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EVIDENCE ON INTERNET COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR LUXURY BRANDS

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ABSTRACT

Luxury brands and the Internet communication media seem to be inconsistent at first sight. On the one hand, luxury brands have to maintain the control of their elitism and their image; on the other hand, Internet is defined as a mass media of communication that is basically not selective. However, some years ago, all the luxury brands started to set up their own websites and some of them have gone as far as opening online shops. Then, regarding these paradoxes and a literature review, the purpose of this article is to analyze how luxury brands can manage scarcity and the use of Internet.

To answer this question, a structural semiotic methodology on luxury brands and their communication is used. The purpose is to bring about a better understanding of how luxury brands use Internet in their communication strategy and how this media may or may not fit into a luxury brand's management of the values of rarity. The methodology analyses factors that can impact the success or the failure of Internet communication for luxury brands.

The results show that Internet is not entirely incompatible with luxury. It all depends on how it is used. Internet can strengthen the core values of brands thanks to original and interactive applications. But sometimes if not enough attention is paid, Internet may dilute the brand values. So many precautions have to be taken to avoid the dilution of brand narratives and some managerial implications are developed in this article, especially concerning e-shopping.

JEL: M31 – M37

KEY WORDS: Brand management, Internet, Communication, Luxury, Semiotic analyses.

INTRODUCTION

Brands are cultural imagery whose consumption is mainly based on desire and emotions (Belk and Askegaard, 2003). They are narratives and values shared by groups of consumers (Levy, 1981; Stern, 1995; Thompson and Holt, 1997). They represent the entrance into legends or myths. Their implementation is made through all kind of supports that help to give meaning, that is to say, through all their communication tools.

Brand communication can be carried out through multiple channels and is not limited to advertising (Hasting, 1990). Particularly, it seems important to consider new media to follow socio-cultural changes. Brands have to stay in step with their times to avoid becoming outmoded. While evaluation of communication techniques has to be taken into account in

both cases, the thinking, the strategies and the purposes are not the same for brands in the mass market and brands in the luxury market.
Mass market is synonymous with profitability and effective values. It focuses on a large number of products and low prices. For brands in this mass market, the purpose of communication is visibility. Accordingly, the Internet appears to be the media that consumers use the most.
Conversely, the luxury market has to show an image of selectivity and rarity. The challenge of these brands is to appear to send a message accessible only to a very small part of the population (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). The choice of the communication tools is very important and has to fit with that. Along those lines, the Internet, defined as a mass media, does not seem to be consistent with the luxury universe. However, for some years, all the luxury brands have set up their own website and some of them have gone as far as opening online shops.

Previous research has mainly set the focus on the one hand, on the incompatibility between luxury and Internet and on the other hand on the opportunity this new media brings up (Roux and Floch, 1996; Dall'Olmo Riley and Lacroix, 2003; Nyeck, 2004). However few have brought a better understanding over the way to optimize Internet communication for luxury brands and how to minimize the incompatibility.

Then, faced with these paradoxes, the purpose of this article is to analyze how luxury brands can manage scarcity and the use of Internet. Particularly, we want to answer the following questions: (1) how do luxury brands develop their values on the websites? (2) Are these value in line with those developed on traditional communication support? (3) And what are the factors that may reinforce the value of these brands on the Internet in order to keep the consistency of the brand?
To answer these questions, this paper is structured around five sections. The first part is about the literature review. It highlights the concept of luxury and its paradoxes. Research focusing on links between communication, Internet and luxury are explained. This literature review leads to research propositions. In the second part, the research methodology is developed. A structural semiotic analysis is used to understand how luxury brands use Internet in their communication strategy and how this media may or may not fit into a luxury brand's management of the values of selectivity and rarity. The third part of this paper presents the results of tested brands. Then, we discuss the main contributions of this article, and in the last part of concluding comments the managerial implications, the research limits and further research are developed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of luxury is very subjective and includes various connotations. However, it can be broadly defined today as a way of being, a way of life but also a way to buy, consume and use, rather than know-how or a way to do something (Roux and Floch, 1996; Nyeck, 2004). In luxury, intangible values are very important (Bechtold, 1991)
To be more precise, several types of luxury have been defined.
Lipovetsky identifies two broad categories: eternal luxury and emotional luxury (Lipovetsky and Roux, 2003). While traditional luxury includes values such as superfluousness, know-how, and the desire to make a certain impression, emotional luxury emphasises values of personal pleasure, feelings and affective and experiential features.
This distinction is close to those established between interpersonal luxury and personal luxury (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Interpersonal luxury includes strong social motivations.

