. There are also some elements of trickle across diffusion, however not in a conflicting manner.

5.2.2 AQUASCUTUM

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the "About Aquascutum" and "History" sections of the webpage, where the company is presented. The section "About Aquascutum" consists of black, tiny text on a beige backdrop. Three different photos accompany the text. The "History" part has the same graphic layout as the "About Aquascutum" section, and is accompanied with one image.

The text is on the whole descriptive, providing an expressive image of the brand. It is narrative, often referring to the old days and the brand's long-standing recognition and success.
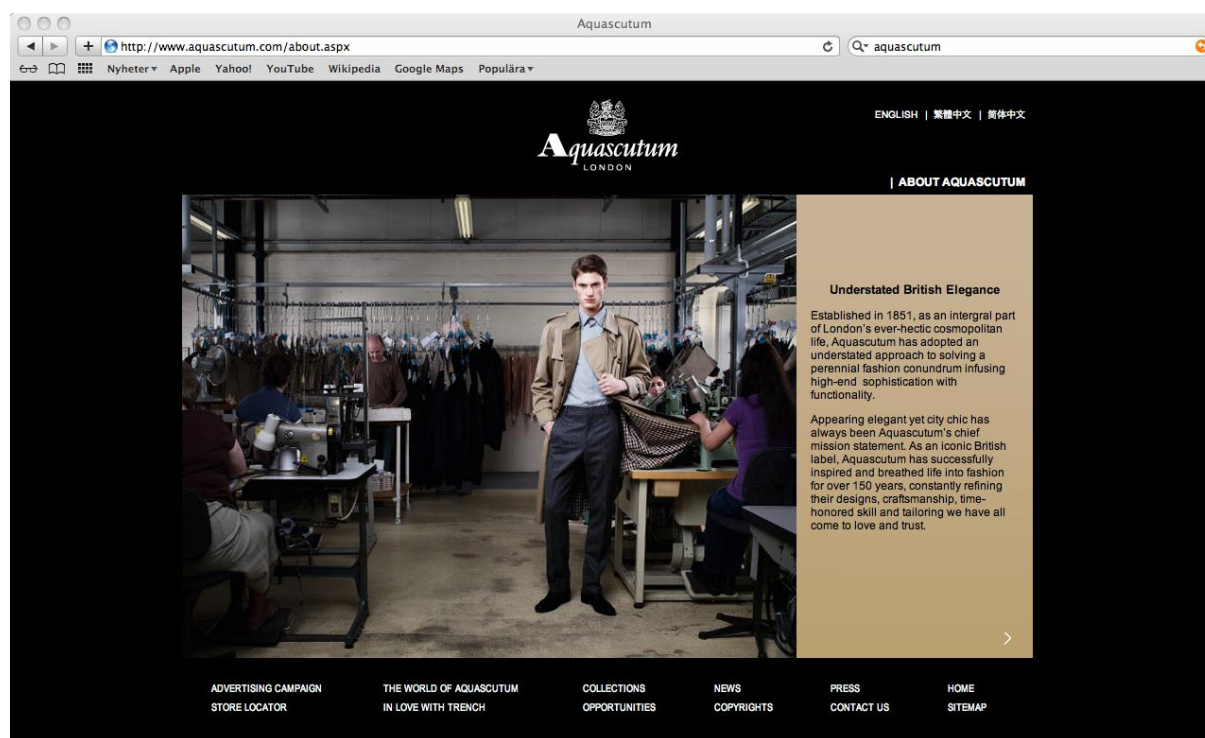

Figure 5.5. *Aquascutum Webpage*. Source: Aquascutum, 2012.

The first image of "About Aquascutum" is stylish and tasteful, giving an impression of being a snapshot of a workshop, yet a product of an arranged photo session with a professional male model in focus. The second image is a close up photography of a classic, masculine outfit; beige trench coat, dark blue and white striped shirt and a burgundy tie. The focus is however on the drops of water that magically stays on the surface of the trench coat. The last image is a black and white photo from back in the days, illustrating a man in a trench coat, assumedly in a preceding Aquascutum store. In essence, these images reflect masculinity, timeless fashion and technological expertise. The image accompanying the history section is a black and white photo

from an old workshop. The old-fashion impression is reinforced by a visual effect making the picture look like an old black and white video clip. Both text and images hence acknowledge old traditions.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"Established in 1851, as an integral part of London's ever-hectic cosmopolitan life, Aquascutum has adopted an understated approach to solving a perennial fashion conundrum infusing high-end sophistication and functionality."	History, urbanity, exclusivity, recognition, sophistication
	"Appearing and elegant yet city chic…"	Urbanity
	"As an iconic British label…"	Great Britain
	"…designs, craftsmanship, time-honored skill and tailoring we have all come to love and trust."	Heritage, quality
	"In 1851, John Emry developed the very first concept of water-proof sartorial clothing for his aristocratic clients and this notion was later adopted by the noble military."	Aristocracy, nobility
	"Liberating many from the day-to-day lives of the unpredictable British weather, it provided a stylish protection and created a new mode in fashion history."	Authenticity
	"To further amplify its British heritage, the famous house checkered designs have been continuously featured, marking its unmistakable quality and unmatchable sophistication in this quintessential British label."	Heritage, Great Britain, quality, sophistication
	"…it [Aquascutum] has been a popular choice of wear by many British royalty and politicians."	Royalty, power
	"…the innovative and luxurious Aquascutum clothing…"	Innovativeness, luxury
	"Beyond its high-fashion sensibility, Aquascutum is also known for its impressive durability and ruggedness…"	Quality
	"Its outerwear's customary British tailoring…"	Great Britain
	"Made in England pieces celebrate all the British hallmarks of Aquascutum - attention to detail, traditional craftsmanship and unquestionable authenticity."	Great Britain, tradition, authenticity

(Aquascutum, 2012)

The text provided by Aquascutum entails several situated meanings and values that can be traced both to time, place and artifacts. The British heritage and the city of London are strongly emphasized in terms of cosmopolitan references, hectic city life, rainy weather, quality and aesthetics, which all boil down to a functional all-in-one fashion design concept. Referring to a Mount Everest excursion indicates the utility for out door activities. The British associations are traceable to the bottom-up diffusion model in terms of urbanity and authenticity. Time is

emphasized through mentioning historical events, craftsmanship, iconic persons, and achievements, aristocracy and nobility, all adhering to the top-down cultural model.

The historical associations shape the occurrence of social goods such as class and power. The dominance of men in images, text and iconic wearers points out gender as a determining social good. The few females that are featured reflect class, status and power, as they are politicians, royalties or iconic movie stars, rather than ordinary people. Age is not explicitly expressed, but there is nothing obvious speaking to a younger audience, as the images only feature grown-ups and all celebrities mentioned probably are unknown or remote for many young people. The majority of the social goods that are featured adhere to the top-down model.

In essence, the message draws from a mixture of notions from all models, clearly adhering to typical British notions.

5.2.3 STELLA MCCARTNEY

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the "About Stella McCartney" section of the webpage, which presents the brand and summarizes Stella McCartney's achievements. The background is light pink, and the text is grey. The text is completed with a close-up portrait photo in of Stella McCartney.

The text is written in a story telling style; the success story about Stella McCartney and her World. In the text, there is no distinction made between Stella McCartney the individual and Stella McCartney the brand. It is clear that Stella McCartney is the designer in charge of the brand.

The background and the image, a close-up portrait of Stella McCartney herself, both have the same nuances of light pastel tones of grey and pink, which brings out feminine associations. On the whole, the layout of the website is modern, light, airy and well arranged, reflecting freshness and elegance.
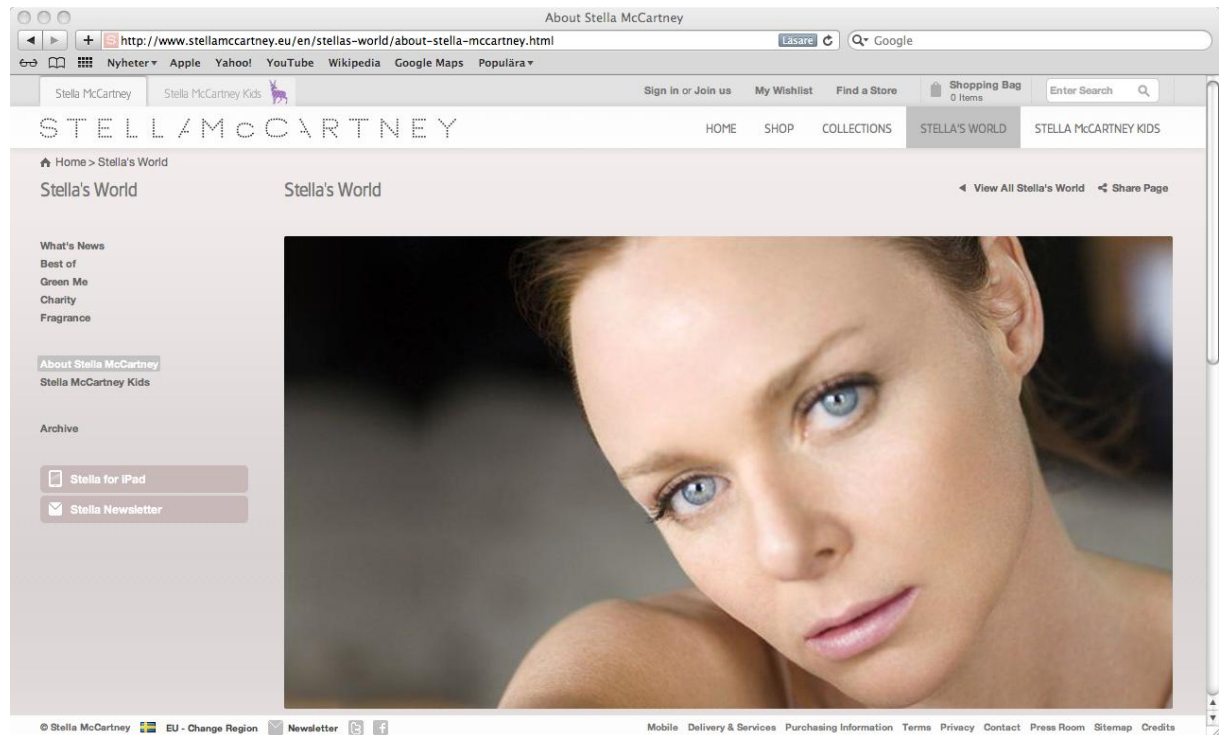
Figure 5.6. *Stella McCartney Webpage*. Source: Stella McCartney, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"Born and raised in London and the English countryside…"	Great Britain
	"A signature style of sharp tailoring, natural confidence and sexy femininity…"	Exclusivity, femininity
	"A lifelong vegetarian, Stella McCartney does not use any leather or fur in her designs."	Social awareness, politics
	"Stella McCartney now operates 16 freestanding stores in locations including Manhattan's Soho, London's Mayfair and Brompton Cross, LA's West Hollywood, Paris' Palais Royal, Milan and Tokyo."	Global recognition
	"In addition to the main line collection, a long-term partnership with adidas was introduced in September 2004. The critically acclaimed sports performance collection…"	Success
	"In 2005, the hugely successful one-off collection "Stella McCartney for H&M" sold out worldwide in record time."	Exclusivity, scarcity
	"…Stella McCartney's achievement in fashion and social awareness…"	Social awareness
	"For the Olympic Summer Games in 2012, Stella McCartney was appointed Team GB's Creative Director by adidas – the first time in history of the game that a leading fashion designer has designed the apparel for a country's team across all competitors for both the Olympic and the Paralympic Games."	Great Britain, recognition

(Stella McCartney, 2012)

The success story about Stella McCartney is strongly bound to contemporary times and events. The text many times refers to years when illustrating important lifetime achievements of the brand. The story draws on London and the English countryside, where Stella McCartney grew up. The assumedly simple life of the countryside is later on contrasted to the different cosmopolitan world locations where the brand now is present, such as Manhattan, LA, Paris, Milan and Tokyo. This comparison brings out aspiration; the girl from the country is now a citizen of the world through her brand. Great Britain is further emphasized in the sense that Stella McCartney has designed the 2012 Olympic Summer Games apparel for the national team, which reflect commitment, drive and new thinking, as she was the first leading fashion designer ever to be assigned the task.

