

Dr. Marina RAMOS-SERRANO

Universidad de Sevilla. Spain. mramos@us.es. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6871-9239>

Gema MACIÁS-MUÑOZ

Universidad de Sevilla. Spain. gemamaciasm@gmail.com. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2906-6540>

Antonio RUEDA-TREVIÑO

Universidad Pablo Olavide. Spain. aruete@cic.upo.es. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4992-2703>

Branded content and luxury fashion: analysis of audio-visual content on YouTube (2008-2019)

Branded content y moda de lujo: análisis de los contenidos audiovisuales en YouTube (2008-2019)

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Abstract

Social networks and the democratisation of fashion have had an impact on the communication strategies deployed by the luxury sector. This article performs a descriptive analysis by way of a content analysis of all the videos hosted —4079— on the YouTube channels of the 12 main luxury fashion brands. The aim is to comprehend the evolution of the audio-visual content of the main luxury fashion brands on YouTube and to identify the main formats. The results provide a classification of the main formats used by the luxury sector, as well as their capacity for interaction. The research concludes that luxury fashion brands deploy more conventional formats than content strategies associated with branded content. Similarly, it can be seen that luxury fashion brands interact with their target audience only marginally.

Keywords

Branded content; Luxury fashion; YouTube; engagement; content analysis

Resumen

Las redes sociales y la democratización de la moda han impactado en las estrategias comunicativas del sector del lujo. Este artículo realiza un análisis descriptivo a través del análisis de contenido de todos los vídeos alojados —4079— en los canales de YouTube de las 12 principales marcas de moda de lujo. El principal objetivo es conocer la evolución de los contenidos audiovisuales de las principales marcas de moda de lujo en YouTube e identificar los principales formatos. Los resultados aportan una clasificación de los principales formatos utilizados por el sector del lujo, así como su capacidad de interacción. La investigación concluye que las marcas de moda de lujo usan más formatos convencionales que estrategias de contenido asociadas al branded content. Del mismo modo, se aprecia que las marcas de moda de lujo apenas interactúan con su público objetivo.

Palabras clave

Branded content; moda de lujo; YouTube; engagement; análisis de contenido

1. Introduction

The luxury fashion sector has undergone a profound renewal in the last 15 years as a result of globalisation and technological transformation. Structural changes have coincided with other more social and cultural changes, such as the democratisation of fashion due to the success of low-cost brands and the birth of the consumer-stylist role (Tungate, 2005). This sector has also had to adapt to a new, younger and more dispersed public, which already accounts for 38% of luxury shopping sales (Phillips, 2020).

In this changing context, social media is considered to be the innovation that has impacted luxury fashion brands the most (Duong and Sung, 2021; Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito and Singh, 2016; Kim and Ko, 2010). With 3.23 billion users in 2020 worldwide (Von Abrams, 2020), social networks have become a key tool in any marketing and communication strategy, especially after the pandemic (Mason, Narcurm and Mason, 2021). Among the most used social networks is YouTube, which has reached 2 billion users in 2021 and is the most used platform for consuming audiovisual content (Timelight Networks, 2020). Social media users consume almost 8 hours of online video per week and their main motivation is entertainment (Timelight Networks, 2020). In addition, YouTube has become one of the key social networks to connect with the younger generation (Duffett, 2020) and over a billion hours of YT videos are viewed every day, particularly among young consumers. YT has become a massive marketing communication platform, which serves as a medium to target the lucrative Generation Z cohort (first born in the late 1990s).

However, both the specialised press (Anjelic, 2019; Blank, 2020) and the academic literature (Okonkwo, 2010; Kapferer, 2014) agree that luxury fashion brands have been reluctant to embrace social media. The main reason is that digital transformation is a challenge for contemporary luxury, as it involves the combination of two antithetical concepts: 'communication implies contact' and 'luxury implies distance' (Sicard, 2007: 25). In other words, the special characteristics of products in the luxury sector demand a different approach at the communicative level (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Hennigs, Wiedmann and Klamann (2012) agree that the open and democratic nature of the internet moves away from the exclusivity of luxury brands, but they finally conclude that the digital transformation benefits the sector, and warn about the negative consequences of falling behind. Similarly, Kapferer (2014) recognises that the internet and social media offer the opportunity to create commercial synergies between online and offline, but, most importantly, to create branded content that effectively communicates its values.

1.2. Digital communication of luxury fashion brands

Historically, the dissemination of fashion and its communication, as well as access to this content, has remained subject to the power of the large traditional media —such as specialised magazines or television—, which were moderating institutions for the dissemination of their images. However, the internet and the users who create content have put an end to this domination. The luxury fashion industry has been forced to engage a new generation of consumers who are characterised by their use of digital media. For instance, fashion bloggers and social media influencers have changed the communicative ecosystem of the fashion industry due to their prescriptive nature (Ramos-Serrano and Jiménez-Marín, 2014). There is no doubt that the mass media continue to be a fast and prestigious method of making a brand visible (Díaz-Soloaga, 2014: 104-105); however, this change has also benefited brands by increasing their independence from these traditional media, as fashion companies have ceased to depend exclusively on them and have gained access to their own communication channels to disseminate their content, becoming communicative institutions themselves. According to Rees-Roberts (2020: 407), "contemporary brands no longer require the editorial filter of legacy media to communicate with consumers". Rocamora (2016) even states that social networks are changing the very business of fashion from production to communication. Collections are now conceived to be seen on social media, and fashion shows and other key communication tools of the sector are designed to be consumed on the internet. In this sense, YouTube is considered a key tool for communication in the luxury sector as it can host a wide range of audiovisual content, the main objective of which is to connect with users (Hanke, 2015).