Personal luxury appeals to the values of pleasure seeking and emotion (Dubois and Paternault, 1996).
Luxury is therefore plural and addresses several aspects, primarily related to personal values and interpersonal values.

Luxury brands, as other type of brand needs to be managed with consistency (Kapferer, 2004). It is required the brand to broadcast the same message through the different media (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1999; Kapferer, 2004). The continuity of its value is essential for the brand development and the brand strength (Semprini, 1996; Keller, 2003; Kapferer, 2004).
Consistency is at the heart of luxury brand management as well as selectivity, legitimacy, creation and perfect quality (Roux, 1991)
Other special features at the heart of luxury brand management, including those related to the inherent paradoxes, are to be analysed and highlighted.
The management of luxury brands has contradictions that other brands do not (Roux and Floch, 1996; Nuemo and Quelch, 1998). These include the paradoxes related to brand management and the various elements of the marketing mix, which do not fit with the basic principles of profitability.
For example, in terms of product distribution, their goal is not to be the more accessible but to control distribution and choose their locations for their symbolism.
The communication of luxury brands is perhaps the most important and most difficult paradox to manage. Indeed, like all brands, those in the luxury sector have to develop awareness in the buying public. They need to communicate to show they exist, that they are present and strong in the competitive world. However, at the same time, luxury brands try to protect their selectivity and remain discreet (Bechtold, 1991).
Thus, in particular through their communication policy, luxury brands need to combine selectivity and diffusion, rarity and enlargement, elitism and increased awareness.

According to this perspective and this observation, in the following section we want to analyse the main characteristics of this new channel; consider its place in the luxury sector; understand how this mass media may be part of a strategy for luxury brands.
Internet has become an essential part of branding strategies and communication for companies whose products range from consumer goods to luxury goods (Dall'Olmo Riley and Lacroix, 2003).
Parallel to the increasing number of brands with their own website, there has been an increased interest in the literature regarding the use of the Internet in brand management.
This interest has led many authors to develop their interest in brand management online (Chen, 2001; de Chernatony, 2001; Clauser, 2001). They agree that the basic rules of branding and the essence of the brand itself are the same online and offline (Dall'Olmo Riley and Lacroix, 2003).
According to Nyeck (2004), the Internet is a complementary tool in communication strategies and its triple objective is to inform, remind and persuade. The web can help to establish links between consumers and brands.
In contrast to other media, the Internet allows a dual interaction with and through the tool itself (Nyeck, 2004). The web creates a central positioning among other communication tools, with, on the one hand, interpersonal and personal aspects and on the other hand, a communication mode that is somewhere between static and dynamic.
Internet can have different impacts on brand. This technology can be used in different ways (Chen, 2001). Marketing practices that are made possible by the Internet can be classified into three types (Chen, 2001).
First, browsers and search engines provide access to a wide range of information on the

Internet in terms of products and services.
Then by integrating websites with consumer databases, it becomes possible to use more information on consumers and their needs.
Finally, the Internet is distinctive because not only it enables consumers to communicate with suppliers but also it allows them to communicate with each other. Firms that have success on the Internet are those that have proved they are capable of getting into virtual communities (Chen, 2001). However, with these forums, brands must accept some loss of control because consumers become active co-producers of value (de Chernatony, 2001; Ind and Riondino, 2001).
Internet constitutes a very wide communication tool with a very strong power in terms of worldwide diffusion, able to reach a large audience and enabling to implement a bilateral communication with the stakeholders of the brand.
According to these characteristics and their impact on brand, it is well founded to wonder if the use of such a tool is appropriate in the luxury market, especially regarding the e-market.

