FASHION-BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT
How Italian Fashion Brands Utilize Audiovisual Media
to Tell Stories and Entertain Audiences

Abstract
During the last decade, the convergence between advertising and the entertainment industry gave birth to new languages that sought to convey brand values in a more effective way. Alongside traditional advertising formats, such as TV commercials and product placement, a new and more refined form of communication has emerged, which is pointed towards storytelling and entertainment: ‘branded entertainment’. Within this context, the fashion industry is a particularly interesting area of study. Having been historically bound to the audiovisual media, fashion was immediately able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by this new language, on the one hand establishing a significant production of audiovisual content (long-short films) with an identifiable form, aesthetic and language; on the other, producing original entertainment content or integrating its values by expressing them in related TV formats. On the basis of the still few academic studies available so far, the primary aim of this article is to shed light on the use of often imprecise terminology related to branded entertainment, through a systemic approach that defines its operating range and highlights the distinctive elements which differentiate branded entertainment from any other hybrid forms of communication. Secondly, the paper will focus on the bond between the fashion and media industries and the production models adopted to date, by categorizing and analysing a corpus of 40 cases of ‘fashion branded entertainment’, carried out by Italian fashion brands from 2010 to 2016.

Keywords
Branded content and entertainment; fashion brands; audiovisual media; brand integration; advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

The act of telling, producing and consuming stories is an anthropological habit of mankind\textsuperscript{1}. In this spirit, brands realized fairly recently that people love stories, and that simply talking about the product no longer suffices to reach their target audience. Today companies no longer advertise and sell just their products, but at the same time they ‘sell stories’ and content that is based on their own values\textsuperscript{2}. This shift in perspective mimics


changes in the advertising industry, where traditional communication formulas (such as commercials, printed advertising or product placement activities in television and film) have less grip on consumers compared to other unconventional forms of communication. While in the past the consumer was conceived (and addressed) as a passive entity, a one-way recipient of messages conveyed by the media on behalf of companies, today the consumer looks to the brand not only for the fulfilment of a need and the acquisition of a commodity, but moreover for an engaging, unique and unforgettable experience. For these reasons the increasing willingness of brands to adopt innovative models of communication and open themselves up to a more effective dialogue with its consumers, particularly in the last decade, has led to the convergence of the advertising and entertainment industries. These two areas, which previously had different aims and purposes, merged and thereby created the new mode of communication that has been labelled ‘branded entertainment’.

Born of ‘content marketing’, we can generally define ‘branded entertainment’ as an unconventional form of storytelling and entertainment that is based on original audiovisual content and (co)-produced by companies, in order to establish a continuous and intimate dialogue with their audience (which is no longer perceived simply as consumers). For brands and publishers/broadcasters it is an extremely useful tool: not only do the product and the brand values serve to create realism inside a narrative universe, but moreover they are effectively integrated within a kind of content that their audience is eager to see, enjoy and share. Combined with the major changes that accompanied the digital age and its increasingly convergent media, this trend has inspired brands to create projects that are characterized by ‘transmediality’ and circulation across many varied media.

More than any other, the fashion industry has realized the full potential of this mode of construction and communication of a brand, and consequently the way it is represented and lived. The industry’s need for innovation and experimentation produced two major results: on the one hand, the so-called ‘fashion film’, which catalysed audience engagement through an aesthetics rooted in photographic and cinematic tra-

---

3 On the perception that branded content has on consumers, see the 2013 research conducted by OBE (Observatory of Branded Entertainment) and 2BResearch-Demoskopea. Accessed August 10, 2016. http://www.osservatoribe.com ricerca-sulla-percezione-del-consomatore-spettatore/.
ditions, distributed via several online platforms as well as at film festivals. These films have fast become the object of academic attention. On the other hand, fashion brands became consolidated in television entertainment, where they obtained a central narrative role and interacted with one-another. This was the consequence of a series of strategic operations of ‘brand integration’, and of the industry itself producing original ‘branded content’ at times.