But, on the other hand, the reasons for following luxury fashion brands on social media differ from other sectors where discounts and social interaction are important. In contrast, in the luxury sector, Bazi, Filieri and Gordon (2020) have observed that the relevance of the content posted, entertainment, and aesthetics, among others, are determining factors for consumers to follow their favourite brands.

1.3. Branded content and luxury fashion

Branded content can be defined as any original content, regardless of its format, created by the brand with a strategic intention (Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero, 2018). Thus, branded content can be informative or entertaining, where audiovisual formats stand out. Moreover, it is a consolidated communication trend, which has had a specific category at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity since 2012 (Sánchez Cobarro, 2018).

Independence from specialised media has allowed fashion brands to be active agents in the generation of entertainment content where videos are the main feature (Kim and Ko, 2010; Rees-Roberts, 2020) with admirable aesthetic value and innovative yet traditional business management. The brands constantly struggle to secure profits by providing novel value to customers through quality products and services, customer management, retail strategies, and innovative marketing mixes. However, the recent entry of numerous fashion brands in the luxury market coupled with decreased sales related to economic downturns have led to new challenges for luxury firms. Because the luxury fashion business is considered high value-added with guaranteed high profit margins and secure regular customers, the lower sectors have begun to heat up the competition. To survive the recent unforeseen challenges of heated competition, they have turned toward marketing communication using social media. Social media are the two-way communication platforms that allow users to interact with each other online to share information and opinions. Use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook has already expanded to almost every luxury fashion brand and been evaluated as business takeoff tools. With the increased use of social media as a means of marketing communication for luxury brands, it has become necessary to empirically analyze the effect of social media marketing (SMM). The work of Kim and Ko (2010), pioneers in the study of luxury fashion brands and social media, detected that entertainment was one of the key factors in improving the relationship with consumers. For this reason, the luxury fashion industry began to innovate its content with the creation of fashion films (Ramos-Serrano and Pineda, 2009; Del Pino Romero and Castelló Martínez, 2015; Díaz-Soloaga and Guerrero, 2016) .

The term 'fashion film' refers to a type of audiovisual productions that has its own characteristics. One of the most updated and complete definitions is the one offered by the authors Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez:

Fashion films can be defined as audiovisual productions in the form of short films, in the service of a brand, characterised by a communicative style in which the beauty and extremely careful aesthetics of the message —inherited from fashion photography— predominate over the product and/or the brand itself (2015: 118).

There is general agreement on the importance that the internet has had in the development and progress of fashion films as their main channel of dissemination (Ramos and Pineda, 2009: 733), as well as in its intention to entertain in order to attract the audience through a non-intrusive and participatory experience.

However, the impact of social media has diversified the content created by fashion brands. In this sense, Rees-Roberts (2020) states that fashion films are moving towards new narratives and visual styles as a consequence of the influence of social networks such as Instagram or TikTok, but also because of the new formats used by influencers, such as tutorials or hauls. In general, it can be said that social media have accelerated the pace of content creation, and the sector is now forced to update its channels on a daily basis. Campaigns are now extended in time, and content is fragmented into small pieces to get the attention of influencers (Segarra-Saavedra and Hidalgo-Marí, 2018), who have become a key part of communication in the luxury sector. However, the reality is that the industry has integrated them into the system and involves them in the distribution of its content, pretending that they have some control over it (Rees-Robert, 2020: 412).

Heine and Berghaus (2014) report that most fashion brands use social media in a traditional way. Nevertheless, they highlight the importance of using brand storytelling and integrating digital channels into their overall marketing strategy. The work of Pérez-Curiel and Sanz-Marcos (2019) also demonstrates the unidirectional use of Gucci's communication strategy on Instagram. The content posted was mostly focused on the brand's products and advertising campaigns. Besides, the brand's lack of interest in engaging in dialogue with followers was confirmed, which demonstrates "the potential of the company in its role as an influencer, without the need for the decisive presence of external agents to control the communication, marketing and sales processes" (Pérez-Curiel and Sanz-Marcos, 2019: 18).

Despite the fact that audiovisual content is a strategic element for the communication of fashion brands (Ng, 2014) making it the world's second largest luxury goods market. Many luxury fashion brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel and Coach, are making huge digital marketing efforts in China to increase brand equity and sales. This paper uses Coach as an example to explore how luxury brands use social media to connect with middle-class customers in China. After briefly summarizing the development of social media platforms in China, the key components of Coach's social media marketing strategy are highlighted and analyzed. Then a discussion of Weibo users' responses to Coach's posts is presented. The lessons learned from this study will help luxury brand marketers to engage in social media with Chinese users and improve their social media strategy in China.,"author":{("dropping-particle":"","family":"Ng","given":"Mark","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},"container-title":"Journal of Global Fashion Marketing","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"3","issued":{"date-parts":["2014"]},"page":"251-265","title":"Social media and luxury fashion brands in China: the case of Coach Social media and

luxury fashion brands in China: the case of Coach", "type": "article-journal", "volume": "5"}, "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=83cf18be-6697-394c-af17-5de9eb4c55c0"}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Ng, 2014, we have found few studies that analyse the content of these brands on YouTube. Along these lines, Hanke (2015: 76) states in her study that luxury brands such as Chanel, Burberry or Dior are using YouTube effectively to attract their target audience and reinforce their brand identity by means of entertainment. She identifies and analyses three categories of content on their YouTube channels: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes footage. In the first category, she highlights the Burberry Acoustic series, which has been showcasing British acoustic artists since 2013 and as of April 2020 has 91 videos and more than 3 million views on its YouTube playlist, making it by far the most viewed on its channel. As an example of historical narrative, Chanel is the most paradigmatic case with its Inside Chanel series, made up of a set of short films that tell different aspects of the history of the company and its founder, Gabrielle Chanel. On the other hand, behind-the-scenes content is one of the most frequent categories on luxury fashion brands' YouTube channels. They usually show the details of how advertising campaigns, fashion shows or the design of collections were made; they may also include making-of scenes or interviews.