Demand for the sale of luxury on line is growing at a global level. Recent studies show that the "rich" are now likely to be connected and are happy to make purchases online (Okonkwo, 2007).
However, luxury goods, clothing, leather goods and fine jewlery are categorized as products with a good deal of "sensory" character. Their aesthetic features can be assessed through the five senses. Several researches have shown a resistance from luxury brands to sell online (Seringhaus, 2005; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). However, more and more brands seem to take the challenge by opening their own e-shop on their website.
Then, in the process of buying luxury products, point of sale plays a crucial role (Okonkwo, 2005, 2007). Nevertheless, is it realistic to think that the magic of these places can be reproduced on the web?
According to Kapferer (2004) and Dall'Olmo Riley and Lacroix (2003), the e-market represents at the same time an opportunity, an inevitable development, and a threat to luxury brands. Indeed, the Internet offers purchasing opportunities to consumers who have no close access to one of the few distributors of the luxury brand, or to those who feel intimidated by the fact of entering these stores (Seringhaus, 2005). Furthermore, for brands whose images are based on a very selective distribution, there is a real threat with this democratization. Internet brings together the "high class" and "mass class". This is why previous research has shown an apprehension of the brand regarding online sells, and some author recommends avoiding E-shopping for some type of luxury brands (Seringhaus, 2005; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009)

According to this literature review, oppositions between traditional luxury universe and the Internet world have been pinpointed (Bechtod, 1991; Roux, 1994; Nuemo and Quelch, 1998). However, regarding socio-cultural changes, luxury brands had no other option than integrating this new media in their communication policy.
It is required that all communication support send the same message, the same values in order to stay clear in the consumer’s mind. This is what authors named consistency of the brand value and this is largely emphasized in the literature (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1999; Kapferer, 2004).
These elements should also be taken into account regarding e-shopping (Okonkwo, 2005).
This leads us to the following research propositions:
P1: Maintaining the consistency of the luxury brand value between traditional communication support and Internet support could minimize the paradoxes between selectivity and diffusion

P2: For e-commerce, the paradoxes between diffusion and selectivity could be mitigated by maintaining the codes of the brand and its universe.

METHODOLOGY

Faced with the research problem and the analysis of the literature, the objective of this study is to explore how luxury brands use Internet in their communication strategy and how this medium can or cannot fit to manage the values of selectivity of luxury brands. More precisely, we want to compare Internet communication with other tools like posters, the press and window-shopping. In order to do that, a structural semiotic methodology is implemented.

Structural analysis tries to understand the relationship of a number of elements under the principle of solidarity of the terms of a structure (Barthes, 1964; Eco, 1970; Floch, 1990). It analyses procedures to describe systems of meanings.
Structural semiotics is based on the concept of sign. This is formed by the relationship between a noticeable element, the *signifier* (i.e. expression), and the meaning given to that signifier in a more or less structured code, the *signified* (i.e. content) (Barthes, 1964, Mick, 1986; Courtès, 1991; Greimas and Courtès, 1993; Alreck 1994).
All symbols relevant to the subject of study should be considered: the words and language, all types of visuals, gestures, concepts (Barthes, 1964; Eco, 1970). The study of the confrontation between these signs and symbols and their interactions helps to create a structure of meaning. Floch (1990) speaks of the principle of "bricolage" (from the French – "do-it-yourself" or "handiwork").
The structural semiotic approach is particularly relevant when studying the deeper signification of brand narratives and their invariants (Floch 1990; Courtès 1991).