With recourse to the most up to date studies, the primary aim of this article is to examine the area of branded entertainment with a systematic approach, in order to provide clarity on the fluid nature of the term, and to trace out its distinctive features and objectives. Secondly, having outlined how the fashion industry has cooperated for decades with the media industry, realizing the potential of storytelling and audiovisual languages in the brand-building process, our analysis turns to a sub-sector that we define here as ‘fashion branded entertainment’. With particular emphasis on cases of ‘fashion branded entertainment’ implemented by Italian luxury and mass-market fashion brands, the article employs textual analysis in order to identify: the commercial or narrative purposes of its operations; the production models adopted, in relation to the medium of their transmission; and the degree of integration and presence of the brand (for example physical presence or a strong perception of it values). To do this, we selected, reviewed and analysed a corpus of 40 cases of branded entertainment projects, created by Italian fashion companies, between 2010 and 2016, distributed via different media (tv, digital and cinema).

2. BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT: DEFINITION AND MODELS

Often confined to the field of marketing and advertising studies, though evidently an overlooked part of media studies, branded entertainment is a form of communication and content that in the last decade has been re-established itself in the media system and in business marketing strategies. In fact, this is a practice whose origins are at the foundations of the mass media and cinema, and which became an industrial and production standard in the ‘30s alongside the birth of the soap opera on the radio and television.


To date, academic literature has not provided a unanimous, precise and exhaustive definition of this term. The first attempt to conceptualize branded entertainment dates back to the early Nineties. Balasubramanian defines it as a hybrid form of paid promotion of products or logos in film and television programs, in order to influence the choices of an audience of potential consumers. A new, key concept emerged in ‘hybrid messages’: “corporate messages aimed at influencing consumers/audiences using the media albeit not explicitly for commercial purposes, and therefore capable of a greater persuasive impact mode”. However, this initial definition is not sufficient, in that it refers more to a concept of sponsorship or product placement.

Subsequent literature from the twenty-first century tends to associate branded entertainment to other, more recent concepts, such as those of ‘advertainment’ or ‘brand integration’. Indeed, Russel defines branded entertainment as the maximum expression of brand integration within pre-produced content, where product placement is its base form. In order to provide a more comprehensive definition, it would be essential to consider another term that is often used synonymously with branded entertainment: ‘branded content’. In the available literature the two terms are often used interchangeably, although in academia there is a tendency to use the first more often and at the expense of the second. Conversely, the term branded content is more widely used among professionals. However, though these two terms are commonly used interchangeably, we agree with Martí-Parreño et al., that: “the term brand content […] can be applied to a broader brand strategy framework (not necessarily linked to entertainment) while branded entertainment can be restricted to those brand marketing communications linked to entertainment content”. However, in addition, branded entertainment can also be used to refer broadly to the whole industry with which brands interact, in the different ways identified here.

In this sense, the ANA (Association of National Advertisers) has provided a useful definition of branded entertainment, as ‘the convergence of the advertising and entertainment industries where a brand message is integrated within an appropriate context as a part of the interaction. It is much more than simple product placement, where a product may be visually included, but not discussed’. In light of this definition, it is therefore possible to identify three different levels where this can happen, that also show the degree of involvement of the brand and the native commercial or narrative purposes.

19 It is not a coincidence that the most important professional association of the branded entertainment sector is called the “Branded Content Marketing Association”. Accessed August 20, 2016. http://www.thebcma.info/.
of the content\textsuperscript{22}: ‘brand integration’, ‘adv-based branded content’, and ‘narrative/entertainment-based branded content’, that is the highest level of branded entertainment.