Another more recent study, carried out in the professional field, has analysed the presence of 10 luxury brands on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram (Aliferis, 2017). The results reveal that the brands analysed post an average of 6 times per week on Facebook and Instagram, while on YouTube they only post once a month. The most used types of videos are advertising spots, behind-the-brand videos and events or fashion shows. The study questions whether brands are missing a communication opportunity via YouTube, as the video platform has more views than Facebook. However, this is not reflected in the number of channel subscribers. Finally, it recommends luxury brands to create more audiovisual content and be more consistent in their YouTube posts.

1.4. YouTube and its communicative power

The evolution of this online video platform has been linked to the emergence and subsequent professionalisation of youtubers. However, since its acquisition by Google (2006), YouTube has focused its business model on advertising and, in this way, monetising the activity of its users (De Aguilera-Moyano, Castro-Higueras and Pérez-Rufi, 2018). This more commercial approach of the platform has prioritised the channel over the individual video (Vonderau, 2016) and, therefore, the professional youtuber over the amateur.

But, in addition to the advertising possibilities of this platform, brands can create their own channels where they could experiment in the creation of audiovisual content. Although YouTube's characteristics are ideal for creating a professional branded content strategy (Castelló-Martínez, Del Pino-Romero and Tur-Viñes, 2016), the reality is that brands tend to use the platform to post commercial content and even television spots (Costa-Sánchez and Túnñez-López, 2019: 234). Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio (2021) have shown that the most viewed videos on the channels of the main Spanish advertisers are TV commercials, which are uploaded to the platform to advertise in digital media. Similarly, it was found that the second most used format is informational branded content, and that most companies do not have a planned content strategy. On the contrary, Wang and Chan-Olmsted (2020) found that a good use of the platform is indisputably related to a commitment on the part of the brand, which means having a specialised team with sufficient financial resources to design specific content according to its kind of product. In addition, the frequency of posts is also related to a professional content strategy (Ashley and Tuten, 2015) which creative strategies/appeals are being used, and how these channels and strategies relate to consumer engagement in branded social media. Past research has suggested that brands should focus on maintaining a social presence across social channels with content that is fresh and frequent and includes incentives for consumer participation (Ling et al., 2004, which is in line with the study by Khan and Vong (2014), who showed that users are always looking for fresh content.

2. Research objectives and methodology

Research on branded content used by luxury fashion brands has focused on the use of fashion films as the predominant audiovisual format. However, changes in the luxury industry and the rise of social media require a more detailed analysis of content strategies in this sector. For this reason, the general objective of this research is to find out what kind of audiovisual content is uploaded by the main luxury fashion brands on YouTube and their ability to interact. Based on this general objective, the following research questions are proposed (RQ):

RQ₁. How has the use of YouTube by luxury fashion brands evolved?

RQ₂. Which audiovisual formats do luxury fashion brands use on YouTube?

RQ₃. Which audiovisual formats generate the most viewers?

RQ₄. Which audiovisual formats generate the most interaction?

RQ₅. Which audiovisual formats generate the most engagement?

RQ₆. What kind of content strategies do brands use, conventional or branded content?

In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative methodology has been followed, applying the technique of content analysis to the videos uploaded on YouTube channels from their creation until December 2019 of a representative set of 12 luxury fashion brands. For the selection of these brands, we have considered several rankings (García, 2018; Carrión, 2019; Deloitte, 2019) with the aim of obtaining a group of companies that stand out not only for their financial value but also for other more qualitative aspects, such as brand value or their digitalisation. Table 1 shows the selected brands, the year of creation of their channel and the number of videos analysed —4079 in total—. Data collection and coding was carried out during the period from 6 June 2020 to 16 January 2021, using a content analysis form designed ad hoc based on Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz (2016), Hanke (2015) and Aliferis (2017). It should be noted that all videos uploaded in the selected period were analysed. This data will allow us to establish a timeline of the strategic use that each of the brands has made of their YouTube channel.

Table 1: Brands analysed, year of creation of the channel and number of videos

Brand	Year of creation	Number of videos
Michael Kors	2008	413
Gucci	2008	368
Burberry	2009	389
Fendi	2009	206
Tory Burch	2009	281
Chanel	2010	766
Christian Dior	2010	573
Louis Vuitton	2010	147
Prada	2010	370
Salvatore Ferragamo	2010	347
Hermes	2015	126
Yves Saint Laurent	2016	93
Total		4079

Source: own elaboration based on YouTube

Thus, the analysis form is divided into two sections. On the one hand, there is a technical form where the following data is collected: (1) date of posting of the video, (2) brand, (3) length, (4) title of the video, (5) number of views, (6) number of likes, (7) number of dislikes, (8) number of comments.

The number of views provides information on the audience of the video, while the number of likes, dislikes and comments indicate the interaction potential of the videos. Based on this data, the engagement formula proposed by López-Navarrete, Cabrera-Méndez, Díaz Somavilla and Calduch-Losa (2021) has been applied: $\text{non-viral interaction (applause + conversation) / impacts (views) * 100}$.