Femininity is, apart from the image and layout, also reflected in the text when describing the signature style of the brand as *sharp tailoring, natural confidence and sexy femininity*. The exclusivity and femininity, classic top-down fashion diffusion attributes of the brand, are mixed with a, in the luxury context, revolting image of politics and social awareness associated with the bottom-up model, making up an interesting fusion.

The situated meanings in the text hence adhere to different cultural models. They draw femininity, recognition and aspiration from the top-down model, freedom of opinion, solidarity and democracy from the bottom-up model and creativity and innovation from the trickle across model.

There are few social goods relevant in the situation. The only characteristic feature is the gender aspect, where the female associations are at play, adhering to the top-down model. Even though there are representations of all models, there is no obvious competition between them, but rather an interaction. In essence, the main message seems to be "you can be both". You can be the girl from the countryside and at the same time the girl of the city. You can be vegetarian against fur, yet exclusively chic in quality materials. You can wear Stella McCartney to the gym and to the gala. You can be fashionable, yet socially aware. Even though this might be a matter of course for many people, this profile is rarely visible in the luxury fashion world.

5.3 ITALIAN BRANDS

5.3.1 SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the section of the homepage called "Our World", which presents the company's history, creations and craftsmanship. The layout is simple, black background and white text in capital letters. Black and white photos illustrating craftsmanship and historical moments accompany the text. A photo of one of the Salvatore Ferragamo stores accompanies the text covering the key message of the creations.

The text is informative and descriptive, focusing on the core business and history of the company. The name Salvatore Ferragamo refers both to the founding designer and the brand, but there is no information about the current creative director. The layout is simple and comprehensive. The images add glamour and elegance to the webpage design as they provide glimpses of a real-life Salvatore Ferragamo store, which is exclusively decorated in white and gold. The historical craftsmanship images add authenticity and expertise.
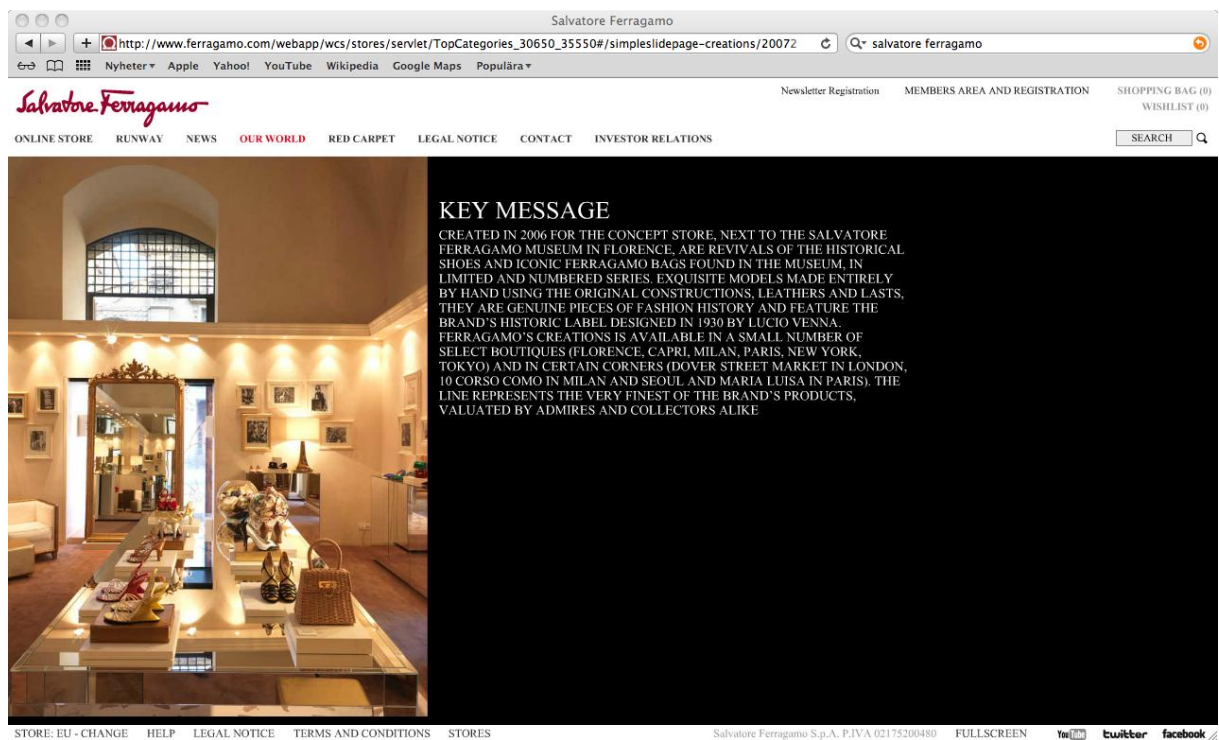

Figure 5.7. *Salvatore Ferragamo Webpage*. Source: Salvatore Ferragamo, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"Exquisite models made entirely by hand using the original constructions, leathers and lasts, they are genuine pieces of fashion history and feature the brand's historic label designed in 1930 by Lucio Venna."	Craftsmanship, exclusivity, quality, heritage

"Ferragamo's creations is (sic!) available in a small number of select boutiques (Florence, Capri, Milan, Paris, New York, Tokyo) and in certain corners (Dover Street Market in London, 10 Corso Como en Milan and Seoul and Maria Luisa in Paris)."	Exclusivity, fashion hubs
"The line represents the very finest of the brand's products, valuated by admires and collectors alike."	Exclusivity, recognition
"A traditional handcrafting process, tramezza is used to make a variety of different shoe models that hold their shape over time, with a perfect alignment of sole and upper. This complex process includes 320 separate stages and over four hours of manual crafting by expert cobblers for a durable, resistant shoe of unparalleled flexibility and comfort."	Heritage, craftsmanship, quality, expertise
"Tramezza shoes are fine works of art that last over time."	Art, quality
"Shoes remain Ferragamo's core business and the creative engine of its entire production. High quality is ensured by the attention given to model construction and the strong manual component that characterizes the production."	Creativity, quality, craftsmanship

(Salvatore Ferragamo, 2012)

The majority of the situated meanings, such as exclusivity, recognition, quality and heritage, adhere to the top-down paradigm of diffusion. Even though holding on to the manual techniques of shoemaking, creativity permeates the production process and brand image, which adds an element from the trickle across model.

National virtues are not explicitly expressed, but when reading between the lines, several characteristics of Italian fashion come clear; innovation, tradition, craftsmanship and quality. Even though pointing out the selectivity in representation, the brand favors several international hotspots of the fashion world; Milan, London, Paris and New York, as well as Tokyo and Seoul, indicating global recognition.

Salvatore Ferragamo offers fashion for both men and women, but there are no situated meanings indicating social goods such as gender, age or class. Both text and layout are relatively neutral, focusing on the production process and history, rather than indicating buying motivations or consumer profiles. Genuineness seems to be the recurring theme of message, which is clearly dominated by top-down diffusion attributes.

5.3.2 VALENTINO

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the section of the webpage presenting the Maison, Creative Directors and different Collections of the brands. The background is white with text in black and dark grey. Black and white photos of the Maison and the current creative directors Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccoli, accompany the texts.

The text is informative and descriptive, focusing on corporate information and the current creative directors. The layout and images are comprehensive, clear and stylistically pure. The main image depicts the entrance to a Valentino store or office, emphasizing the exclusive Valentino logo above the front door, casted in iron. The image of the designers is neutral.
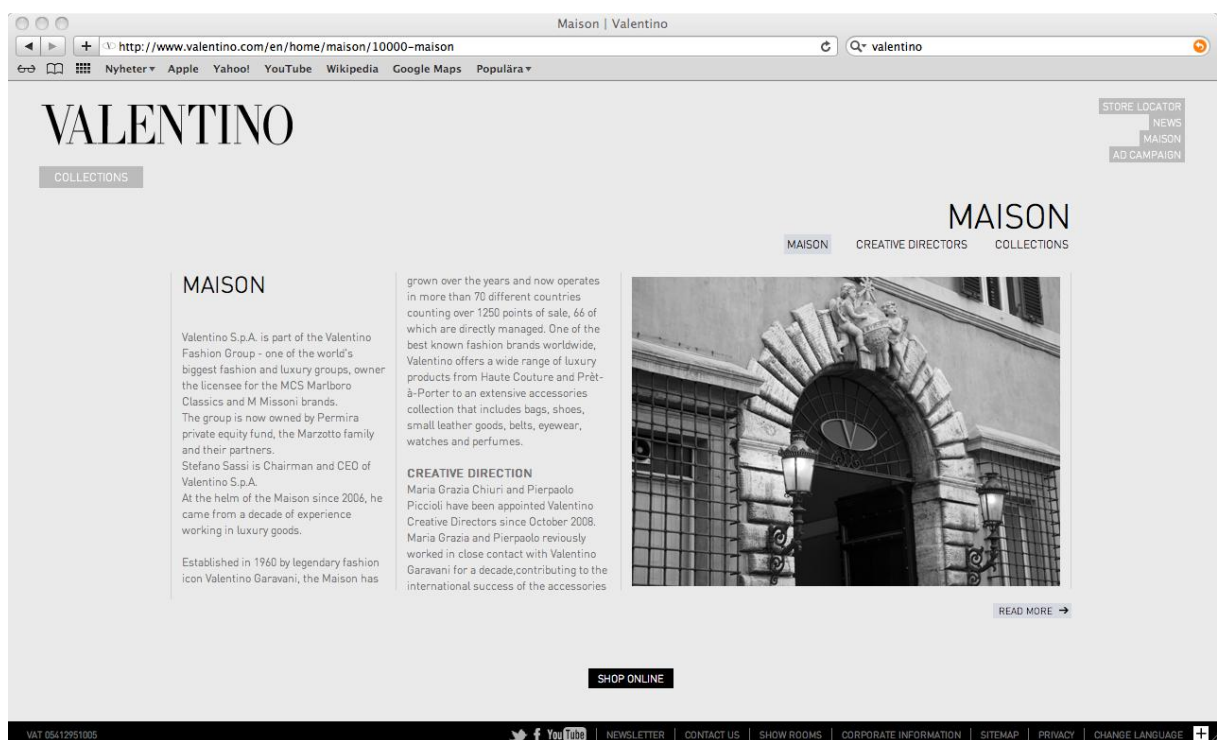

Figure 5.8. *Valentino Webpage*. Source: Valentino, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"Established in 1960 by legendary fashion icon Valentino Garavani, the Maison has grown over the years…"	Heritage
	"Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccoli's July 2009 Haute Couture collection expresses their new vision of the Valentino woman: an extreme elegance that affects her entire way of being. "	Modernity, exclusivity, femininity
	"…Valentino's iconic style."	Uniqueness
	"Their creativity was well-received from the start, obtaining unanimous approval in the world of fashion. Hollywood stars, socialites and fashion leaders have worn and appreciated their creations."	Creativity, glamour

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"Fragile and dangerous nature interweaved with a cult of uniqueness and distinction, are all elements captured for their creations."	Attitude, uniqueness, distinctiveness
"Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccoli's stylistic approach is defined by their sense of contemporary nourished by contrasts and love for a mélange of visual, artistic and literary inputs synthesized in a vibrant and distinctive style. A fusion of styles and languages is the key to their method."	Art, distinctiveness, style, variety
"Condensed and simplified, the grace and precious delicacy that have always been a part of Valentino's DNA are now contemporary and full of contrasts. The spirit of time has entered the atelier and changed the cards on the table."	Uniqueness, newness
"Everything, without distinction, expresses Valentino style. Heritage and style, tradition and innovation coexist in the concept of a new future."	Heritage, style, tradition, modernity
"Valentino Haute Couture offers a variety of collections made up of unique items singularly handcrafted in the prestigious atelier situated in Rome."	Exclusivity, Italy
"Valentino Prêt-à-Porter presents sophisticated, exclusive lines for women and men intended for an elegant, but unconventional young clientele belonging to the new international jet set."	Exclusivity, modernity
"Valentino Roma combines seductive charm with modern elegance, interpreting the contemporary woman's lifestyle in an elegant Prêt-à-Porter collection."	Modernity, lifestyle, femininity

(Valentino, 2012)

The message mainly draws on attributes of the top-down paradigm: exclusivity, femininity and distinctiveness. In addition, there are elements from the trickle across model expressing modernity, newness and variety. The fusion of the two models is summarized in the brand's description of the Valentino style: *Heritage and style, tradition and innovation coexist in the concept of a new future.* Important to note is the coexistence; there is no contradiction between the elements.