The first level, brand or ‘product integration’\textsuperscript{23}, is an evolved form of traditional ‘product placement’. It gives a functional role to the brand within the narrative of existing content (TV format, films), which nevertheless remains consistent with its own values. This creates continuity between the host and hosted. In some cases, brand integration is already planned for as a liturgical element in the so-called format bible: this is the case of international TV formats such as \textit{The Apprentice} and \textit{Undercover Boss}, which naturally include the presence of a different brand in each episode. Elsewhere it is a process that, in formats such as \textit{X Factor} or \textit{Masterchef}, the presence of the brand is determined retrospectively, and manifests itself not just in the format, but also in secondary textual extensions (extended placement) that are distributed on other platforms\textsuperscript{24}.

However, when audiovisual content is produced entirely by the brand, and therefore looks and feels like editorial content (TV shows, movies) but has a marketing or advertising function (TV commercial), it falls into the category of ‘adv-based branded content’. The evident purpose of this content is to convey the brand, its values and its products, and to address first and foremost its target consumers, before the potential content audience. As a consequence, the narrative component is generally weaker, in favour of the explicitly commercial aspect. The duration of this type of branded content it is generally short, varies between sixty seconds and a maximum of five/ten minutes\textsuperscript{25}. Depending on the formats and channels in which they are conveyed (TV, the web), they are also called in different way: ‘adv short films’ or ‘fillers’. For example, the term ‘fillers’ refers to all those contents distributed only on television, which have a duration that varies from two to five minutes and which are positioned in the schedule between a TV show and another. ‘Adv short films” refers, however, to all the contents that are distributed equally on television and on the web, characterized by aesthetics and a film language, and in fact include some types of non-narrative/entertainment fashion films.

Finally, ‘narrative/entertainment-based branded content’, or simply branded entertainment, refers to products that carry all of the aspects (format, language, function) of the narrative content (TV shows, movies, videogames). The goal of the brand is to convey indirectly the brand’s values by addressing the content audience first, even before the potential consumer. These products are created on the basis of the brand’s values and identity, and they are intended to be interesting, fun and engaging for the target viewer. According to Elena Grinta: “though leaving its mark, the brand or the product can actually be completely absent from the explicit narrative (shots, quotes) and instead be ‘ubiquitous’, on an implicit narrative level. The importance of storytelling this way permits two levels of narrative that come together in a meta-discursive process: the first refers to the content of the ‘story’ and the second refers to the universe of brand

\textsuperscript{22} This tripartite categorization is a partial reworking of the proposal adopted by E. Grinta, “Branded content. Finalmente un po’ di chiarezza sulle definizioni”, \textit{ADF. Strategie di comunicazione}, 5 (2015): 114-115.

\textsuperscript{23} Russel, \textit{Advertainment}, 8.


Branded entertainment “is based on the development of strategic alliances between advertisers and entertainment companies and often bypasses main media altogether. Branded entertainment aims to contextualize brand images in ways that are so appealing that consumers will seek them out for inclusion in their personalized media and entertainment flows”.

At this point it is worth citing the most notorious case of branded entertainment, considered by scholars as a pioneer in this field: The Hire (BMW, 2001-2003), a series of eight short, online films, starring Clive Owen (in the role of the driver) and directed by internationally acclaimed directors including John Frankenheimer, Ang Lee, Guy Ritchie and Tony Scott. Other relevant examples in recent years were, on the one hand, a series of projects designed to be distributed primarily on the web, as in the case of the short film Real Beauty Sketches (Dove, 2013) or the trilogy of social films produced by Intel and Toshiba: Inside (2011), The Beauty Inside (2012), The Power Inside (2013). On the other hand, we have witnessed a series of productions created specifically for the television, such as the Finnish’s sit-com Buy This (2014), which tells the story of an unlikely agency that produces real commercials that air in prime time, immediately after the episode; or some Italians TV cases, such as Jack on Tour (2010-16) created by Jack Daniel’s and Mixologist (2014-15) created by Campari. It is also worth mentioning film productions, such as the case of the animated film The Lego Movie (Lord - Miller, 2014) and the Illy’s documentary film A Small Section of the World (2015).