The process of the analysis is structured in several parts.
First, corpuses of communication are established for each brand studied. The corpuses are divided into two parts: one on traditional media (press advertisements and posters - old and new -, images of storefronts and shops and images of the product) and one on the Internet. .
Data were collected during 2009, thanks to an extensive research on the Internet and via screenshots. Many communications have been sent via managers of luxury brands.
Then, respectively, with traditional media and on the Internet, an analysis grid is prepared. It serves to highlight the elements that shape the meaning. The grid is divided into three parts: an analysis of the plastic message (medium of communication, frame, composition, shapes, colours, lighting and texture), an analysis of the pictorial message (motifs, figures, objects and characters) and an analysis of the linguistic message (typography, colours, shapes of letters and meaning) (Courtès, 1991).
To highlight the structure of meanings of each brand, the meanings of the various communication media are grouped together. Their relationships, overlaps and redundancies are analysed. The invariant meanings are put forward in forming the narrative of each brand.
This analysis is done in parallel for the traditional media of communication and for the Internet.
In a final step, a comparison between these two parts of the communication policy is made.
To improve the internal validity of the study, all the analyses are first made by the two authors of this paper. Then their results are compared and confronted. A match rate of about 90% was found. Following this confrontation, slight adjustments were made to refine the analysis.

Six luxury brands are considered in the methodology: Goyard, Hermès, Louis Vuitton,

Boucheron, Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels. This choice was motivated by several factors. First, to improve the external validity of the study, two sectors of activity were considered: leather goods and jewlery. Moreover, we chose brands with a high level of awareness and the same level of development according to a small study on 30 luxury consumers and previous research on luxury brands (Dubois and Laurent; Okonkwo, 2007). Finally, selected brands have all developed a website for over two years. To make comparisons, some of these brands have developed an e-commerce, while others do not.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in the following way. First, the analysis of each brand is made. Then, a discussion is developed and some implications are deduced.

Hermès

Table 1: Hermès communication

Brand values	Traditional communication	Internet communication
The Know-How related to the job of Saddle maker	Stores: sign bearing the effigy of a horse and saddle maker Product Names: "Amazon" Text: "Under the sign, the hand", "Everything changes, nothing changes" Hermes Magazine: illustration of the craft	Home Page: Logo with the carriage and horse Hermès "Universe" and "Expertise" Presentation of 4 tabs related to the saddle maker (Leather, Silk, Horse, Know-how)
Contribution of Internet: Interactivity of know-how and originality		Tab "Expertise": Videos shifted that focus somewhat / not on the mastery of traditional brand craft Presentation of figurative elements out of step with traditional know-how (helicopter, kiwi, pink flamingos, slot machines)
« Savoir Vivre à la française »	Text: "Elegance and comfort with Hermès" "24, Faubourg Saint Honoré" "Paris" Products related to « Savoir Vivre à la française »: tableware, scarves, gloves reflecting elegance Visual symbols of Paris, cobblestone streets, golf, picnic in the park	

This table shows the values of the brand identified through both traditional and internet communication

Brand values:
The brand narrative of Hermes is « savoir-vivre à la française », a state or a way to grasp the moments of life, with delicacy and distinction. It also highlights product quality, with two noble materials: silk and leather, symbols of the French equestrian spirit. This Know-how is related to the original skills of the brand: the saddler. The brand maintain its craftsmanship tradition, and handmade its products. We can see some pictures of craftsmen working on leather, which reinforce the place of the brand in the leather sector.

Consistency of means of communication:
There is an inconsistency in this narrative between the classic communication channels and the Internet. Although there are a few evocations of traditional expertise of the brand through a video on Internet, other applications are not coherent with the values of the brand and generate more confusion. The website architecture is very complex, its contents is shifted, somewhat traditional and modern at the same time.

Internet contribution:
In the case of Hermès, the Internet does not reinforce the brand values. It goes against the overall communication policy of the brand. Namely, the Internet does not refer to the « savoir-vivre à la française », a fundamental value of the brand since its creation. The use of Internet in this case is creative but leads to confusion regarding Hermès values.