Situated meanings of national origin are explicitly pointed out by emphasizing Rome and Roma, but also through the references to innovation, tradition, craftsmanship and quality. Several traditional French luxury expressions, such as atelier, haute couture and maison, are applied in order to underline these Italian luxury qualities. Global affiliation is expressed by emphasizing the Hollywood red carpet presence.

The description of the typical Valentino woman: *an extreme elegance that affects her entire way of being*, concentrates the social goods expressed in the message. Class is here indicated by the extreme elegance of the brand and its recognition in the spheres of *Hollywood stars, socialites and fashion*

leaders. Gender is expressed by the feminine attributes, also visible in *the contemporary woman's lifestyle*, even though the brand turns both to men and women. Age, class and power are indicated in the intended *unconventional young clientele belonging to the new international jet set*. Youth is not present in the sense that the bottom-up models suggests; as a source of inspiration, but is rather a tool for positioning the brand at the high end of luxury, focusing on young, cosmopolitan customers. The social goods reflect, in accordance with the message in its completeness, a fusion of the top-down and trickle-across models, however with a dominance of the former.

5.3.3 VERSACE

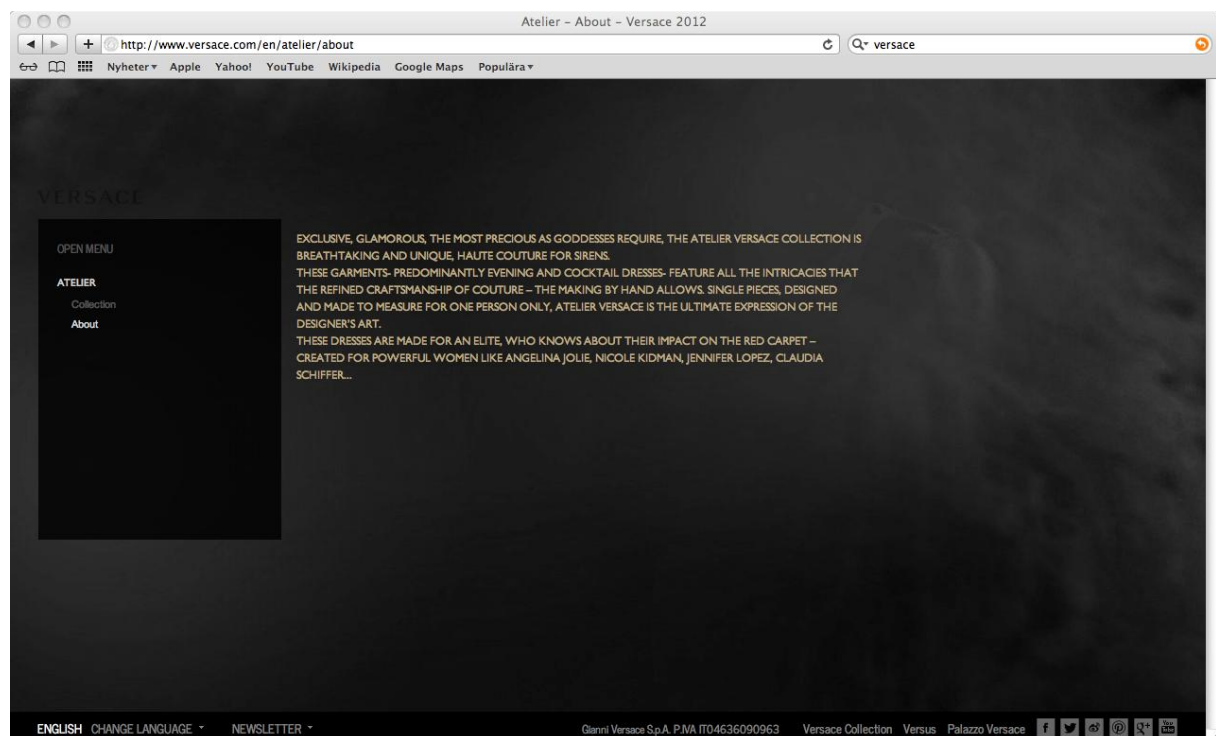| *SEMIOTIC BUILDING*	The selected text resides from the webpages of two different Versace lines; Atelier Versace and Versus. These two particular lines are selected because they represent an interesting two folded approach. The text that covers Atelier comes from the "About Atelier" section of the webpage. The background is dark and the text is written in capital letters in gold. The Versus text resides from the history part of the Versus collection, which covers history about the brand and its designers, Donatella Versace and Christopher Kane. The backdrop is a photo of what looks like a tiled wall in a metro station. The text is small and black on a white background. There is one picture of Donatella Versace and Christopher Kane together with some models, probably taken before or after a fashion show.

Figure 5.9. *Versace Atelier Webpage*. Source: Versace, 2012a.

The Atelier text is cogent and coherent, covering what the reader needs to know in terms of brand idea. There is no image accompanying the text, but the dark and fastidious layout reveals something about cleanliness and exclusivity. The Versus text is similar in approach, yet adding

some information about the designer. The image is interesting and creative, as it makes the reader think about its purpose and meaning.
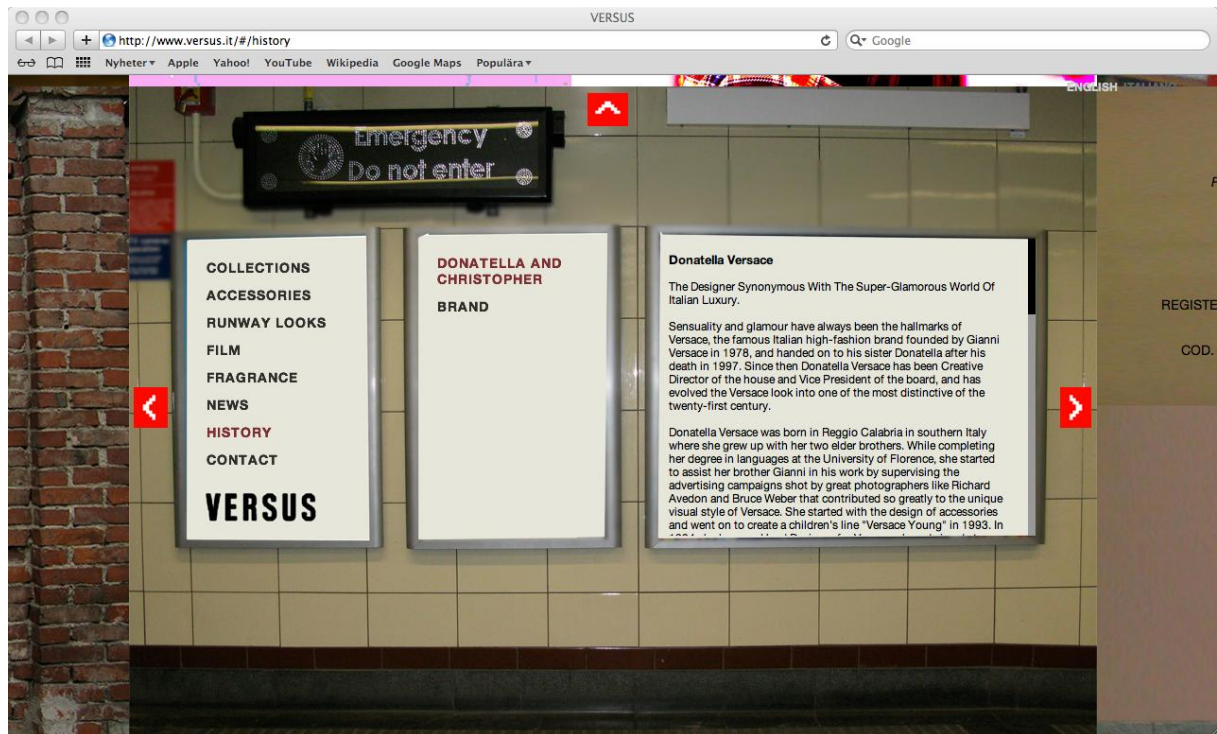

Figure 5.10. *Versace Versus Webpage.* Source: Versace, 2012b.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
SEMIOTIC BUILDING	"Exclusive, glamorous, the most precious as goddesses require, the atelier Versace collection is breathtaking and unique, haute couture for sirens."	Exclusivity, glamour, femininity
	"These garments- predominantly evening and cocktail dresses-feature all the intricacies that the refined craftsmanship of couture – the making by hand allows."	Craftsmanship, quality, exclusivity
	"Single pieces, designed and made to measure for one person only, Atelier Versace is the ultimate expression of the designer's art." (Versace, 2012a)	Exclusivity, art
	"The Designer Synonymous With The Super-Glamorous World Of Italian Luxury."	Italy, luxury, glamour
	"Sensuality and glamour have always been the hallmarks of Versace, the famous Italian high-fashion brand founded by Gianni Versace in 1978, and handed on to his sister Donatella Versace after his death in 1997."	Glamour, Italy, heritage
	"In 1994 she [Donatella Versace] became Head Designer for Versus, a brand aimed at younger fashion enthusiasts."	Youth

"Since then Donatella Versace has been Creative Director of the house and Vice President of the board, and has evolved the Versace look into one of the most distinctive of the twenty-first century."	Distinctiveness, exclusivity
"Created for those who want evolve their own individual style, Gianni Versace introduced Versus in 1989 describing it as, "Versus was born with an innate creative approach, with a strong focus on innovation, flair and the unconventional. A (sic!) artistic force that takes fashion forward, anticipating new trends and embracing challenge"."	Individuality, creativity, innovation, art
"…its distinctive 'rock-chic' style."	Distinctiveness
"From 1995 to 2003, Versus was shown in New York during New York fashion week, as it was closest matched city to the brand's rock'n roll DNA and host to the most important celebrities from the global music scene who were devoted to line's avant-garde style." (Versace, 2012b)	Street style, avant-gardism, urbanity

The texts emphasize exclusivity, femininity, quality, luxury, glamour and distinctiveness in accordance with the top-down diffusion model. These attributes are mixed with urbanity, youth and avantgardism, adhering to the bottom-up model, and individuality, creativity and innovation of the trickle across model.