Secondly, the videos were categorised by format. The formats identified are: (1) advertisement, (2) competition/contest, (3) detail, (4) documentary, (5) editorial, (6) interview, (7) fashion film, (8) fashion show, (9) making of/behind the scenes, (10) news/report, (11) trailer, (12) tutorial, (13) video blog, (14) music video. On this matter, it should be noted that YouTube's own formats, such as videoblog, unboxing, haul, reviews or challenges, have been categorised in a single format called "videoblog" in order to simplify their classification. Only tutorials, a very popular format on this platform, have been counted separately due to its importance.

Once the different formats have been identified, they have been grouped into two distinct categories, namely traditional formats, more related to conventional advertising and the ones commonly used by luxury fashion brands, and on the other hand, branded content formats, which in turn have been subdivided into two subcategories: entertainment branded content and informative branded content. Thus, based on the definition of branded content offered by Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero (2018), and the classifications made by Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio (2021); BCMA Spain (2020); Toledano Cuervas-Mons, Selva-Ruíz and Díaz-Masa Gutiérrez (2021), this grouping of the formats identified in the study is proposed —see Table 2—. As for the traditional formats, we have taken into account not only advertisements but also fashion shows, details and fashion editorial, formats already used regularly by luxury fashion brands, and which they have simply transferred to YouTube. This grouping of the individual formats into larger containers allows us to clarify whether luxury fashion brands use YouTube to share traditional content, or whether they follow a branded content strategy.

Table 2. Proposed classification of formats

Traditional content	Branded content	Types of branded content
Advertisement	360°	Entertainment
Detail	Competition	Entertainment
Fashion show	Documentary	Informative
Editorial	Interview	Informative
	Fashion film	Entertainment
	Making of	Entertainment
	Trailer	Entertainment
	Tutorial	Informative
	Music video	Entertainment
	Video blog	Entertainment
	Report	Informative
	News	Informative

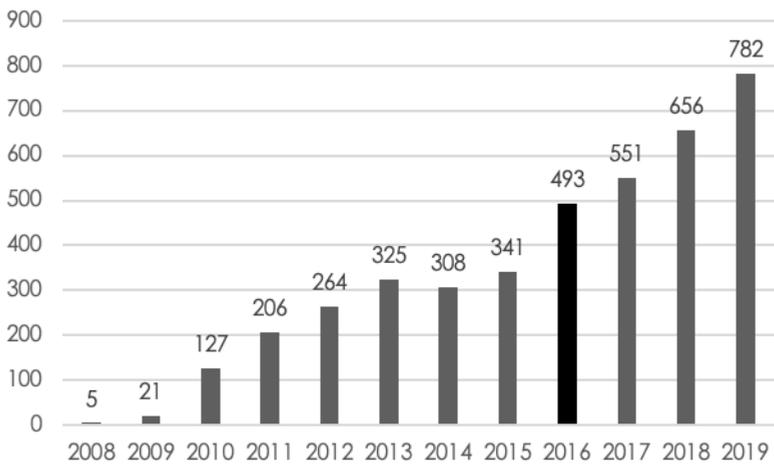
Source: own elaboration based on Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio (2021); BCMA Spain (2020); Toledano Cuervas-Mons et al. (2021).

3. Results

3.1. Video production and its evolution over time

The luxury fashion brands analysed have an uneven evolution in their use of YouTube. The first brand to be recorded is Michael Kors, with its first video uploaded on 3 June 2008. However, it was not until 2010 that five of the brands in the sample opened their YouTube channels: Prada, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Salvatore Ferragamo. The last brand to start its activity on this platform was Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) (17/6/2016). This information is relevant when it comes to observing which has been the period of greatest activity so far, since it is only since 2016 that all the luxury fashion brands in the sample have been active on their respective YouTube channels. In this respect, it can be seen that the increase in the annual average has generally followed an upward trend. As a result, the year with the highest overall activity was 2019, with a significant leap in values from 2016 onwards, a period in which the average value almost doubled.

Graph 1. Total number of videos per year



Source: own elaboration

In terms of total video production by brand, Chanel (18.8%), Dior (12.6%) and Michael Kors (9%) are the leading brands. In contrast, the brands with the lowest activity are YSL (2.3%), Hermes (3.1%) and Louis Vuitton (3.2%). In Table 3, we can see the number of videos per brand and their percentage of the total analysed.

Table 3. Number of videos by brand and percentage of the total

Brand	Number of videos	%
BUR	389	9,5%
CHA	766	18%
DIOR	573	14%
FEN	206	5,1%
GUC	368	9%
HER	126	3,1%
LOU	147	3,6%
KOR	413	10,1%
PRA	370	9,07%
SAL	347	8,5%
TOR	281	6,9%
YSL	93	2,3%
Total	4079	

Source: own elaboration

However, individual brand analysis reveals that the use of YouTube has been somewhat up and down, with periods of inactivity or low use combined with periods of higher activity. In fact, Chanel and Fendi are the only two brands that have followed some upward progression in their annual postings. But even these brands have periods of lower activity; for instance, Chanel reduced its video production in 2015 and 2017, and Fendi in 2016. The rest of the brands show a more irregular evolution, with periods of no activity or a very sharp decrease and others of sudden growth. Table 4 shows the years of greatest and least activity of each brand, which helps to understand this very uneven behaviour. As can be seen,

in all cases the year of lowest activity coincides with the year of creation of the channel, in which few videos are usually uploaded. Meanwhile, Prada and Ferragamo differ from the rest of the brands in that they launch their channel with a high number of videos, but they do not continue their activity on a regular basis during the period analysed. As for the period of greatest activity, not all brands coincide. Even so, 2019 is the year in which half of the brands analysed concentrate their activity.