E-shopping:
E-shopping is present on the Hermes website. Already on the home page, you can click either on "Hermes Universe" or on "E-Shopping". Therefore, there is an immediate focus on the purchase as the viewpoint of the mass market. Also as before (i.e. for about one year), the site was only focused on e-shopping and did not have the part about the universe of the brand.
The presentation of e-shopping is like a product catalogue. It is relatively limited. The vocabulary and architecture are those of a site for the mass market. There are expressions like "your account", "buy", “How to pay for your purchases".
The inconsistency between the brand values in the traditional channels of communication and the Internet is reinforced through e-shopping.

Louis Vuitton

Table 2: Louis Vuitton communication

Brand values	**Traditional communication**	**Internet communication**
The expertise trunk extended to leather	Text elements: " Louis Vuitton bags surprise since 1854" Shop: at the entrance and ground floor, presence of trunks Close-up of bags and suitcase	Home Page: Bag put forward on the photo Service tab: Videos and photos of manufacturing and traditional manufacture Tab Universe with: "Heritage, Family House, Know-how"
Internet contribution: Personalisation of the know-how		Tab Universe: headings "Special Orders; customisation"
The travel	Text: "Love to learn," "Soul of Travel," "Necessary travel" "The Spirit of Travel" Visuals: sailing, swimming pool, sea, boat, train, taxi Landscapes: New York, desert Products related to travel: trunks, logbook	Home Page: Integration of the bag in the travel universe (boat, beach, scooter) Textual elements: "The Art of Travel", "The passenger in history", "Travel with Coppola" Presentation of City guides
Internet contribution : Interactivity of travel		Creation of an application: MP3 audio to various cities such as Paris, Beijing ...

This table shows the values of the brand identified through both traditional and internet communication

Brand values:
The narrative of the Louis Vuitton brand is the spirit of travel (both real and spiritual). The brand offers its expertise to attain this state of escape through both trunks and leather goods. This also refers to the original skills of the brand. The brand expose trunks and purse in these shops (in the entrance) and in its advertising. The Brand sets the focus on its “tradition” and its “innovation”.

Consistency of communication support:
A real coherence emerges between the values expressed by the brand’s traditional channels of communication and those conveyed via the Internet. We find the same types of staging of the brand’s know-how and its narrative of travel.

Internet contribution:
In the case of Louis Vuitton, the Internet strengthens the message of the brand and its values. Internet offers the opportunity to develop interactive applications. The use of explanatory videos to support the expertise of the brand, and the "Soundwalk" (audio guide application for major cities around the world) to bring the cybernaut into the world of travel are some examples.

E-shopping:
E-shopping is on the Louis Vuitton website but it is not dominant in its first display (the e-

shopping only appears in the last tab of five). Indeed, there is a desire to stage the universe and the brand's identity.
Concerning the specific e-shopping pages, the format is like a product catalogue with descriptions of items and prices. The products for sale online are mainly those related to leather, which reflects the will to focus on its main expertise. This consistency in setting forth the know-how of the brand is also enhanced by the possibility to customize products ordered.
The e-shopping is fully integrated into the site and does not give rise to a new Internet window when clicking on the tab. This sequencing helps to strengthen the consistency of the brand and its commitment to integrate e-shopping in the larger universe of the brand's identity.

Goyard

Table 3: Goyard communication

Brand values	**Traditional communication**	**Internet communication**
The expertise trunk	Advertising: presentation of products in large size Focus on quality Text: "Malletier since 1853" Goyard shop: Rue Saint Honoré in Paris Authenticity of the store decorations	Focus on brand expertise with special orders Presentation of the brand history Brown color to sow the brand authenticity
Contribution of Internet		Only a reinforcement of the values

This table shows the values of the brand identified through both traditional and internet communication

Brand values:
The Maison Goyard puts forward in its communication expertise trunk maker "Malletier since 1853". All bags, accessories and bags are the finest materials.
Its shop is located on Rue Saint Honore in Paris since its creation and strengthens its history.
The decorations demonstrate the authenticity of the brand. The presentation bags close to the center of advertising highlights the details of products and their quality.