The brand clearly draws on the Italian origin by describing Donatella Versace as *The Designer Synonymous With The Super-Glamorous World Of Italian Luxury* and by referring to *Italian high-fashion*. Situated meanings of innovation, tradition, craftsmanship and quality further strengthen the Italian image. At the same time, there are French expressions such as haute couture and avant-garde, applied in order to illuminate the luxurious and artistic flair of the brand. New York is further referred to when pointing out the urban, rock-rebellious traits of the Versus line. Hence, there is a balance between local and global.

Referring to goddesses, evening and cocktail dresses, haute couture, and glamour, attributes that indicate femininity, and also clearly emphasizes class. In addition, youth and independence are further expressed social goods, which makes up a fusion between the top-down and trickle across models.

Overall, all models are mixed without interference, in the same sense that national origin is mixed with international references, however still within the luxury fashion world.

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5.4 AMERICAN BRANDS

5.4.1 COACH

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The passage of analysis resides from the company profile section of the webpage, where the brand presents its heritage and vision. The section called "Company Profile" has a clean, black and white, simple style. The text is rather tiny, written in dark grey color on white background. Next to the text is a black and white photo of a sewing machine needle. There is no music or sound, but at the time when I entered the webpage there was a possibility to listen to a webcast called "Coach, Inc. at Piper Jaffray Consumer Conference".

The text is highly informative, illuminating former achievements and present position, product selection and strategy of the company. In addition, the webcast strengthens the corporate approach of the message even more. Neither the layout of text and image reveal much about the brand image, as it is rather ordinary and boring, using no colors or visual effects. The image of a sewing machine needle however indicates handcraft and high quality.
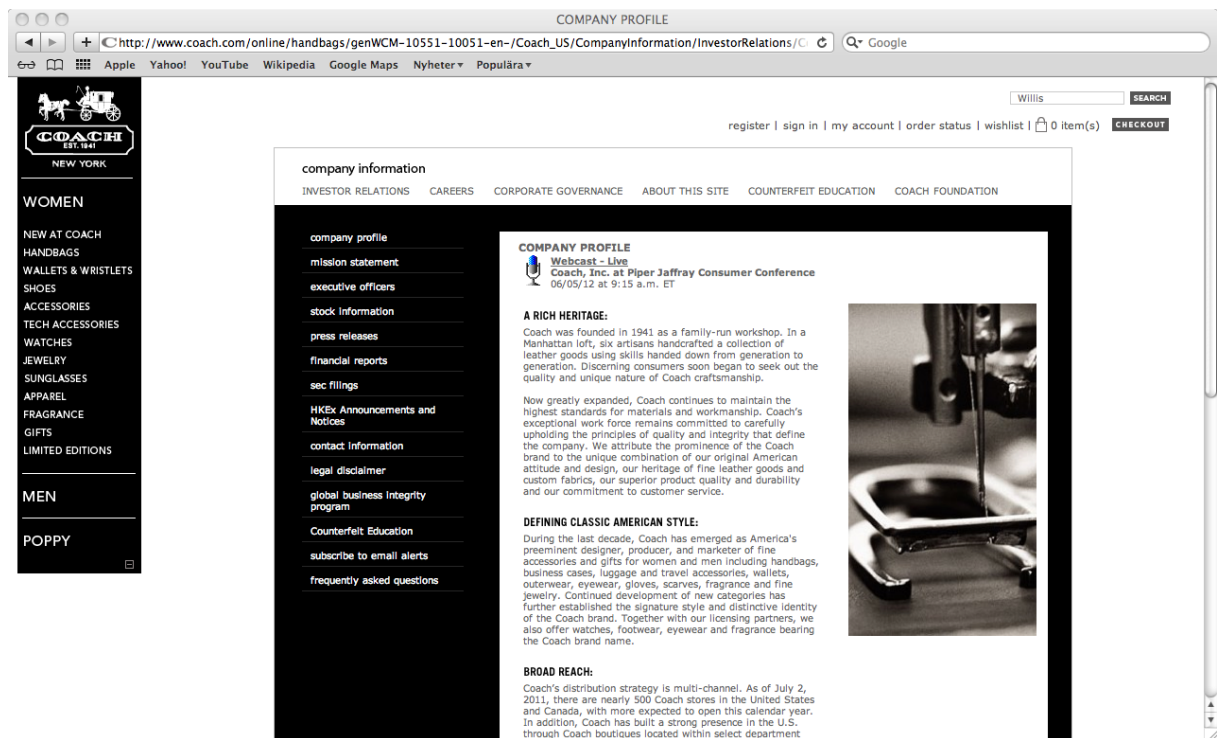
Figure 5.11. *Coach Webpage*. Source: Coach, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"In a Manhattan loft, six artisans handcrafted a collection of leather goods using skills handed down from generation to generation."	Urbanity, tradition, craftsmanship
	"Coach was founded in 1941 as a family run workshop."	Family tradition

"Now greatly expanded, Coach continues to maintain the highest standards for materials and workmanship. Coach's exceptional work force remains committed to carefully upholding the principles of quality and integrity that define the company. We attribute the prominence to the Coach brand to the unique combination of our original American attitude and design, our heritage of fine leather goods and custom fabrics, our superior product quality and durability and our commitment to customer service."	Prosperity, confidence, quality, exclusivity, America, tradition, originality
"Defining classic American style:"	America
"During the last decade, Coach has emerged as America's preeminent designer, producer, and marketer of fine accessories and gifts for women and men including handbags, business cases, luggage and travel accessories, wallets, outerwear, eyewear, gloves, scarves, fragrance and fine jewelry."	America, diversity
"Continued development of new categories has further established the signature style and distinctive identity of the Coach brand. Together with our licensing partners, we also offer watches, footwear, eyewear and fragrance bearing the Coach brand name."	Distinction, individuality
"Coach's corporate headquarters remain in mid-town Manhattan on 34th Street, in the location of our former factory lofts."	Urbanity, tradition

(Coach, 2012)

The overarching cultural model is the top-down diffusion model, reflected in the situated meanings of tradition, popularity, quality, exclusivity, distinction and craftsmanship. The fact that the brand started as a family run workshop adds a pinch of authenticity, as illustrated by the bottom-up model.

In the text, America is emphasized as the main source of inspiration in terms of originality, attitude, design and style. In essence, these features make up the classic American lifestyle, where the broad product selection reflects the accessibility typical for American brands. These concepts adhere to the bottom-up model in terms of solidarity, membership and diversity and to the mass commercial traits of the trickle across model. Furthermore, being the leader of the American market is a statement used in order to emphasize recognition and popularity, attributes of the top-down model.

Social goods are detectable neither in the text nor in the graphic layout. In fact, the message reveals little about the assumed consumer, but rather focuses on telling the corporate story from the early days until today. Time varies, whereas the place remains the same. Old is becoming new, a watchword strongly tied to the trickle across cultural model.

To summarize, even though representations of the top-down model dominates, all models are present in the communicated message. Because no social goods are emphasized, the different models do not explicitly contradict each other.

5.4.2 PROENZA SCHOULER

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected texts reside from the "About Us" section of the webpage, where the company and its achievements are presented. The text is white on a black background. The backdrop looks like a figured fabric in light shades of pink and yellow.

The text is mostly descriptive, focusing on the short history and core characteristics of the brand, together with a brief presentation of the designers behind the success. The interplay between layout and colors is exciting and new thinking, drawing on the dynamism and futurism of the American fashion hub, and on the creativity and innovation of the trickle across model.
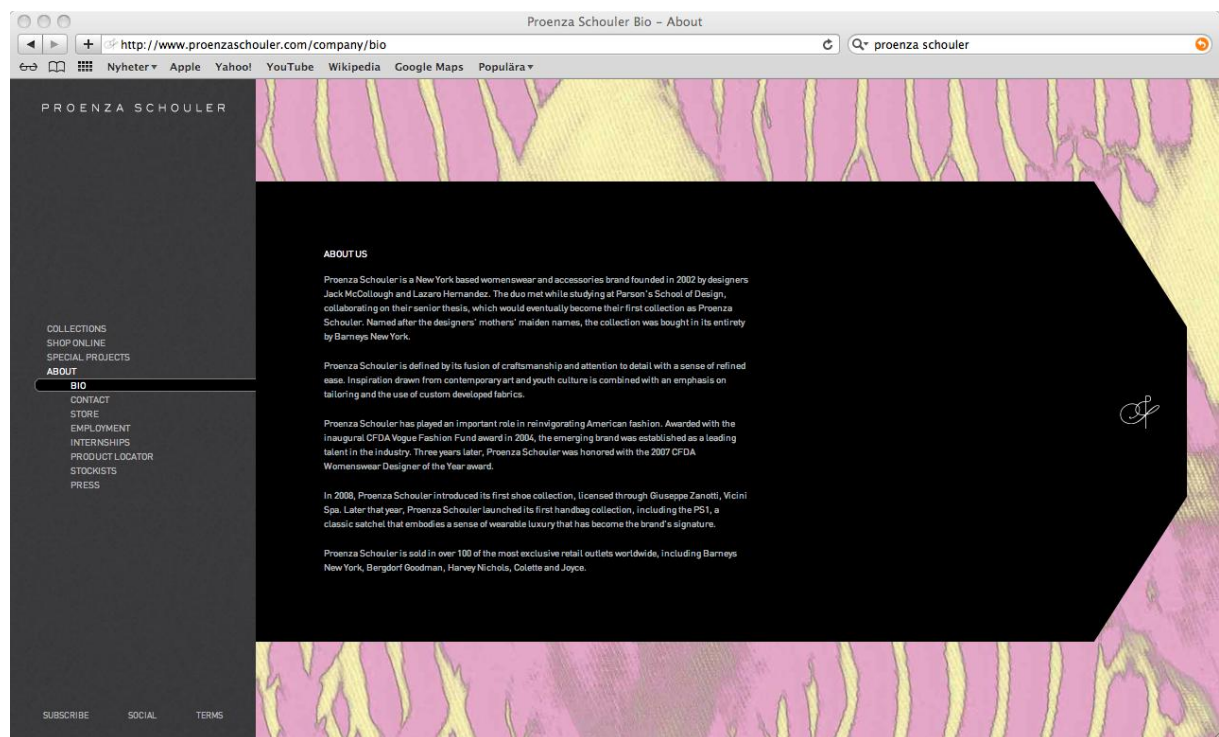
Figure 5.12. *Proenza Schouler Webpage.* Source: Proenza Schouler, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
SEMIOTIC BUILDING	"Proenza Schouler is a New York based womenswear and accessories brand founded in 2002 by designers Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez."	Femininity
	"Proenza Schouler is defined by its fusion of craftsmanship and attention to detail with a sense of refined ease."	Craftsmanship

"Inspiration drawn from contemporary art and youth culture is combined with an emphasis on tailoring and the use of custom developed fabrics."	Art, modernity, youth culture, quality, exclusivity
"Proenza Schouler has played an important role in reinvigorating American fashion."	Recognition, newness, America
"Proenza Schouler is sold in over 100 of the most exclusive retail outlets worldwide, including Barneys New York, Bergdorf Goodman, Harvey Nichols, Colette and Joyce."	The fashion world, exclusivity
"Later that year, Proenza Schouler launched its first handbag collection, including the PS1, a classic satchel that embodies a sense of wearable luxury that has become the brand's signature."	Femininity, luxury, wearability, uniqueness

(Proenza Schouler, 2012)

In accordance with the new-thinking graphic design, the text is bound to modernity and contemporary times, which probably is a result of the brand's modest age. Applying metaphors such as a *fusion of craftsmanship and attention to detail with a sense of refined ease* and *reinvigorating American fashion* bring out curiosity, dynamism and innovation, connected to the trickle across model. Notions traditionally related to the top-down model, such as craftsmanship, art and luxury, are applied, but in twisted versions that make them adhere better to the trickle across model: the craftsmanship is as already implied spiced with modern vibes, inspiration is drawn from *contemporary* art, and the satchel is described as *wearable* luxury. The emphasis put on tailoring and custom developed fabrics is however clearly associated with the top down model. The bottom-up model is represented in the sense that the brand draws its inspiration from youth culture.