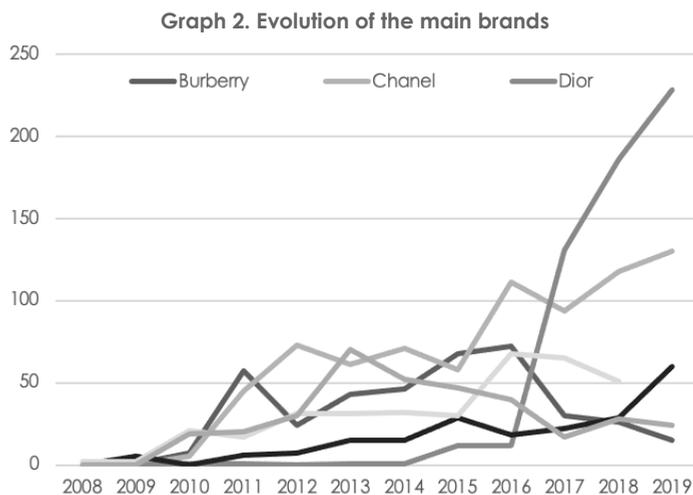
Table 4. Periods of highest and lowest activity

Brand	Year of lowest activity	Year of highest activity
BUR	2009 (1)	2016 (72)
CHA	2010 (5)	2019 (130)
DIOR	2010 (1)	2019 (228)
FEN	2009 (5)	2019 (60)
GUC	2008 (3)	2017 (70)
HER	2015 (9)	2018 (55)
LOU	2010 (1)	2019 (64)
KOR	2008 (2)	2016 (68)
PRA	2010 (35)	2019 (59)
SAL	2010 (19)	2013 (70)
TOR	2009 (5)	2016 (60)
YSL	2016 (9)	2018 (37)

Source: own elaboration

On this matter, very explosive growth has also been observed after certain dates. This is the case of Christian Dior which, despite starting its activity in 2010, like Chanel, has a very sharp growth in 2017, with an increase of 1091% compared to the previous year, 2016, as we can see in Graph 2. However, the case of Ferragamo is the opposite, which has reduced its activity very sharply since 2014, with a drop of 65% in just 5 years.

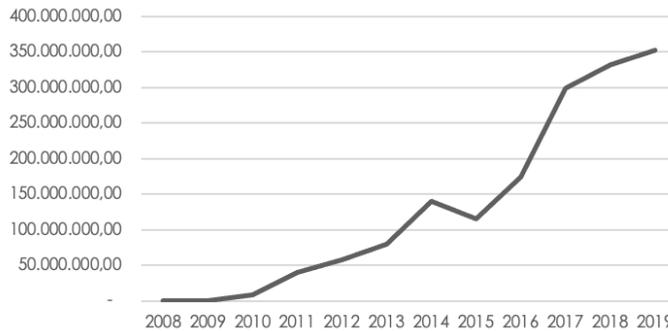
The results also show that luxury fashion brands use their channels with little planning. For instance, Michael Kors, which started its activity in June 2008, takes more than 6 months to upload the next video. On the other hand, it is common for brands to upload several videos on the same day, but they also combine this with periods of inactivity. However, the differences between brands are very clear. While Chanel posts on average every 4 days, Louis Vuitton takes an average of 23 days. With the exception of Chanel and Dior, the rest of the brands take an average of 10 days to post.



Source: own elaboration

Regarding the number of views, the luxury fashion brands analysed accumulated more than 1.6 billion views. As we can see in Graph 3, the annual evolution is increasing throughout the period analysed, with 2019 being the year with the highest number of views—more than 331 million—. Similarly, it can be seen that this increase is associated with the incorporation of luxury fashion brands on YouTube and with the increase in the number of videos. Therefore, 2010 and 2016 are key years to understand the evolution of the audience of luxury fashion brands on YouTube. When analysed by brand, Chanel, the fashion house with the highest number of videos, is also the one with the highest percentage of views—31.7%—. Louis Vuitton has the second highest number of views—20.3%—, despite being the brand with the third lowest number of videos. Therefore, 2 of the 12 brands analysed obtain more than 50% of the views. In third place is Dior with 14.4% of the views. Surprisingly, Michael Kors, the first brand in the sample to have a YouTube channel and the third in number of videos, only obtains 8.5% of the views. The rest of the brands do not reach 10% of the views.

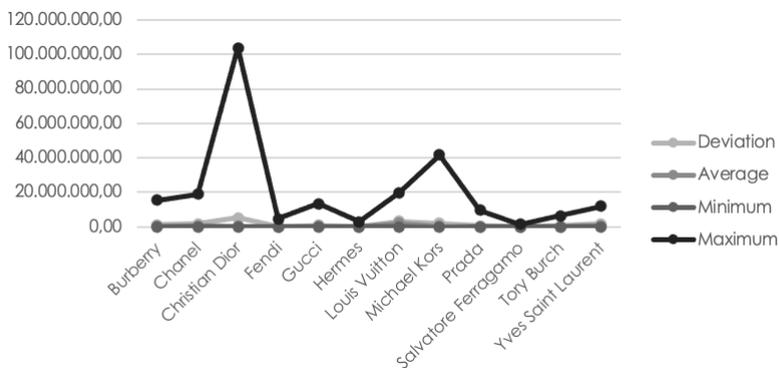
Graph 3. Evolution of views



Source: own elaboration

Most of the brands have a very uneven distribution of views, which means that the power to generate an audience for each of the videos is very different. Compared to the rest of the brands, Ferragamo is, despite being one of the brands with the lowest number of views, the one with the most stable audience—see Graph 4—. Dior, on the other hand, has a very high standard deviation, i.e., it has very different audience data with respect to its average number of views.