Consistency of means of communication:
There is a consistency in this narrative between the classic communication channels and the Internet. Indeed, the brand know-how is highlighted not only through the press advertising and other traditional media (shopping) but also on the website with the presentation of the history of the brand and special orders.

Internet contribution:
For Goyard, the Internet allows it to strengthen its values (related to its know-how). However, the website is not particularly developed and is very simple and traditional. This element can fit with the brand authenticity and the willingness of not being too modern.

E-shopping:
Goyard website does not have an e-commerce part. The brand does not sell online at this time.

Cartier

Table 4: Cartier Communication

Brand values	**Traditional communication**	**Internet communication**
The Expertise of Jewelry (and watchmaker)	Visual Elements focused on jewelry close-up Textual elements: "Jeweller since 1847"	Home Page: Focus on products Cartier House tab: "Heritage", "Excellence"

	In store: no staging of the product, minimalist presentation of the jewels	Textual elements: "Through Time", "Expertise Jeweller", "Wizard of Stone" Films of the brand trades and craft
Internet contribution: Personalisation of the jewels choice		Tab Universe: section "precious moments", proposal of a purchase guide: buying advice for a special occasion (birth, engagements)
Social elite position	Textual elements: "The art of being unique" Visual Elements: jewelry boxes synonymous with protection of precious and rare things Red colour representing strength and domination Visuals of panther, symbol of majesty	Home Page: red background Visuals: box partially open and closed, reflecting exclusivity Tab Collection: "Panther of Cartier, Caresse d'Orchidee" "Jeweller kings, King of Jewelry"
Internet contribution: Social elitist desecrated by the application "Enter a unique place"		Interactive visit of a boutique: paradox between democratisation and limitation of a virtual world only

This table shows the values of the brand identified through both traditional and internet communication

Brand values:
The narrative of Cartier is based on jewelry know-how (extended to watch making) in a world of elite social status. Prestige, domination and demonstration of social values are highlighted.

Consistency of means of communication:
There is a consistency between the values communicated via traditional media and the Internet. The visual codes and the figurative language are the same. Jewelry know-how and high social status are dominant in all means of communication.

Internet contribution:
The use of explanatory videos supports the expertise of the brand. The originality of one application, called "Enter a unique place", reaffirms and reinforces the brand narrative on the prestigious social position. It allows the net surfer to visit the online shops. This application can be perceived as a paradox with respect to the elitist values of the brand. It can be seen as a desecration of the act of entering a fine jewelry store, but may also remind users that the visit on the Internet is still only virtual.

E-shopping:
Cartier's website does not sell jewelry online. There was thus no e-shopping. However, the brand leaves the possibility of requesting additional information and creating a "wish list". This service and these "privileges" are reserved only to Cartier Club members. This exclusivity again reinforces the elitist values of the brand.

Van Cleef & Arpels

Table 5: Van Cleef & Arpels communication

Brand values	**Traditional communication**	**Internet communication**
Expertise in Jewelry	Visual Elements: close-ups of the jewelry, always staged. Dark backgrounds to highlight the brilliance of the stones Textual elements: "Jeweller" Store: presentation of exceptional pieces	Home Page: Focus on one jewel Tab Collection: Focus on products, directed and animated on a dark background Tab « La Maison Van Cleef&Arpels »: "Craft, Memory" "Exceptional Pieces", « watchmaker art and crafts »
Internet contribution: Interaction between the brand and products		Watches tab: focus on the technical characteristics of the brand and its expertise with the possibility to download a manual Existence of an I phone application
Magical and fairylike universe	Visual elements: Decor that focuses on the fairies and nature Predominance of an imaginary world where the jewels are put on display Store: Presence of fairies and flowers	Website animated around the theme of magic and nature. Tab « Jewelry Collection »: Poetic product names: "A day in Paris, Midsummer night's dream, Butterflies, Fleurette & Snowflake"

This table shows the values of the brand identified through both traditional and internet communication

Brand values:
The brand narrative of Van Cleef & Arpels is based on jeweller expertise in a universe of magic and fairies. The brand offers a world of unrealistic characters and spaces. In its classical advertising, the brand presents its jewels in close-up in a fairy world to put forward the quality of its jewelry. In the brand shop, few pieces are exposed in order to reinforce the selectivity and the scarcity.
We can pinpoint the permanent presence of the nature in the advertising of the brand.