National references are present, but not overarching. Proenza Schouler is illustrated as a truly American brand, however with a strong global appeal, sold in numerous prestigious and exclusive retail outlets.

In terms of social goods, the feminine gender is the one most emphasized, both in the light pink background, which brings associations to femininity, and in text pointing out the launch of the famous satchel PS1 and the product selection focusing on womenswear and accessories. These feminine associations derive from the top-down model.

In essence, the message is well balanced and coherent, even though referring to several cultural models. It is new thinking, yet genuinely exclusive.

5.4.3 VERA WANG

SEMIOTIC BUILDING	The selected text resides from the company profile section of the webpage, where the company is presented. The section about the company has a black background with white text. The passage is accompanied by a collage of photos in color of Vera Wang (the designer) together with some of her designs.

The text is informative describing Vera Wang's achievements and characteristics, without making any distinction between the designer as a person and the brand she represents. The dominating black background brings out comprehensive masculine associations, which in combination with the black clothes, long black hair and black leather boots in the images produce "rock'n'roll" vibes. Keeping in mind that Vera Wang started out in the bridal industry, which still constitutes the main part of the product lines, this picture is somewhat distorted.
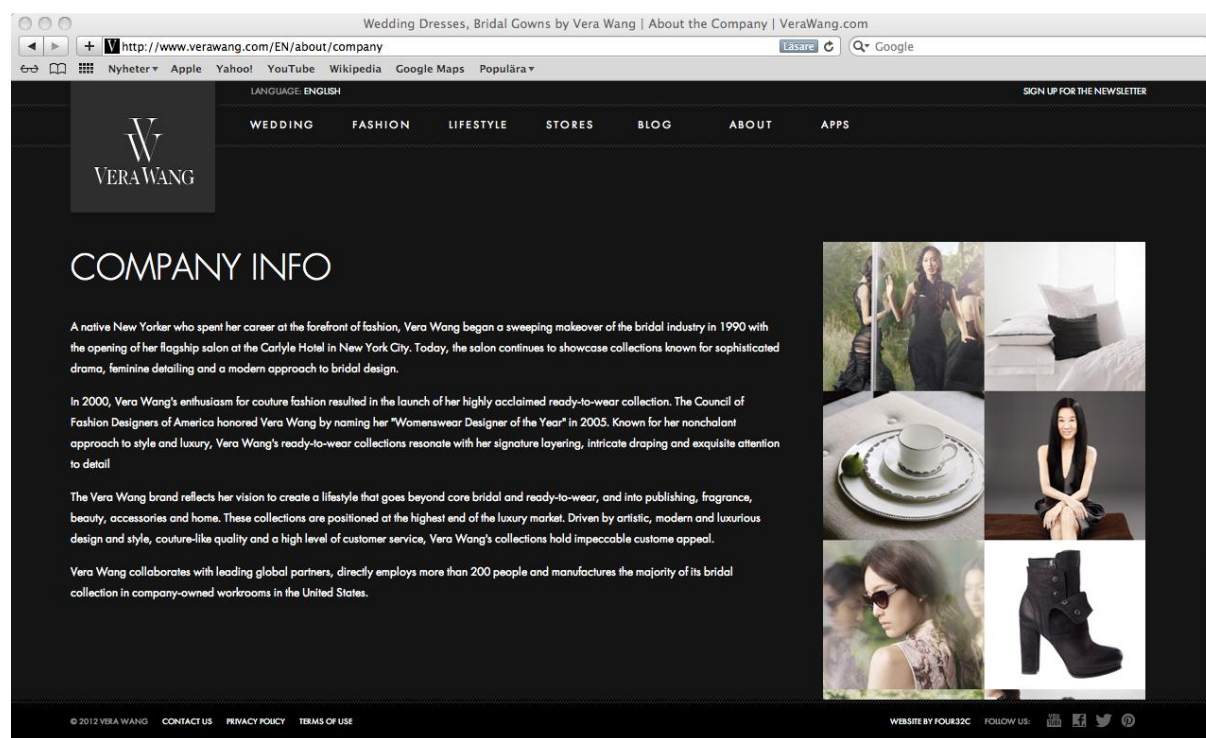
Figure 5.13. *Vera Wang Webpage.* Source: Vera Wang, 2012.

	Quotation	Situated Meaning
WORLD BUILDING	"A native New Yorker who spent her career at the forefront of fashion, Vera Wang began a sweeping makeover of the bridal industry in 1990 with opening her flagship salon at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City."	New York, innovation
	"Today, the salon continues to showcase collections known for sophisticated drama, feminine detailing and a modern approach to bridal design."	Sophistication, modernity, femininity

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"…her highly acclaimed ready-to-wear collection."	Recognition
"The Council of Fashion Designers of America honored Vera Wang by naming her "Womenswear Designer of the Year" in 2005."	Recognition, America
"The Vera Wang brand reflects her vision to create a lifestyle that goes beyond core bridal ready-to-wear, and into publishing, fragrance, beauty, accessories and home."	Lifestyle, diversity
"…couture-like quality and a high level of customer service…"	Customer
"Known for her nonchalant approach to style and luxury, Vera Wang's ready-to-wear collections resonate with her signature layering, intricate draping and exquisite attention to detail"	Exclusivity
"…positioned at the highest end of the luxury market."	Exclusivity
"…impeccable customer appeal."	Desire
"Driven by artistic, modern, and luxurious design and style…"	Modernity

(Vera Wang, 2012)

The contradicting elements in the semiotic building may be explained by the fact that Vera Wang provides a rebellious image in relation to the bridal industry, illustrated in the text as *a sweeping makeover of the bridal industry*, *a modern approach to bridal design* and *a lifestyle that goes beyond core bridal ready-to-wear*. This modern approach goes in line with the freedom of opinion, represented by the bottom-up model and the freedom, independence and creativity represented by the trickle across model.

Attributes such as exclusivity, sophistication, femininity and desire, drawn from the top-down model, are emphasized through the use of classic French luxury fashion expressions like *flagship salon* and *couture-like quality*. In the text, French traditional associations to luxury and high quality are mixed with American references to metropolitan life, modernity and lifestyle, which rather adhere to the bottom-up and trickle across models. References to America and New York are however the only situated meanings bound to place.

Class is insinuated through emphasizing high levels of quality, customer appeal and luxury. There is however a vagueness lying in the fact that the designer has a *nonchalant approach to style and luxury* while the brand is *positioned at the highest end of the luxury market*. The nonchalant approach points towards authenticity, as suggested by the bottom-up model, while high-end luxury rather points towards the top-down model. Mixing attributes of masculinity with the distinguishing quality of femininity associated with bridal dresses is another ambiguity. In this sense, the message is not

clear and coherent. On the other hand, this might be exactly the intention behind the act, pointing out its pioneering approach to luxury fashion.

To summarize, the message draws from all models and clearly mediates the brands somewhat rebellious approach to both luxury fashion and bridal dressing, where the American influence is emphasized.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The three paradigms of fashion dissemination have for a long time dominated the views of how fashions emanate and diffuse (Crane, 1999; Davis, 1992; Field, 1970; Polhemus, 1994; Sproles, 1981). In my study, I develop these ideas by outlining their relation to business strategy. I argue that cultural theory of fashion diffusion and national identities provide a comprehensive foundation for strategic brand communication by offering a wide and flexible spectrum of variables for designing nuanced brand identities. My argument draws from two major empirical findings from the analysis.

First of all, all models of fashion diffusion are employed in the messages of the sample, and there is a clear order of precedence. Attributes of the top-down paradigm, the model most traditionally associated with luxury fashion, and the only model from which all brands of the sample draw, are most salient. The second most featured cultural model is the trickle across model, and the third is the bottom-up model. The messages of the sample show several ways in which the models are strategically applied for sophisticated communication (Kotler, 2003; Kozinetz, 1999; Solca et al., 2010b) by targeting specific consumer groups, marking sovereignty, expressing uniqueness, indicating high-end brand position, creating desirability and emphasizing popularity and recognition, among others.

Secondly, representing four of the world's leading geographic circles for fashion, all brands refer to their nations of origin, predominantly in order to distinguish the brand from others by marking out its originality. However, my study reveals that brands also draw from *other* national fashion identities than their own, for example in order to mark out global appeal, to target certain "lifestyles" such as urban-, cosmopolitan-, jet set-, or country living, or to enforce statements and achievements. For these purposes, French and American attributes are most prominent. French words and expressions, or references to France or Paris, are mainly applied for strengthening the luxurious impression, fashion tradition and outstanding quality. On the other end of the continuum, American attributes or references to New York are applied in order to mark out rock-rebellious elements and avant-gardism. For marking their global presence, several brands list different international, mostly Western, fashion hotspots and famous exclusive department stores. Interestingly, a great majority of the brands, and especially the French ones, residing from

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the very luxury origin (Breward, 2010; Elzingre & Hodgson, 2010), emphasize internationality more than national affiliation.

These two overarching propositions have a number of implications that I now will account for, starting with the role of the overarching cultural models of fashion diffusion in strategic communication.

The fact that the diffusion paradigms in my study are mixed in all kinds of ways shows that the models coexist. This condition does not mean that they dissolve, but that it is possible to extract fragments from all of them that in turn can be integrated, connected and combined in a multitude of variations. The specific ways in which they are applied make up the brand distinctiveness, where variables like age, class, origin, power, and gender come to play.

Arguing that the diffusion paradigms are flexible, versatile and can be divided into a number of different categories adds a new perspective to diffusion theory, as my study shows that there is no explicit conflict between the models. The great majority of the literature on the subject (Davis, 1992; Field, 1970; Polhemus, 1994; Sproles, 1981) tends to juxtapose the three fashion diffusion paradigms by comparing and contrasting them, and thereof treating them as discrete units in conflict. As an example, the top-down model and the bottom-up model are most commonly described as exact opposites of each other (Field, 1970; Polhemus, 1994).

Another direct effect of the wide and dynamic applicability of the diffusion paradigms is that luxury fashion consumers no longer can be categorized according to the three conventional perspectives of diffusion. Instead, consumer groups fit into different combinations of the models. As many commentators (e.g. Jansen et al., 2007; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Polhemus, 1994) point out; social class adherence does not unite or form groups of people, and the higher class is not considered a powerful minority in the diffusion process in contemporary developed Western societies. The underlying mechanisms are far more multifarious; organizations and individuals are tied together in circles or networks by complex sets of social interactions (Davis, 1992; Jansen et al., 2007). This is one possible explanation to why the diffusion paradigms have changed their operational role, developing a more sophisticated field of application.

Continuing to the observed order of precedence among the diffusion paradigms, a few aspects are worth mentioning. Firstly, the top-down model has for a long time represented the

dominating approach to luxury fashion and was the very first model to describe the social movement of styles. Even though this paradigm predominates my sample of investigation, the model has clearly lost its original role as absolute ruler. Secondly, the top-down and trickle-across paradigms play the new principal parts by in conjunction provide the ultimate balance between tradition and modernity, exclusivity and commercialization, timelessness and trendiness, local and global, and so on and so forth. This supports market tendencies observed by many scholars (Crane, 1999; Kapferer, 2012; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Thomas, 2007): there are no longer any rules of fashion. Luxury companies have left their previous roles as dictators of fashions to now offer a diversified set of trends in "the supermarket of style" (Polhemus, 1994). Luxury is not privileged only a few, as luxury items and industrial fashion have come to complement, rather than exclude, each other (Crane, 1999; Davis, 1992; Kapferer, 2012; Polhemus, 1994).