Graph 4. Study of views



Source: own elaboration

With regard to interactions, it should be noted that YSL has deactivated the interaction options, which is why it was decided to exclude its videos when presenting the results. The 3986 videos of the 11 brands analysed in this section achieved 6,090,246 interactions, an average of 1,527 interactions per video. Of the total number of interactions, 91%—5,552,901— correspond to 'likes', and only 5.6% are 'dislikes'—340,047—. Meanwhile, comments account for only 3.2% of interactions, i.e., 197,298 comments in total. As for the annual evolution of interactions, it can be said that it follows an upward trend, with 56% of interactions occurring in the last three years analysed—2017-2019—. In the analysis by brand, Chanel is the one with the highest number of interactions—more than 2 million—, representing 48% of the total number of interactions. Hermes, on the other hand, is the brand with the fewest interactions, with just 0.19%, or 11,381 interactions.

3.2. Formats: evolution over time

The advertisement is the most used format, representing 41.57% of the total number of videos registered. It is followed, with a notable difference, by the making of (15.4%), the fashion show (11.5%) and the interview (11.3%). From here, the rest of the formats do not have a representation of more than 3.5%, which is achieved by the news. At the bottom of the ranking, the least used formats are editorial (0.12%), trailer (0.32%) and 360° (0.69%). Fashion films, on the other hand, accounted for only 1.23% of the total, with a total of 50 videos.

With regard to the evolution over time of the formats, it can be seen that as brands join the platform, they experiment with new formats. Thus, in 2008, the first year analysed, only two different formats appeared, advertisement and news, while in 2019, 15 of the 16 formats registered were identified. Advertisements have, in general, a growing trend that is relevant from 2016 onwards, when the data increases by 53%, and this growth is kept until 2019. With other formats, such as the making of and the fashion show, we observe that there is a very pronounced increase during the first years, then a moderate decrease, and a stronger increase from 2016 onwards. Similarly, tutorials and interviews also have a progressive increase from 2016 onwards, and achieve their best results in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Fashion films were particularly popular in 2013 and 2015, years in which 43% of the videos in this format were posted.

On the other hand, there are formats that have experienced irregular ups and downs, but whose use by brands is significant, given their intrinsic potential on YouTube. These include music videos, which experienced its biggest boom between 2013 and 2016, with an average of 21 videos per year, and video blogs, which has seen the highest rate of use in 2017 and 2019, with 18 and 24 videos of this format, respectively.

As for the individual analysis by brand, we observe that the advertisement continues to be the most used format on most occasions (see Table 5). Only three brands stand out from the rest. This is the case of Hermes, where competition is the most used format, with 38.1% of the total number of videos, compared to advertisement, which represents 28.6%. However, it is important to note that the results of the competition format are an exception, as they are only attributed to this fashion house, which uses the video platform to broadcast equestrian competitions. For its part, Dior uses the making of format in 33.3% of cases compared to advertisement (26.9%). In the case of Fendi, making of (27.7%) also narrowly outperforms the advertisement format (27.2%). On the other hand, the brands that use advertisements the most are YSL (86%), Tory Burch (58%) and Salvatore Ferragamo (49.6%).

Table 5. Formats used by each brand

Format	BUR	CHA	DIOR	FEN	GUC	HER	LOU	MIC	PRA	SAL	TOR	YSL
360°		3	10	2	6		1		6			
Advertisement	150	275	154	56	201	36	64	194	157	172	164	80
Competition						48						
Detail		41	3				1					
Documentary		52	1		4		2	1	6			
Editorial					3			2				
Interview	32	105	136	31	38	13	18	36	7	23	22	
Fashion film		4		2	4				24	10	5	1
Fashion show	30	55	49	36	45	10	46	22	108	38	19	11
Making of	24	132	191	57	46	2	1	47	40	57	35	
News	16	13	10	16	12		3	32	8	29	6	
Report	3	24	12	6	4	11	9	7	3	2	2	
Trailer	1				3				4	5		
Tutorial	32	52	2		2	6	1	31	1	6	18	
Music video	101	5						4	1	3		1
Video blog		5	5				1	37	5	2	10	
Total	389	766	573	206	368	126	147	413	370	347	281	93