Consistency of means of communication:
In the case of Van Cleef & Arpels, the use of Internet is consistent with the other more traditional communication tools. The Internet brings the user into the know-how and the magical world of the brand. A focus is made already on the home page on nature and fairy world.

Internet contribution:
Internet reinforces the values of Van Cleef & Arpels, by explanatory videos to support the know-how of the brand. You can also enter more easily into the magical world of the brand thanks to lyrical and enchanting animations. The magical world is hence close to the virtual world offered by the various possible applications of the Internet.

E-shopping:
The Van Cleef & Arpels website does not have an e-commerce part. The brand does not sell online at this time. We can also note that there is no possible interaction with the brand except via the newsletter.

At this stage, we can highlight that the jewelry sector uses Internet as a brand image tool and takes advantage of it namely using interactive and original applications to reinforce brand values. However, regarding E-shopping, none of the two brands we have analysed has an E-shopping part.
In order to check if this desire not to use e-commerce is related to the sector of these brands we have examined whether there were other jewelry brands that practice e-shopping. Several have emerged including Tiffany and Boucheron. To continue with fine jewelry brands, we decided to analyse Boucheron.

<u>Boucheron</u>

Table 6: Boucheron communication

Brand Value	Traditional Communication	Internet Communication
Expertise of the Jewelry	Visual elements : close up of jewels « *Jeweler since 1857* » In the shop :minimalist presentation of the Presentation of Paris and place Vendôme Dark blue color to improve presentation of the products	Home page : Focus on Place Vendôme « *Boucheron Paris* », « *Haute Joaillerie* », « *La Maison Boucheron* », « *Bijoux* », , « *precious moments*», (related to the craftsmanship tradition of the brand) Focus on products, no staging Dark color: put the jewels forward
Innovation	Advertising with staged jewels in the mouth of sexy men and women	
Internet contribution : Presentation of all innovation of Boucheron		Home Page: E-shop for each country Sell of jewels « *Boucheron and you* »

This table shows the values of the brand identified through both traditional and internet communication

After analysing this brand, we can highlight the consistency between the values communicated via traditional media and the Internet. More than for the other jewellers, Internet reinforces the message and the values of Boucheron.

E-shopping is very present on the website of Boucheron but, as for Louis Vuitton, the presentation of e-shopping is completely integrated in the website. There is no distinction between the brand universe and the sale of products by Internet.
The vocabulary and architecture are those of a site for the mass market. There are expressions like "your shopping bag", "Your favourites". Boucheron sells extravagant, very expensive jewelry (up to 40 000£). Despite this type of strategy, the presentation of the products remains classic and prestigious. Then the e-shopping mixes tradition and innovation, the two narratives of the brands.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The purpose of this article was to analyze how luxury brands can manage scarcity and the use of Internet. The literature review that we have conducted has led us to these research propositions:
P1: Maintaining the consistency of the luxury brand value between traditional communication support and Internet support could minimize the paradoxes between selectivity and diffusion
P2: For e-commerce, the paradoxes between diffusion and selectivity could be mitigated by maintaining the codes of the brand and its universe.
In order to test these propositions a structural semiotic analysis has been implemented through six notorious brands which websites have been created at least 2 years ago.
Here is the discussion of the primary findings resulting from our research.