Having established the main implications generated by my first proposition, I will now turn to the conclusions related to my findings regarding national fashion identities and the role of international fashion hubs. The dual capacity of applying national fashion identities in brand promotion is the finding that surprised me the most and which has the largest implications for business.

In the contemporary industrial environment where global expansion permeates business strategies (Kapferer, 2012; Solca et al., 2010a), there seems to be a need for expressing and balancing both national qualities that have been passed on by heredity, *and* the global status the brand possesses on the international market. The fact that the national fashion identities consist of the same components as the diffusion paradigms means that also they are applied in the same interactive way. As the fashion hubs are outspoken global brands rich in symbolic capital (Gilbert, 2000), they are all effective for communicating brand attitude. Referring to brand origin is supported by literature on national fashion identities that tend to describe a rivalry and prosperity among the global fashion hot spot brands (Breward, 2010; Gilbert, 2000; Polhemus, 2005), which in turn motivates a somewhat "patriotic" approach to marketing.

More strikingly, my study indicates that globalism has become more important than national origin, a tendency that in the long run can undermine the luxury industry's particularly strong link to national branding (Polhemus, 2005). The change may be explained by Porter's (1990) argument that national values at some point are exported through media and other transnational

social communication channels to eventually end up in a global blend. The extensive market strategies mentioned above may have facilitated this procedure.

Lastly, this finding adds to the discussion about globalization, non-globalism, exoticism and Western prevalence in the fashion industry, initiated by Polhemus (2005) and Teunissen (2005). I argue that globalism is more prominent in the brand messages than the national origins are. However, the references to globalism almost exclusively rest on the Western fashion hubs' appeal. Hence, the brands refer to the global *fashion* world, which according to sample still is under strong Western influence. This is supported by the industrial analysis, which points out the Asian, and particularly Chinese, preference for traditional Western luxury brands (Chevalier & Lu, 2011; Kapferer, 2012). However, this does not support the argument that there is no unity among the Western national identities (Polhemus, 2005) and neither has the Western influence lost its prescribing role in the fashion world (Teunissen, 2005). Therfore, it is justified to gear the discussion towards what *is* global in the fashion world. In the sample, the brand's actual creations and designs may be strongly influenced by other national references than Western ones, but the brand's actual self-presentations do not reveal such influences.

Summarizing the main findings from my study, I would like to return to the very beginning of my project. When initiating my study, I was truly fascinated by the theory on fashion diffusion and fashion's strong relationship to national branding. In this thesis I was able to operationalize both theories and apply them to luxury brands in a contemporary context. However, only in a limited way, as my study is delimited to a small sample, only the website media, and only brands from four major Western nations.

However, the findings from my study are clear: paradigms and national identities are not in competition, they are freely mixed. This is therefore my biggest contribution to the study of luxury marketing and diffusion: the diffusion paradigms and national fashion identities are not only applied in isolation for distinguishing purposes, such as for marking out origin, categorizing consumers, or adhering to tradition. Instead, they are applied in conjunction in order to describe and relate to new phenomenon such as global affiliation, miscellaneous consumers, and unique widely attractive, brand identities. Hence, the individual roles of the models and identities have not lost their influence, but have acquired new and versatile strategic positions that multiply their authority in contemporary luxury fashion promotion.

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APPENDICES

History
Once upon a time the world's great fashion designers formed an extremely closed circle of nimble fingered, white-coated craftsmen. Season after season in their tailor's workshops they redefined Parisian fashion and worldwide trends. Hubert de Givenchy was one of them.

Born in 1927, at the age of seventeen Hubert James Taffin de Givenchy left his birthplace in Beauvais for Paris, at a time when the couturier business was still passed on from master to apprentice. He learned from Jacques Fath, Robert Piguet, Lucien Lelong (recommended by Christian Dior) and in Elsa Schiaparelli's famous salons of Place Verdôme.

Foreseeing relaxed chic and the democratization of luxury, which together marked the end of the century, in 1952 Givenchy launched "separates", light skirts and puff-sleeved blouses made from raw cotton – previously reserved for fittings only.

Two years later Hubert de Givenchy was the first major designer to present a luxury ready-to-wear line, "Givenchy Université". More than any other, this was a designer who maintained close relations with his famous clients. No surprise there, he wanted to dress women. All women. From Paris to New York, Hubert de Givenchy's fashions came out of the salons and down to the street. In 1953 one of Hubert de Givenchy's designs was featured on the cover of Life magazine.

The best dressed women in the world were keen to be part of it – Lauren Bacall, Babe Paley, Greta Garbo, Elizabeth Taylor, Marlène Dietrich, Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis, Princess Grace of Monaco and Wallis Simpson, for whom the designer created special covers, to preserve the Duchess's envied orders from prying eyes. They were made in Windsor blue.

In 1953 Hubert de Givenchy received the wrong Miss Hepburn, because it was Audrey Hepburn, and not, as planned, the great Katharine, who arrived for a fitting in a tied-up T-shirt, tight trousers, sandals and a gondolier hat. The result was a relationship that lasted forty years, with the Anglo-classic such as Sabrina, Breakfast at Tiffany's and Funny Face.

Hepburn entered the circle of the world's smartest women and Hubert de Givenchy's fame spread worldwide. Together the designer and his muse defined a new kind of beauty: exhaustive perfection of lines, narrow hips, willowy body and swan's neck…… The sixties ingenuous style was born chez Givenchy.

In 1957, Hubert de Givnechy again made the headlines by using Hepburn to promote his first perfume, L'Interdit. It was the first time that an actress had allowed her face to be used in perfumery. Success was enormous, with American market immediately won over. This was when the designer's clientele became almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon.

The information era made Hubert de Givenchy a superstar fashion designer – immortalised by Irving Penn and Richard Avedon, sketched by René Gruau and Christian Bérard – his supreme elegance became in 1973 the ideal example for his men's fashion line, "Gentleman Givenchy". Even today that look remains a benchmark.

Having delayed launching licences (sic!) on the advice of his friend and mentor, the legendary designer Cristóbal Balenciaga, Hubert de Givenchy made up his mind to do so in the seventies, to ensure the lasting nature of his haute couture collections. The house's diversification then

happened quite naturally with the designer running his aesthete's eye over collections of table linen, furnishing fabrics, shoes, jewelry and even, in 1976, a car: Ford's Lincoln Continental.

Hubert de Givenchy travelled widely. From Washington to Tokyo, promotional gala to institutional exhibition, the designer saw things big. And he saw further. He handeled globalisation as the perfect man of the world that he is. Givenchy was always a man of his time. In 1988, he felt the wind turn towards major groups, and joined LVMH Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy at the very time when the world leader in luxury started to re-consider the way in which business is run, on the eve of the new millennium.

After retiring in 1995, Hubert de Givenchy was succeeded by young British designers. John Galiano (in January 1996), Alexander McQueen (in October 1996) and Julian MacDonald (in March 2001): three fashion non-conformists, just like Hubert de Givenchy when he first started. In 1956 Hubert de Givenchy was the first designer to present his collections simultaneously to the press and clients. Half a century later the young bloods from over the channel have successfully taken up the baton, with their colourful shows still being written about extensively as they flatter a whole new generation of couture clients.

From December 2003 to end of 2006, it is the British tailor Ozwald Boateng who was appointed creative director for Givenchy Homme.

In March 2005 the Italian designer Riccardo Tisci was appointed creative director for the Givenchy Femme haute couture and ready-to-wear collections.

Pampered by his mother and his eight sisters, Riccardo Tisci has preserved the unwavering desire to recreate the tenderness that he received from women's hearts. From the steep path that has taken him from the south of Italy to the perfumed salons of Parisian haute couture, via Saint Martin's College in London, he would learn clear-sightedness, skill and discipline.

The designer draws on these same standards of excellence to twist the codes of the House of Givenchy, restrainedly playing with a palette of non-colours, greys, blacks, white and beiges, set off with occasional flashes of ruby and topaz, to better outline a streamlined and uncluttered silhouette. The company's 'flou' and 'taileur' workshops are put to the service of innovative haute couture, which Riccardo Tisci translates with flair into graphic structured ready-to-wear. Aristocratic and distinctive, sober and sensual, the Givenchy woman's style reflects the path Riccardo Tisci has taken: far-reaching. By avoiding the pitfalls of fashion and seasonal trends, Riccardo Tisci has tenaciously built a coherent, modern universe at Givenchy, firmly anchored in the company's illustrious heritage, but determinedly forward-looking.

APPENDIX B Webpage Text Transcription Lanvin

Portraits
Lanvin according to Jeanne

Biography
As the 19th century drew to a close, Jeanne Lanvin had grand plans. In 1889, while working as a milliner at number 22, rue du Faubourg St Honoré, she was already thinking of founding her own fashion house. Her dream came true in 1909. Far from slowing her down, the birth of her daughter Marguerite in 1897 fuelled her entrepreneurism.

Indeed, Jeanne Lanvin was truly exceptional in combining motherhood and her career. She stayed away from society events and their games of seduction, remaining discreet and apart, listening only yo her own ambitions and feelings.

She was well-attuned to the beat of her time; she understood its needs and created a perfect response. She was thus able to impose her idea of fashion before fashion was even a concept, deploying different creative skills and diversifying her activities.

From 1909 to her death in 1946, she directed her company wisely, letting nothing and nobody diminish her curiosity for contemporary arts, new forms, and the cultures of the world.

Her vision and dedication have carried the House into its second century.

An unprecedented lifespan, made possible by the way in which the essence of Lanvin has been passed down, ensuring that the company today is exactly what Jeanne Lanvin herself would have made it.

Marguerite forever
"She sewed to dazzle her daughter, and in so doing she dazzled the world." It was in these terms that Louise de Vilmorin described Jeanne Lanvin's love for Marguerite Marie Blanche, born in 1897. Her unconditional love for her daughter fired her creativity. In creating highly sophisticated outfits for her daughter, she invented child fashion.

Child apparel thus became Lanvin's first department, created in 1908. The mothers who bought these outfits were won over and soon demanded similar attire for themselves, leading to the launch of departments for Young Ladies and Women.

Furthermore, Arpège, Lanvin's iconic perfume, was created in 1927 to celebrate Marie-Blance's 30th birthday, and today's Blanche brital wear collection also bears her name.

Lifestyle Intuition
Jeanne Lanvin was the first designer to see fashion as a lifestyle. Clothes-making alone was not enough; she saw her creations as a part of a wider dynamic that encompassed a wide range of fields, including interior decorating, perfume, lingerie, sportswear, furs, and menswear.

She inaugurated the brand principle and extended it across different product lines which together make up the Lanvin world.

Pearls, embroidery and decorative work
Jeanne Lanvin travelled the world, compiling her discoveries into a "fabric library" that nourished her inspiration with patterns and themes from far away.

She was a discerning collector who appreciated the subtlety of Coptic and Chinese embroidery and the rich cultural heritage of Japan and Persia. And she poured it all back into contemporary fashion, adorning her creations with a magnificently artistic profusion of ribbons, velvet medallions, sequins and silk threaded embroideries.

An artist's soul
She rubbed shoulders with many contemporary artists, writers, musicians and designers, and was therefore able to create partnerships that glorified her taste for the arts.

In 1901, she designed an Académicien suit for Edmund Rostand, author of Cyrano. She dressed Yvonne Pritemps, and the acclaimed writer Louise de Vilmorin.
She worked with Armand – Albert Rateau on the interioir design of the Dounou thatre, inaugurated n 1921.

Her peerless artistic sensitivity and unerring sense of volume, composition and colour association have been universally acclaimed.

For Jeanne Lanvin, art and fashion are one.