Having thus far provided an overview of branded entertainment, we now turn to the second objective of this article. In the following section, we examine the relationship between the fashion industry and audiovisual media, analyzing in which way – through what languages and production models – fashion brands have exploited the potential of branded entertainment through the language of film, television and new media.

3. BACKGROUND: FASHION, AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA AND THE RISE OF FASHION

As anticipated broadly in relation to branded entertainment, the link between brands (in this case fashion) and the audiovisual industry is certainly not a novelty. The basis of the specific sub-sector that we discuss here – that in this paper we have chosen to define as ‘fashion branded entertainment’ – can easily be traced back to the earliest experiments of motion images at the turn of the century.

Scholars have different notions of the roots of the fashion film. Some trace back its origins to a series of products designed for commercial purposes, where the aesthetic of clothing gives prominence to the narrative content. This includes a set of short films produced by Georges Méliès between 1898 and 1900 for the companies Mysthère Corsets and Delion, and the film Fifty Years of Paris Fashions, 1859-1909 (1910). Others side consider the earliest embodiments of the fashion film as a

---

group of films that were created with a more narrative and entertaining intent. This was the case in *Danse Serpentine* (Lumière, 1896) for example, which shows the famous dancer Loïe Fuller, harmoniously and sinuously floating in a garment that continues to change in shape and colour. It is the same for the short film *Danse du Papillon* (Guy, 1900), and the avant-garde French film *Le Sang d’un Poète* (Cocteau, 1930), for which Coco Chanel contributed to the costume design. These are useful examples of how costumes became integrated into early film diegeses – in a primitive form of product placement – creating character identity and giving them a specific style that is then adopted by the viewers, to mimic the character or the environment showed in the film. With the rise of sound film and then the big Hollywood productions, this relationship strengthened and became more intense, and partnerships between the film industry and stylists often produced iconic films, as in the cases of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (Edwards, 1961) with Givenchy, and *Belle de Jour* (Buñuel, 1967) with Yves Saint Laurent. These examples marked a production trend called promotional-costuming, where designers collaborated on film productions with mutual benefits for both sides: promotion for the fashion label with the endorsement by the actors and reduced costs of costume production. Thanks to the large number of designers who contributed their collections to the movie productions, the exchanges between fashion and the audiovisual media became increasingly frequent and varied. As Soloaga and Guerrero note, “some collaborations were mere exhibitions of a designer’s collection, whereas others sought to show the new trends of each season or a product’s manufacturing process.”

Following the rise of private and commercial television, fashion brands began to involve famous movie directors in the production of televised commercials. They also produced the first experiments in self-produced fashion films (though this term was not in use at the time), which were suspended between abstraction and narrative, and which in part entered into the collective consciousness. In the Nineties John Malkovich directed three short films for the fashion designer Bella Freud, while Wim Wenders directed the documentary *Notebook on City and Clothes* (1990) for the Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto. There have also been instances of designers going behind the camera, as in the recent film *A Single Man* (Ford, 2009), or becoming the subject of the narrative, as in the biopic of *Yves Saint Laurent* (Lespert, 2014).

This scenario also the witnessed an emerging form of visual culture in the eighties: the music video. On the one hand, this format allowed young and famous film directors to experiment and refine new visual languages; on the other, fashion brands found an additional medium for expression. Artists such as Michael Jackson and Madonna not only made history for their famous songs, but also for influencing a generation through the clothes they wore in the videos of their songs.

The big switch to digital also inspired a further breakthrough. The birth of dedicated platforms, such as YouTube, and the rise of social networks enhanced the power of fashion-themed audiovisual content, as a means through which the brand can convey creativity, values and ideas. This set the foundations for the birth of a real genre: “the

---

33 The titles of the three short movies are: *Strap Hanging, Lady Behave and Hideous Man* (1999).
35 Notable directors include David Fincher, Spike Jonze and Michel Gondry.
fashion films as a new form of high gloss representation [...] has challenged traditional forms of fashion media. As Uhlirova has noted, technology in fact had a broader influence:

The designers’ growing interest in the moving image was of course propelled by the technological possibilities – the now easily accessible electronic and digital production techniques and editing equipment – but also, and perhaps more importantly, coincided with the shift of the fashion show towards a theatrical spectacle, a multimedia, multisensory experience that was to forcefully impress upon the audience the concept and the creative process behind a collection.