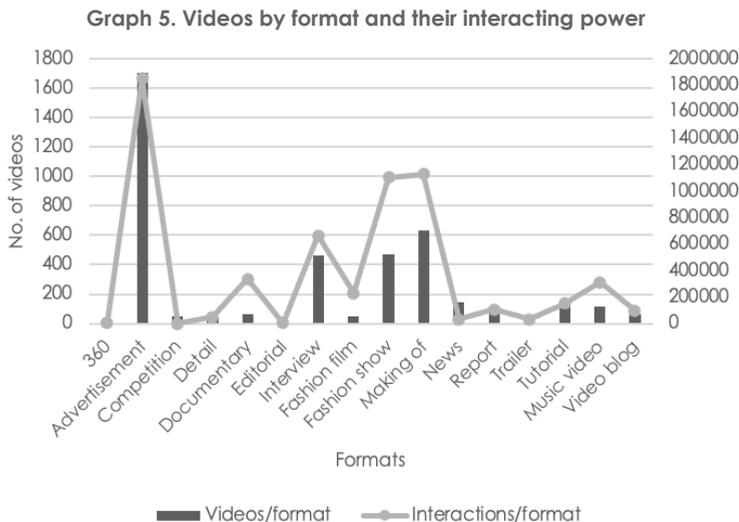
Source: own elaboration

When looking at other lesser-used formats by brand, Burberry, for instance, is heavily invested in the music video format, which accounts for 26% of its own content and 88% of the music videos in total, with the aim of reinforcing its origins through the promotion of emerging and established British artists, who participate in the Burberry Acoustic programme with live performances and special collaborations. For its part, Chanel is betting more on the documentary and report formats compared to the other brands, representing 79% and 29% of the respective totals, to underpin both its history and tradition and the iconicity of its founder, Gabrielle Chanel, through series such as Inside CHANEL —produced both in English and French, which seems to be intended to reinforce the Gallic origin— or CHANEL SUBLIMAGE. Chanel is also the driving force behind the detail format, producing 91% of this type of video, which allows the viewers to appreciate product features that are difficult to perceive without touching or observing them up close. Prada, for its part, makes intensive use of fashion shows, which represents 26% of the total of this format, and is also the producer of the greatest number of fashion films —48% of the total of this format—.

On the other hand, special mention should be made of the two formats most closely related to YouTube, namely the tutorial and the video blog. Most of the brands analysed post tutorials, except for Fendi and YSL. The brands that use this format the most are Chanel —34%—, Burberry —21%— and Kors —20.5%—. On the other hand, video blogs are only used by 7 of the 12 brands analysed, and Kors is the brand that makes most use of this new format —57%—.

The format with the highest number of views is the advertisement, which accumulates 65% of them — more than one million views—. The rest of the formats have very limited views. Thus, fashion shows have 13% of the total number of views —209,735,511— and the making of barely gets 5.2%. The formats with the lowest number of views are editorial, detail and competition, which do not reach 0.1%. Meanwhile, fashion films only accumulated 1.5% of views —24,084,645—.

Meanwhile, the formats with the highest number of interactions coincide with the formats with the highest representation: advertisements —30.3%—, making of —18.5%— and fashion shows —18%—. In other words, more than 66% of interactions are concentrated in these three formats. And if we compare the number of videos with the number of interactions, as can be seen in Graph 5, making of and fashion shows are proportionally more effective, as they achieve good results with fewer videos. Interviews, on the other hand, achieve 10.8% of the interactions, a figure that is also very high, mainly due to the number of comments, 12% of the total. The same goes for fashion films, which stand out for their interactions (see Graph 5). After this, the rest of the formats do not exceed 6% of interactions.



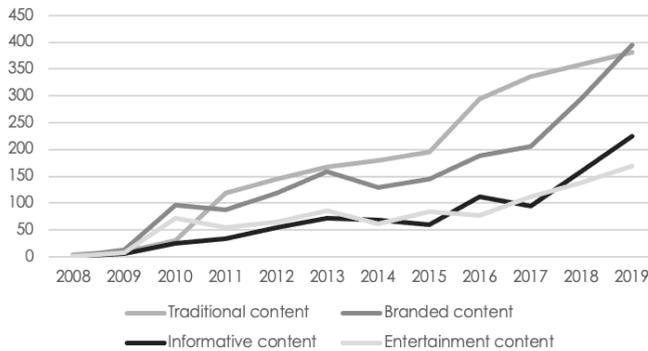
Source: own elaboration

Finally, in terms of engagement rate, the data is very low in general. Most of the formats fail to reach 1%. And the format with the best results is the interview, although it only achieves 2.2%. Meanwhile, the advertisement only reaches 0.17%. In terms of engagement data by brand, the fashion houses with the best global results are Dior —20.3%—, Ferragamo —19.6%— and Chanel —18.4%—. On the other hand, the brands with the lowest engagement are Hermes —0.3%—, Louis Vuitton —1.4%— and Tory Burch —3.2%—. It should be noted that this data corresponds to the total amount achieved in the entire period analysed, and without differentiating by format.

3.3. Branded content and advertising content of luxury fashion brands

The results indicate that 54.4% of the content posted on YouTube by luxury fashion brands is traditional, while 45.5% corresponds to branded content, of which 28.8% is entertainment and 22.6% is informative. As for the evolution over time, both categories of content have shown a regular growth over the period analysed, which is related, as mentioned above, to the increased use of the platform by brands. In general, luxury fashion brands tend to use more traditional content than branded content. However, it is from 2017 when branded content begins to grow more than traditional content, even surpassing it in 2019. In terms of the type of branded content, it can be seen that entertainment content is used more regularly over time, although there is greater use in the period from 2009-2013. Meanwhile, informative branded content began to be used more from 2014 onwards, when it caught up with entertainment content. However, it was in 2017 when luxury fashion brands began to opt for informative content over entertainment content, as can be seen in Graph 6 below.

Graph 6. Evolution over time of traditional content and branded content



Source: own elaboration

The individual data reveal that each brand has different content strategies. However, 8 of the 12 brands analysed create more traditional content, as can be seen in Table 6, although in some cases the use of traditional formats is considerable, as in the case of YSL, Prada, Tory Burch and Ferragamo. In contrast, Burberry, Chanel, Dior and Fendi use more formats categorised as branded content. In this way, Burberry is generally committed to entertainment branded content, which, as mentioned above, is related to its commitment to music. Dior, on the other hand, is also committed to branded content, with a greater number of entertainment videos. It can be seen that it has also invested heavily in informative branded content, especially interviews. Fendi, for its part, with a closer proportion between the two categories, uses both entertainment and informative branded content. In the case of Chanel, the leading brand in terms of number of videos, it is more strongly committed to informative branded content, due to the use of interviews, documentaries and reports. However, it should be noted that, in the case of Chanel, the difference between traditional content and branded content is minimal.