APPENDIX C Webpage Text Transcription Nina Ricci

The house of Nina Ricci

The Story of Nina Ricci
1932 Nina Ricci established her Parisian couture house. A hallmark of elegance, it would become famous for representing femininity via a sophisticated luxuriousness yet internationally relaxed style. By combining sumptuous materials with soft draping, tailoring and her ability to capture the essence, Nina Ricci became synonymous with contemporary fashion. Her main goal was to channel the personality of every woman; proposing a classic wardrobe that favoured naturalness over ostentation. Born in Turin 1883, Nina Ricci moved to Monaco with her family. She then settled in Paris, where she spent 20 years refining her art as a couturier and developing her unsurpassed technical expertise. Stepped in Parisian savoir-faire, she pursued her mission to make women look beautiful with a youthful sparkle. When wearing her designs, they appeared subtly fresh and graciously composed; not unlike a flower in bloom.

The story of fragrances
1945, Robert Ricci, only son of Nina Ricci, created Cœur Joie, the House's first perfume. His second fragrance, L'Air du Temps, became the iconic classic known in the world over and that has withstood the tests of time and fashion. Its fame helped consolidate the house's international reputation.

In time it was followed by three new creations: Fille d'Eve, Capricci and Farouche. A fervent art-lover, over the years Robert Ricci gathered around him a team of artists who added their passion to the House's creations. This rich heritage is still alive today and an endless source of inspiration for the brand and its perfumes.

Peter Copping
Having worked for fifteen years in Paris fashion, his sights are now set on capturing the essence of Ricci's femininity through a youthful, graceful style via subtly pared-back, playful sensuality. Copping takes pride in pursuing the same goals as associated with the brand's beginnings. "Nina Ricci has always been an incredibly feminine label, yet with a relaxed feel," he says. "I was very lucky, because the heritage left by Nina Ricci was more of a spirit than imposed dogmas. By continuing this approach, I am trying to capture the ultra-feminine side of the modern wardrobe".

In his quest for excellence, Peter Copping has introduced a range of powdery hues that evoke the sensual and satin aspects of the skin, evoking the world of dreams and merging the image of the Nina Ricci woman with a vision of spontaneous authenticity.

APPENDIX D Webpage Text Transcription Aspinal of London

Elegant, Sophisticated and Uniquely Distinctive
Dear Customer

Welcome! Aspinal of London is founded on the fundamental premise of offering our customers the most beautiful objects of unsurpassed quality and design for home & living, created by our designers and each handmade by genuine craftsmen, to bring to you at an affordable price and great value.

Our entire team is genuinely proud of the work they produce and our daily satisfaction is receiving feedback from you our customers and exceeding your expectations in every way. We strive to achieve the highest standards of quality and care right from our workshops through to our customer care team and direct to you. We always perform to the best of our ability and are often known to even perform miracles to deliver our customer's needs.

We want you to enjoy and appreciate the entire shopping experience with us and cherish our products for years to come in your home. Most importantly we want you to feel a friend of the Aspinal team.

Thank you, we look forward to welcoming you to Aspinal and serving you for years to come. Our business is your enjoyment of beautiful, quality, fine luxury goods.

Iain Burton
Chairman

APPENDIX E Webpage Text Transcription Aquascutum

Understated British Elegance

Established in 1851, as an intergral part of London's ever-hectic cosmopolitan life, Aquascutum has adopted an understated approach to solving a perennial fashion conundrum infusing high-end sophistication with functionality.

Appearing elegant yet city chic has always been Aquascutum's chief mission statement. As an iconic British label, Aquascutum has successfully inspired and breathed life into fashion for over 150 years, constantly refining their designs, craftsmanship, time-honored skill and tailoring we have all come to love and trust.

Heritage

Aquascutum is derived from the two Latin words - "Aqua" meaning water, and "Scutum" meaning shield, when it successfully marked the revolutionized and innovative techniques in their outerwear.

In 1851, John Emary developed the very first concept of water-proof sartorial clothing for his aristocratic clients and this notion was later adapted by the noble militaries. Liberating many from the day-to-day lives of the unpredictable British weather, it provided a stylish protection and created a new mode in fashion history.

To further amplify its British heritage, the famous house checkered designs have been continuously featured, marking its unmistakable quality and unmatchable sophistication in this quintessential British label.

Dressing the Powerful

From the unpredictable British weather to the resilience of battle fields, Aquascutum has enhanced and solidified its distinctive technical achievements. Throughout its heritage of over 160 years, it has been a popular choice of wear by many British royalty and politicians. Just to name a few, those who favored the innovative and luxurious Aquascutum clothing included HRH King Edward VII, HRH Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher - giving the brand a distinctive aristocracy. Hollywood royalty include Sophia Loren, Greta Garbo, Sean Connery, Cary Grant, Pierce Brosnan, Humphrey Bogart and Peter Sellers - making it nothing short of fashion must-haves. Beyond its high-fashion sensibility, Aquascutum is also known for its impressive durability and ruggedness; esteemed explorers such as Edmund Hillary and sherpa Tenzing wisely wore Aquascutum's highly advanced Wyncol D711 fabric to protect themselves against the harsh conditions of sleet and snow during their history-making climb of the formidable Mt. Everest - bringing Aquascutum to both physical and fashion peaks.

The Great British Trench Coat

MADE IN ENGLAND

Hailing from the United Kingdom, Aquascutum, the quintessentially British label was founded in 1851 with its iconic tailoring heritage from the world of authentic quality and fine craftsmanship in Northamptonshire, England. Its outerwear's customary British tailoring underscores the company's unfailing support of the British textile industry and ensures its impeccable standards are unfailingly maintained.

Made in England pieces celebrate all the British hallmarks of Aquascutum - attention to detail, traditional craftsmanship and unquestionable authenticity.

APPENDIX F Webpage Text Transcription Stella McCartney

Born and raised in London and the English countryside, Stella McCartney graduated from Central St Martins in 1995. A signature style of sharp tailoring, natural confidence and sexy femininity was immediately apparent in her first collection and after only two collections, in 1997, she was appointed the Creative Director of Chloe in Paris and enjoyed great success during her tenure.

In 2001, Stella McCartney launched her own fashion house under her name in a joint venture with Gucci Group (now PPR's luxury division) and showed her first collection in Paris in October 2001. A lifelong vegetarian, Stella McCartney does not use any leather or fur in her designs. Her collections include women's ready-to-wear, accessories, lingerie, eyewear, fragrance and organic skincare. Her first perfume, "Stella", launched successfully in September 2003.

Stella McCartney now operates 16 freestanding stores in locations including Manhattan's Soho, London's Mayfair and Brompton Cross, LA's West Hollywood, Paris' Palais Royal, Milan and Tokyo. Her collections are now distributed in over 50 countries through 600 wholesale accounts

including specialty shops and department stores.

In addition to the main line collection, a long-term partnership with adidas was introduced in September 2004. The critically acclaimed sports performance collection "adidas by Stella McCartney," has since successfully grown to include several athletic disciplines including running, gym, yoga, tennis, swimming, golf, winter sports and cycling.

In 2003, Stella McCartney launched her first perfume "Stella." In November 2005, the hugely successful one-off collection "Stella McCartney for H&M" sold out worldwide in record time. In 2008, a new lingerie line was launched. In November 2010 Stella McCartney Kids was launched, a collection catering for newborns and children up to the age of 12. In September 2011 Stella McCartney's costume designs for the New York City Ballet's Ocean's Kingdom premiered in New York.

For the Olympic Summer Games in 2012, Stella McCartney was appointed Team GB's Creative Director by adidas - the first time in the history of the games that a leading fashion designer has designed the apparel for a country's team across all competitions for both the Olympic and the Paralympic Games. Also in 2012; L.I.L.Y, her latest fragrance launched. In celebration of London in 2012, Stella McCartney presented a one-off capsule evening collection during London Fashion Week.

The following awards have recognized Stella McCartney's achievement in fashion and social awareness: VH1/Vogue Fashion and Music 2000 Designer of the Year Award (2000, NY), the Woman of Courage Award for work against cancer at the prestigious Unforgettable Evening event (2003, LA), the Glamour Award for Best Designer of the Year (2004, London), the Star Honoree at the Fashion Group International Night of the Stars (2004, NY), the Organic Style Woman of the Year Award (2005, NY), the Elle Style Award for Best Designer of the Year Award (2007, London), Best Designer of The Year at the British Style Awards (2007, London), Best Designer of The Year at the Spanish Elle Awards (2008, Barcelona), the Green Designer of the Year at the ACE Awards (2008, NY), in 2009 she was honoured by the NRDC, featured in the Time 100 and recognized as a Glamour magazine Woman of the Year, in 2011 she was presented with the Red Carpet Award by the British Fashion Council. Most recently in March 2012 she was presented the Brand of the Year - Women at the 16th annual Luxury Briefing Awards in London.

APPENDIX G Webpage Text Transcription Salvatore Ferragamo

Key Message
Created in 2006 for the concept store, next to the Salvatore Ferragamo museum in Florence, are revivals of the historical shoes and iconic Ferragamo bags found in the museum, in limited and numbered series. Exquisite models made entirely by hand using the original constructions, leathers and lasts, they are genuine pieces of fashion history and feature the brand's historic label designed in 1930 by Lucio Venna. Ferragamo's creations is available in a small number of select boutiques (Florence, Capri, Milan, Paris, New York, Tokyo) and in certain corners (Dover Street Market in London, 10 Corso Como en Milan and Seoul and Maria Luisa in Paris). The line represents the very finest of the brand's products, valuated by admires and collectors alike.

Craftmanship
Tramezza

A traditional handcrafting process, tramezza is used to make a variety of different shoe models that hold their shape over time, with a perfect alignment of sole and upper.
This complex process includes 320 separate stages and over four hours of manual crafting by expert cobblers for a durable, resistant shoe of unparalleled flexibility and comfort.
Tramezza shoes are fine works of art that last over time.

Three generations of shoes
Salvatore Ferragamo is now in its third generation. Shoes remain Ferragamo's core business and the creative engine of its entire production. High quality is ensured by the attention given to model construction and the strong manual component that characterizes the production.

Curiosity
Salvatore Ferragamo dedicated his life to the search for a secret: the shoe that fits well. When he began studying human anatomy in the United States he found his first clue to the problem, in the distribution of the body's weight over the joints of the foot. "I discovered – he wrote- that the weight of our bodies when we are standing erect drops straight down on the arch of the foot. I constructed my revolutionary lasts, which supporting the arch, make the foot act like an inverted pendulum.

APPENDIX H Webpage Text Transcription Valentino

Maison
Valentino S.p.A. is part of the Valentino Fashion Group – one of the world's biggest fashion and luxury groups, owner the license for the MSC Marlboro Classics and M Missoni brands.
The group is now owned by Permira private equity fund, the Marzotto family and their partners.
Stefano Sassi is Chaiman and CEO of Valentino S.p.A.
At the helm of the Maison since 2006, he came from a decade of experience working in luxury goods.

Established in 1960 by legendary fashion icon Valentino Garavani, the Maison has grown over the years and now operates in more than 70 different countries counting over 1250 points of sale, 66 of which are directly managed. One of the best known fashion brands worldwide, Valentino offers a wide range of luxury products from Haute Couture and Prét-à-Porter to an extensive accessories collection that includes bags, shoes, small leather goods, belts, eyewear, watches and perfumes.