The form of the fashion film can be narrative-led, abstract, experimental or with a documentary structure. By its nature, the genre does not respond to precise rules or styles, but seeks principally to illustrate collections and reveal the universe of values revolving around the brand. Following the technical classifications adopted to date by scholars in the field of fashion and media studies, we can define this form of communication as branded audiovisual content, that is distributed on multiple media, has a short duration (on average from one to thirty minutes) and “a specific attention to visual aesthetics – with a photographic inheritance – and narration (verbal and nonverbal), resulting in the combination of productions like music videos, avant-garde cinema, video art, documentary, commercials and short films”. These projects are characterized by the predominance of refined visual aesthetics, either in the choice of colours or lights (white is central); the involvement of directors and well-known celebrities; and the contribution of techniques and special effects taken from cinematic languages.

The phenomenon began at the launch in 2000 of the video platform Show Studio “The House of Fashion Film”, by fashion photographer Nick Knight and graphic designer Peter Saville. The show forged a link between the internet and fashion, and produced daring and transgressive content with the collaboration of well-known names in fashion. Another platform that is worthy of mention is Nowness. Established in 2011 by the LVMH group, the channel celebrates contemporary culture, concerning not only fashion related topics, but also art and design, music, food, culture and travel.

4. FASHION BRAND ED ENTERTAINMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCENARIO

The discussion thus far leads us now to reflect on the state of fashion branded entertainment in Italy, by mapping out a corpus of 40 different kind of brand operations – conveyed via different audiovisual media – realized by Italian fashion brands (both luxury

---

37 Uhlirova, “100 Years of the Fashion Film”, 147.
39 From their first productions, Show Studio’s has sought to enhance the expressive beauty of the collections and to show the creative process and mental processes behind a clothing line. Examples include the re-editing of the series of photographic experiments by Erwin Blumenfeld and Guy Bordin, or their first fashion film titled Sleep (Knight, 2001). Show Studio, http://showstudio.com, accessed August 28, 2016.
41 Already in the 1990s, Louis Vuitton started making use of storytelling when the company began selling travel guides. With the launch of Nowness, this experience was translated into a series of videos entitled The Art of Travel, followed by a campaign in which anyone could embrace the ‘traveler spirit’ of Vuitton.
FASHION-BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT

and mass-markets)\textsuperscript{42} from 2010 to 2016\textsuperscript{43}. The samples include locally TV operations, but also include those designed to be carried on digital platforms or film festivals, addressed to an international audience, and often, in fact, shot directly in English, as in the case of fashion films.

Our objective is to map the various projects – nevertheless accounting for the disparities that arise between them – in order to identify: which trends and projects emerge from the luxury and mass market brands; the production models adopted, in relation to the commercial or narrative/entertainment purposes of its operations and the medium of their transmission (TV, cinema, web); and finally the degree of integration and presence of the brand (naming, product, plot, value placement). We achieve this by combining the taxonomy identified above (brand integration, adv based branded content, narrative/entertainment based branded content) with textual analysis.

As indicated in Table 1, which shows the corpus of the 40 cases analyzed – classified by the categories we identified – there is a clear distinction between the approach of the Italian fashion luxury brands and of the mass-market brands.

The fashion luxury brands tend to favour original branded content within the ‘fashion film’ genre and distributed on digital platforms (owned or paid media), and they address the films to target audiences not only locally but also internationally. The presence of the brand is hinted in some cases in the title (naming placement), as for example Gucci Guilty and Gucci Cruise (Luchford, 2016) both by Gucci and Valentino Uomo (Renck, 2014) by Valentino Garavani. In others cases is developed through the integration of the products, the values and the brand’s universe within the film’s diegesis (product, plot and value placement).