From a general overview, for five on the six brands we have analysed, their core central values are reinforced through the utilization of the Internet and its interactive applications. Internet is used as a brand image tool for both leather goods and jewelry sectors.
Actually using Internet as a brand image tool makes it possible to avoid inconsistency emerging from the use of a mass media in a luxury strategy. This is in line with literature recommendations about maintaining consistency of brand values on the different communication support (Kapferer, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1999). Only Hermès set the focus on the e-commerce part, thus neglecting the brand image aspects and therefore the luxury atmosphere.
From a brand sector point of view, Richemont Group‘s Jewellers choose a risk-free approach by allowing limited interactions with the consumers, which avoids loss of control regarding brand values. This approach seems not to be related to the brand sector since our control case, Boucheron, which does not belong to Richemont, uses original interactivity with its consumers and e-commerce too. This risk-free approach may result from a consistent group strategy.
The leather goods sector uses Internet as an interactive platform with consumers and takes advantage of the original opportunities Internet brings in the communication world. They are willing to establish a bilateral communication strategy. This technique is more risky in terms of loss of control regarding the content of information.
The dominant craftsmanship aspect in the jewelry could explain this difference between jewelry and leather goods.
Overall, this analysis is consistent with the research proposition:
P1: Maintaining the consistency of the luxury brand value between traditional communication

support and Internet support could minimize the paradoxes between selectivity and diffusion.

Focussing on the E-shopping aspects, three brands (Goyard, Van Cleef & Arpels, Cartier) have not (yet?) taken up the challenge of e-commerce. Three brands (Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Boucheron) have decided to integrate this part as much as possible in the context of the brand image tool so that the core values are omnipresent and the luxury atmosphere is preserved.
One brand (Hermès) has positioned itself differently from other brands by offering a particular website where e-commerce is dominant and where mass market flirts with luxury.
It means that E-shopping is present for both sectors we have analyzed. Regarding further on the other brands of these sectors like Gucci, Longchamp or ST Dupont (Leather goods) or Tiffany & Co and Mauboussin (Jewelry), E-shopping is also used by these.
This leads us to moderate the vision of Kapferer and Bastien (2009) stating that luxury brands should always communicate through the Internet but never sell through it on web 2.0. We think that selling through the Internet is not impossibility but a real opportunity to be considered by luxury brands and their managers if they go for a completely integrated strategy respecting the holy rules of luxury communication, such as highlighting the values of selectivity and rarity.
Then, this analysis is consistent with the research proposition:
P2: For e-commerce, the paradoxes between diffusion and selectivity could be mitigated by maintaining the codes of the brand and its universe.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS SECTION

The results of this research and the previous discussion lead us to make several recommendations for managers of luxury brands.
First, brands have to consider the Internet as a fundamental communications tool. Because of the several applications that can be created, Internet gives brands the opportunity to express all the values of their identity in an original way and to maintain brand narratives consistency. This will allow consumers to better understand the brand values and to discover them through funny applications. In order to achieve that, each part of the website should be created to highlight the brand universe.
In order to maintain the consistency of the brand on the Internet, it is important to resume on all pages on the website the same color codes, the same universe, the same word as used in other communication media.
The use of many innovative applications can also be a means to strengthen the brand values.
Regarding e-shopping, managers should consider the opportunity of Internet as a selling platform as stated above. The success of such a strategy will depend on the way it is implemented. Brands should absolutely maintain their selective image on the E-shopping by namely using luxury codes in terms of content, layout of the website. Brands have to use a mass-market platform and turn it into a luxury world.
Moreover, besides the turnover generated by the E-shopping, this really constitutes an open window to the world for the brand, regarding the fact that consumers take now a lot of information online.
Another implication of this research concerns structural semiotics. It constitutes a new trend for managers and researchers to analyse and identify their brand values. The description in this research of the several methodological steps can be a basis for further research.

Some limits and furthers research can be highlighted.
Despite the fact that many cautions have been taken, we could broaden the scope of the research namely by analysing more different sectors like fashion, cosmetics or table arts in

order to improve the external validity and to know if the Internet communication strategies selected by the brands are in some way related to the sector they belong to.
In addition, in order to achieve an acceptable internal validity, the analysis was conducted by the two researchers independently, after which they confronted their results. A request for an expert point of view has been made.
To continue this work, a quantitative analysis will compare the results of this research with consumer perceptions of luxury. The study of their attitudes toward e-shopping and these various arrangements constitutes the next step in this research.

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