Creative Direction
Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli have been appointed Valentino Creative Directors since October 2008. Maria Grazia and Pierpaolo reviously worked in close contact with Valentino Garavani for a decade, contributing to the international success of the accessories project.
Debuting with their first Haute Couture collection in Paris in January 2009, they demonstrated their ability to fully understand and interpret the world of Valentino.
Their creativity was well-received from the start, obtaining unanimous approval in the world of fashion. Hollywood stars, socialites and fashion leaders have worn and appreciated their creations. Jennifer Aniston chose of dress from their Haute Couture collection for the 2009 Oscars. Rachel Weisz and Evangeline Lilly wore creations from their first Prêt-à-Porter collection at the 2009 Cannes Festival. Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccoli's July 2009 Haute Couture collection expresses their new vision of the Valentino woman: an extreme elegance that affects her entire way of being. Fragile and dangerous nature interweaved with a cult of uniqueness and distinction, are all elements captured for their creations. Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo

Piccoli's strong leadership style, their strong leadership style, their professional and creative approach – highly characteristic of Valentino's corporate identity- joined to their extremely talented in-house team of designers, allowed them to make the most of Valentino's iconic style.

Creative Directors
Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccoli's stylistic approach is defined by their sense of contemporary nourished by contrasts and love for a mélange of visual, artistic and literary inputs synthesized in a vibrant and distinctive style. A fusion of styles and languages is the key to their method.
Maria Grazia and Pierpaolo both studied at the European Institute of Design in Rome and crossed paths in Fendi's design studio. The immediately worked well together and their strong professional relationship has always been based on dialog, mutual admiration and a focus on the present. At Fendi their freedom and taste for experimentation in design led to the creation of memorable accessories.
Valentino Garavani himself saw their work and invited them to join him. In 1999 he gave them the task of creating an accessories line that interpreted the Couture spirit of the fashion house. The result was a collection with an unusual balance of tradition and innovation.

In 2007, following Monsieur Valentino's decision to retire, Maria Grazia and Pierpaolo were appointed Creative Directors of all the accessories lines of the fashion house. When that appointment was extended in the following year to include the men and women's collections as well as the Haute Couture line, Maria Grazia and Pierpaolo became the Creative Directors of Valentino.

The fashion house took a new path. Backed by technical expertise jealously protected in the ateliers of Piazza Mignanelli, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli brgan writing a new page in the history of the company. The perspective changed and Valentino's ideal woman evolved.

Condensed and simplified, the grace and precious delicacy that have always been a part of Valentino's DNA are now contemporary and full of contrasts. The spirit of time has entered the atelier and changed the cards on the table.

Maria Grazia and Pierpaolo consider creative direction a total design project in which clothes, accessories, shoes and even store interiors – the last entrusted to David Chipperfield – create a system of signs. Everything, without distinction, expresses Valentino style. Heritage and style, tradition and innovation coexist in the concept of a new future.

Collections
Valentino Haute Couture offers a variety of collections made up of unique items singularly handcrafted in the prestigious atelier situated in Rome. A team of about 40 Premiere is entirely dedicated to the highest quality manufacturing of one of a kind precious creations.

Valentino Prèt-à-Porter presents sophisticated, exclusive lines for women and men intended for an elegant, but unconventional young clientele belonging to the new international jet set.

Valentino Garavani signs lines of accessories such as bags, shoes, small leather gods, belts and bijoux for women and men. Haute Couture details appear in all of these refined creations, majority of which are handmade. Classic iconic Valentino motifs are reinterpreted to enrich incredibly modern accessories. Valentino Garavani is a product category which has been particularly successful and in continuous evolution.

Valentino Roma combines seductive charm with modern elegance, interpreting the contemporary woman's lifestyle in an elegant Prèt-à-Porter collection. This product line blends classic trends with casual styles, adding a touch of practicality to specific technical details.

REDValentino, established to to offer a different point of view from Prèt-à-Porter, represents the Valentino woman's contemporary and unconventional style. A different vision, a modern fairytale made up of original creations, impalpable fabrics, elegant finishes and details in which all the Maison's distinctive traits appear.

The Maison also offers a variety of fragrances, watches, eyewear and silks produced under licensing agreements.

APPENDIX I Webpage Text Transcription Versace

Atelier
About
EXCLUSIVE, GLAMOROUS, THE MOST PRECIOUS AS GODDESSES REQUIRE, THE ATELIER VERSACE COLLECTION IS BREATHTAKING AND UNIQUE, HAUTE COUTURE FOR SIRENS.THESE GARMENTS- PREDOMINANTLY EVENING AND COCKTAIL DRESSES- FEATURE ALL THE INTRICACIES THAT THE REFINED CRAFTSMANSHIP OF COUTURE – THE MAKING BY HAND ALLOWS. SINGLE PIECES, DESIGNED AND MADE TO MEASURE FOR ONE PERSON ONLY, ATELIER VERSACE IS THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE DESIGNER'S ART.THESE DRESSES ARE MADE FOR AN ELITE, WHO KNOWS ABOUT THEIR IMPACT ON THE RED CARPET – CREATED FOR POWERFUL WOMEN LIKE ANGELINA JOLIE, NICOLE KIDMAN, JENNIFER LOPEZ, CLAUDIA SCHIFFER...

Versus
History
Donatella Versace

The Designer Synonymous With The Super-Glamorous World Of Italian Luxury.

Sensuality and glamour have always been the hallmarks of Versace, the famous Italian high-fashion brand founded by Gianni Versace in 1978, and handed on to his sister Donatella Versace after his death in 1997. Since then Donatella Versace has been Creative Director of the house and Vice President of the board, and has evolved the Versace look into one of the most distinctive of the twenty-first century.

Donatella Versace was born in Reggio Calabria in southern Italy where she grew up with her two elder brothers. While completing her degree in languages at the University of Florence, she started to assist her brother Gianni in his work by supervising the advertising campaigns shot by great photographers like Richard Avedon and Bruce Weber that contributed so greatly to the unique visual style of Versace. She started with the design of accessories and went on to create a childeren's line "Versace Young" in 1993. In 1994 she became Head Designer for Versus, a brand aimed at younger fashion enthusiasts.

Since taking over the design helm of the house, Donatella has won critical acclaim and numerous awards, and has brought her own distinctive style to the famous Medusa label. She also presided over its expansion into areas beyond fashion. In 2000, Versace opened Palazzo Versace on Australia's Gold Coast, a six star resort and the first hotel project to be branded by a luxury

goods company. Now as well as clothing, accessories, fragrances, jewelry and timepieces, there is a Versace home furnishings collection, as well as an interior design facility.

Brand

Launched in 1989, Versus is the true rock and roll soul of Versace.

Created for those who want evolve their own individual style, Gianni Versace introduced Versus in 1989 describing it as, "Versus was born with an innate creative approach, with a strong focus on innovation, flair and the unconventional. A artistic force that takes fashion forward, anticipating new trends and embracing challenge".

The following Versus collections of fashion, accessories, eyewear, watches and fragrances proved to be an enormous success with a strong public following who were tuned into its distinctive 'rock-chic' style.

Donatella Versace has been the creative director of Versus since the line's first Milan show in 1991. From 1995 to 2003, Versus was shown in New York during New York fashion week, as it was closest matched city to the brand's rock'n roll DNA and host to the most important celebrities from the global music scene who were devoted to line's avant-garde style.

APPENDIX J Webpage Text Transcription Coach

A rich heritage:
Coach was founded in 1941 as a family-run workshop. In a Manhattan loft, six artisans handcrafted a collection of leather goods using skills handed down from generation to generation. Discerning consumers soon began to seek out the quality and unique nature of Coach craftsmanship.

Now greatly expanded, Coach continues to maintain the highest standards for materials and workmanship. Coach's exceptional work force remains committed to carefully upholding the principles of quality and integrity that define the company. We attribute the prominence of the Coach brand to the unique combination of our original American attitude and design, our heritage of fine leather goods and custom fabrics, our superior product quality and durability and our commitment to customer service.

Defining classic American style:
During the last decade, Coach has emerged as America's preeminent designer, producer, and marketer of fine accessories and gifts for women and men including handbags, business cases, luggage and travel accessories, wallets, outerwear, eyewear, gloves, scarves, fragrance and fine jewelry. Continued development of new categories has further established the signature style and distinctive identity of the Coach brand. Together with our licensing partners, we also offer watches, footwear, eyewear and fragrance bearing the Coach brand name.

Broad Reach:
Coach's distribution strategy is multi-channel. As of June 30, 2012, there were over 500 Coach stores in the United States and Canada, and over 300 directly-operated locations in Japan, China, Singapore and Taiwan, with additional retail locations in Malaysia and South Korea acquired in July and August, 2012. Beyond the company's direct retail businesses, Coach has also built a strong presence globally through Coach boutiques located within select department stores and specialty retailer locations in North America, and through distributor-operated shops in Asia,

Europe and Latin America. In 1999, Coach launched its on-line store at www.coach.com and currently offers its products on-line in three countries: the U.S., Canada and Japan, with informational websites in 20 other countries.

Crafting the Future:
While Coach continues to be one of the best recognized accessories brands in North America, its long-term strategic plan is to increase international distribution and target international consumers, with an emphasis on the Asian consumer. Through the company's directly operated businesses in Japan, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and South Korea, the company is leveraging a significant growth opportunity in this important region. Intent on maintaining a consistent brand strategy domestically and abroad, this ownership structure provides Coach with complete control of its distribution in these key Asian markets.

Coach's corporate headquarters remain in mid-town Manhattan on 34th Street, in the location of our former factory lofts. Coach is a publicly traded company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, traded under the symbol COH and Coach's Hong Kong Depositary Receipts are traded on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited under the symbol 6388.

APPENDIX K   Webpage Text Transcription Proenza Schouler

Proenza Schouler is a New York based womenswear and accessories brand founded in 2002 by designers Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez. The duo met while studying at Parson's School of Design, collaborating on their senior thesis, which would eventually become their first collection as Proenza Schouler. Named after the designers' mothers' maiden names, the collection was bought in its entirety by Barneys New York.

Proenza Schouler is defined by its fusion of craftsmanship and attention to detail with a sense of refined ease. Inspiration drawn from contemporary art and youth culture is combined with an emphasis on tailoring and the use of custom developed fabrics.

Proenza Schouler has played an important role in reinvigorating American fashion. Awarded with the inaugural CFDA Vogue Fashion Fund award in 2004, the emerging brand was established as a leading talent in the industry. Three years later, Proenza Schouler was honored with the 2007 CFDA Womenswear Designer of the Year award.

In 2008, Proenza Schouler introduced its first shoe collection, licensed through Giuseppe Zanotti, Vicini Spa. Later that year, Proenza Schouler launched its first handbag collection, including the PS1, a classic satchel that embodies a sense of wearable luxury that has become the brand's signature.

Proenza Schouler is sold in over 100 of the most exclusive retail outlets worldwide, including Barneys New York, Bergdorf Goodman, Harvey Nichols, Colette and Joyce.

APPENDIX L   Webpage Text Transcription Vera Wang

A native New Yorker who spent her career at the forefront of fashion, Vera Wang began a sweeping makeover of the bridal industry in 1990 with the opening of her flagship salon at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City. Today, the salon continues to showcase collections known for sophisticated drama, feminine detailing and a modern approach to bridal design.

In 2000, Vera Wang's enthusiasm for couture fashion resulted in the launch of her highly acclaimed ready-to-wear collection. The Council of Fashion Designers of America honored Vera Wang by naming her "Womenswear Designer of the Year" in 2005. Known for her nonchalant approach to style and luxury, Vera Wang's ready-to-wear collections resonate with her signature layering, intricate draping and exquisite attention to detail

The Vera Wang brand reflects her vision to create a lifestyle that goes beyond core bridal ready-to-wear, and into publishing, fragrance, beauty, accessories and home. These collections are positioned at the highest end of the luxury market. Driven by artistic, modern, and luxurious design and style, couture-like quality and a high level of customer service, Vera Wang's collections hold impeccable customer appeal.