Broadly there are two strategic approaches by luxury brands. On the one hand, we can observe a type of branded content, purely on the ‘adv based side’, where even if the project has looks like editorial content, the commercial intentions remain obvious. In fact, the main objective is often to present new season collections (shots often insist on the dresses and accessorize) to the detriment of storytelling, which remains in the background or sometimes is entirely absent. This is the case, for example, for the short film series The Postman Dreams (De Wilde, 2015) or First Spring (Fudong, 2010) both created by Prada; Back Damon (Dello Russo, 2011) by Giorgio Armani; Chicago is my Beat (Weber, 2016) by Versace. Also, sometimes, this kind of ‘adv-based’ content, are exploited to create thirty seconds cuts for TV commercials campaign. This is the case, for example, for The Dresscode (Vecchi, 2015) by Cristina Pacini, Black and White (Natoli, 2015) by Valentino Garavani, My Life is a Play (Grousset, 2016) by Salvatore Ferragamo and the already mentioned Gucci Guilty.

\textsuperscript{42} The brands analyzed during the research are: Armani, Calzedonia, Carpisa, Caruso, Cristina Pacini, Dolce & Gabbana, Dsquared2, Ermenegildo Zegna, Fendi, Freddy, Intimissimi, Miu Miu, Nicole Spose, Parco Leonardo, Prada, La Rinascente, Salvatore Ferragamo, Tezenis, Tod’s Valentino, Versace, Yamamay.

\textsuperscript{43} For analytical reasons, we chose as the start date 2010, since Italian law deregulation concerning television product placement (Decreto Romani, 2010) there was, in general (not only by the fashion brands), a rich production of brand integration and branded content projects. A different situation regarded cinema, where product placement practices were allowed since 2004 (Decreto Urbani), and the web, where regulation concerning product placement were never provided.
Table 1 - Typology of fashion branded entertainment initiatives by Italian luxury and mass-markets fashion brands, distributed across different media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Luxury Brands</th>
<th>Adv-Based Branded Content</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Brand Presence</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armani</td>
<td>Back Damon (2011)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sabbia (2014)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristina Pacini</td>
<td>The Drescode (2015)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolce &amp; Gabbana</td>
<td>Dolce Rosa Excelsa (2016)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dsquared2</td>
<td>Twin Peaks Bags (2015)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferragamo</td>
<td>My Life is a Play (2016)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gucci</td>
<td>Gucci Cruise (2016)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Naming, Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gucci Guilty (2016)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>First Spring (2010)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Therapy (2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candy L’Eau (2013)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>The Postman Dreams (2015)</td>
<td>Short Film Series</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tod’s</td>
<td>An Italian Moment (2011)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentino</td>
<td>Valentino Uomo (2014)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Naming, Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentino</td>
<td>Black and White (2015)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versace</td>
<td>Chicago is my Beat (2016)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative/Entertainment-Based Branded Content</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Brand Presence</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armani Alice (2011)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odga Carre (2011)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valeria (2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armani Films of City Frames (2014-15)</td>
<td>Short Film Series</td>
<td>Value, Product</td>
<td>Web, TV, Cinema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caruso The Good Italian I &amp; II (2014-15)</td>
<td>Short Film</td>
<td>Value, Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fendi A Dangerous Invitation (2013)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Value, Product</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferragamo Walking Stories (2013)</td>
<td>Fashion Film Series</td>
<td>Product, Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferragamo White Shoe (2014)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miu Miu Women’s Tales (2011-15)</td>
<td>Short Film Series</td>
<td>Value, Product</td>
<td>Web, TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada Castello Cavalcanti (2013)</td>
<td>Fashion Film</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Web, Cinema</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(segue)
On the other hand, we find more ‘narrative/entertainment based’ examples, where the dresses, accessories and collections are present, but remain secondary to the story. The narrative takes indirectly communicates brand values. The main objective therefore is to boost brand awareness by entertaining not only its target consumer, but also potential audiences who are interested in the content. This is often the case for Prada, who created several productions over the last decade, including Castello Cavalcanti (Anderson, 2013), a short film with a narrative basis that is a clear homage to the work of Fellini (through films such as La Dolce Vita and Amarcord). Another example is the series of twelve short films produced by Miu Miu, Women’s Tales, which represents the female universe from the point of view of women directors; or those promoted by Armani with Luxottica and Rai Cinema, Films of City Frames (2014-15), written and directed by talented students from the most important film schools in the world and presented at the Toronto Film Festival. Armani has also produced, in collaboration with Purple Television, the trilogy Alice (Zahm - Evgin, 2011), Olga Carre (Zahm - Evgin, 2011), Valeria (Zahm - Carlier, 2012). Further examples by other brands include: the short films Dangerous Invitation (Lagerfeld, 2013) by Fendi and the two-part film The Good Italian (Di Bacco, 2015-16) produced by Caruso; the two web-series in four episodes, A Rose Reborn (Chan, 2014) by Ermenegildo Zegna.
and *Walking Stories* (Guadagnino, 2013) by Salvatore Ferragamo; and finally the historical short film *White Shoe* (Borrelli, 2014) always by Ferragamo. These products constitute an evolved experience of marketing, which have in fact inspired a number of international film festivals all over the world.

Beyond the successful experiences of luxury fashion brands, mass-market fashion brands have been able to exploit the commercial potential of television medium in particular, with the aim of reaching a wider (and diverse) range of spectators, and therefore introduce new trends. In addition to the numerous thematic programs that celebrate fashion on TV from different points of view (for example *Non Solo Moda* and *X Style* on Canale 5 or *Le Italie della Moda* on Sky Arts), there are various entertainment formats relating to concepts of image and fashion, to such an extent that it “has become very difficult to understand how much can TV say about fashion, or how much fashion compels TV to do so.”

In this sense, mass-market fashion brands seem to have found a particularly functional tool in the language of television, especially in the macro genre of factual entertainment.

Firstly, we can observe a broader tendency by mass-market brands (that is certainly less costly from the point of view of production and media investment) to promote ‘brand integration’ within existing entertainment TV formats. Compared with the traditional product placement, in this case to the brand is given a greater and interactive role, both within the content (product/plot/value placement), both through initiatives that is expanded to other platforms (extended placement), thus creating a connection of values between the host and hosted. The most relevant cases are the Italian edition of *Celebrity Survivors*, in Italian *Isola dei Famosi* (“Celebrity Island”, Canale 5, 2015), which involves the Tezenis brand, not only through the clothing of the competitors, but also through the involvement of the brand in the tele-voting phase, social tv, contests and licensing activities; the travel factual *Blue Beach Paradise Story* (Rete 4, 2014) involving Yamamay and Carpisa as main sponsors; the game show *Shopping Night* (Real Time, 2012-15) filmed entirely inside “La Rinascente” shopping center; and finally *Enzo Mesiione Spose* (Real Time, 2014), involving the wedding dress brand Nicole Spose. With this kind of operations, thus, strengthens the bond between brand, content and media industry, prompting the brand a more active involvement also in the creative and production process, with a view to ensuring more effective presence of the product and the brand within the editorial content and other content expanded to other platforms. Secondly, they create original and full financing ‘narrative/entertainment based’ content, reflecting their own values and communicative goals, whereby the brands are present even in the title (naming placement), as for example in the talent show *Yamamay Fashion Show* (Sky Uno, 2013), in the adventure game *Calzedonia Ocean Girls* (Sky Uno, 2014) and in the ice skating show *Intimissimi Opera On Ice* (Canale 5, 2015). In other cases, there is the mere presence of the brand through its products or purchase space, as for

---

44 Díaz Soloaga, García Guerrero, “Los fashion films como estrategia de construcción de marca a través de la seducción”.

45 Among the many festivals this includes *A Shaded View on Fashion Films* (ASVOFF), established in 2008, as well as the Berlin Fashion Films Festival (BFFFF), the New York Fashion Film Festival (NYFFF) and the recently-founded Milan Fashion Film Festival, which has in fact benefitted from a strategic partnership with the Discovery Networks Italy, thus creating a dedicated channel on the Italian OTT platform “Dplay”.


example, the game show *Voglio Essere Così* (La5, 2015) involving the shopping center Parco Leonardo. Other cases can also be found in programs that celebrate social events through a very specific area of the fashion universe: wedding dresses. Here we can cite for example *L’abito dei Sogni* (Real Time, 2014-15) and *La Stilista delle Spose* (Real Time, 2016), both produced by already mentioned wedding dress brand Nicole Spose. In the latter two cases, besides the already mentioned brand integration formulas, there is a further brand presence within the content (plot placement), given by the designer, Alessandra Rinaudo, in the role of talent/host.

5. Conclusions

As we have sought to illustrate in this discussion, the relationship between fashion brands and the audiovisual media has strengthened and become more diverse over time. What we are witnessing today is a kind of ‘golden age’, where (fashion) branded entertainment has become rooted in the industry’s strategies and significantly changed the way brands communicate with their consumers, or rather the public, by inserting itself within the brand building process. Brands become the creators of original content, making projects that organically tend to be a ‘transmedial’ type of storytelling (such as fashion films), and at the same time launching the platforms which host them (for example Nowness). According to Soloaga and Garcia: “brands discovered the advantages of branded entertainment and the power of seduction as they secure them to more engaging and collaborative experiences than television commercials. They are not oriented towards selling but towards branding”\(^{48}\).

The analysis here allowed us to observe how fashion brands’ increasing awareness of the potential of a good branded entertainment strategy has led to the emergence of a dual trend to date, that is closely linked to the language of the medium through which these contents come to life. On the one hand, in the last decade, Italian luxury fashion brands have developed – for an international digital distribution (by owned or paid media) – more originals adv-based short films. Only fairly recently some brands (such as Prada, Ferragamo, Armani and Miu Miu) have realized the maximum potential and attractiveness for the audience of more narrative/entertainment based content, also thought to be conveyed in other media (TV, film festivals). On the other hand, Italian mass-market fashion brands have tended to involve the audience through stronger brand integration operations, within TV formats consistent with their values, but also started to develop original TV entertainment content that reflects their essence and permits to dialogue in new dynamic way with the audience.

It is not easy to foresee how this area will continue to evolve in future months and years. In the future, it would be interesting to see a reshuffling of this dual trend, so to understand how luxury fashion brands would use forms of brand integration or branded entertainment in television; and conversely how mass-market fashion brands would communicate through the typical language of fashion films. What is clear today, is that the highest expression of branded entertainment is still a little unexplored territory by many brands\(^ {49}\), for a few reasons: the reluctance to focus investments on initiatives


\(^{49}\) According to a research conducted in 2016 by OBE (Observatory of Branded Entertainment): the 56% of companies investing in branded entertainment, do so to build or strengthen the brand’s values; the 51% to
aimed to building awareness and not increase sales in the short term; high production costs to develop original and high-quality contents; limits in terms of measurability and effectiveness of these operations, unlike the traditional TV commercials. What is certain, however, is that while forms of traditional advertising will doubtless continue to exist, it is plausible that over time they will concede more and more space to forms of communication-oriented content and entertainment, creating an increasingly deep merger of the two.

invest in a different way from advertising; the 47% to get in touch with real or potential customers; the 44% to increase the awareness of the brand; and the 35% to provide entertainment as reward for the audience. Accessed December 29, 2016. http://www.engage.it/eventi/branded-entertainment-240-milioni/64343#bYhzrErZ6Kwd6wHF.99.