Table 6. Content strategies by brand

Brand	Traditional	Branded content	Informative	Entertainment
Burberry	180	209	83	126
Chanel	371	392	246	146
Christian Dior	206	357	161	196
Fendi	92	112	53	59
Gucci	249	113	60	53
Hermes	46	80	30	50
Louis Vuitton	111	35	33	2
Michael Kors	215	198	109	89
Prada	265	99	25	74
Salvatore Ferragamo	210	137	60	77
Tory Burch	183	98	48	50
Yves Saint Laurent	91	2	0	2

Source: own elaboration

4. Discussion

As for the evolution over time of luxury fashion brands, the results show that this sector has an irregular behaviour in the use of YouTube. The brands analysed join the platform gradually, which is in line with previous studies that show certain reticence in the use of social media in this sector (Anjelic, 2019; Blank, 2020; Okonkwo, 2010; Kapferer, 2014). As YouTube becomes more established as a platform and a key tool for reaching younger people (Phillips, 2020), the brands studied are using the platform more intensively. In fact, it is only in 2016 that the 12 brands analysed have a presence on YouTube and there is a significant increase in the number of videos uploaded.

However, not all brands have an upward trend in their use of YouTube. The data shows that brands behave in a disorganised way. This is related to the capricious strategies of the sector, closely linked to changes in the creative directions of fashion houses. Thus, it can be seen that, while Ferragamo leaves this social network in 2014, Dior begins an explosive growth in the same year. This behaviour is in the opposite direction to the recommendations for professional use (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

On the other hand, the low interaction rate of luxury fashion brands demonstrates the difficult relationship established with their audience on social media, as a consequence of the exclusivity that characterises this kind of products (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009), and which is very difficult to fit into communication strategies. For instance, YSL does not allow interactions on its YouTube channel. Although this is an exception, the reality is that the rest of the brands are not characterised by conversation on their channels either. This traditional way of using the platform observed in this study is in line with the reports made by Heine and Berghaus (2014) and Pérez-Curiel and Sanz-Marcos (2019). However, the brand that has the closest relationship with its audience is Chanel, which is also the brand with the highest number of videos uploaded, and which makes the most intensive use of the platform.

The most common format used by most luxury fashion brands is the advertisement. These are the same TV spots that are uploaded to the video platform for advertising campaigns. This practice is also common in other sectors (Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio, 2021). Other formats widely used by luxury fashion brands are the making of and the fashion show. Both audiovisual practices are closely linked to the luxury fashion sector. The former, also known as "behind the scenes" (Hanke, 2015; Aliferis, 2017), aims to show the details of the creation of campaigns and fashion shows. Fashion shows, on the other hand, are posted on YouTube to bring seasonal collections and products to the general public.

As for the tutorials, a format associated with the world of youtubers, they are used by most brands. However, Chanel, Burberry and Louis Vuitton are the brands that experiment most with this format. On the other hand, video blogs are less used, with Kors being the brand that uses them most intensively.

In addition, it can be seen that some brands are focusing on certain formats that are associated with their brand universe. Thus, Hermes uses YouTube almost exclusively to broadcast the equestrian competitions with which it is traditionally associated, just like Burberry with music formats and Chanel with more informative formats that explore the legacy of its founder. For its part, Dior uses making of and interviews to connect with the audience.

Meanwhile, fashion films, the audiovisual format par excellence for luxury fashion brands (Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015), is rarely used on YouTube. Prada and Ferragamo are the brands that use it the most, but major fashion houses, such as Dior and Burberry, do not have any fashion films uploaded to their YouTube channel. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, these types of short films are usually submitted to fashion film festivals, and brands do not always use social media for their dissemination. Secondly, this type of format, which is costly and difficult to produce, has given way to more flexible and simpler formats that are easy to produce on social media (Rees-Roberts 2020). Despite these low data, their capacity for interaction is high in comparison with other more traditional formats.

The format that accumulates the highest number of views is the advertisement. This shows that most luxury fashion brands run paid advertising campaigns on YouTube. The interactions are similar, with the majority of them concentrated in the three most used formats: advertisements, making of and fashion shows. However, when comparing the number of videos with the number of interactions, advertisements are less effective. Similarly, the formats that generate the most interaction are interviews and fashion films.

As for the engagement rate, it should be noted that this is a formula that determines the success of individual videos, and therefore caution should be exercised when applying it to a set of videos. However, the study data shows that videos from luxury fashion houses have a very low engagement rate, and most of the formats barely achieve 1%. The interview is the format that achieves the highest percentage due to the use of comments to ask questions from the viewers. Therefore, there are formats that naturally encourage conversation. In contrast, most formats are designed to be consumed passively, just like a TV spot.

To conclude this section, and in response to RQ₆, it can be stated that most luxury fashion brands use conventional content strategies across the board, as a result of the massive use of the advertisement and fashion show formats. Both formats are communication tools specific to the luxury fashion sector, which brands have transferred to the YouTube platform. As far as branded content strategies are concerned, there has been a certain increase in branded content strategies since 2017, which will even surpass conventional strategies in 2019. This is especially thanks to the informative formats that are gaining ground in the sector due to the consolidation of their own media and the independence of brands from traditional media (Rees-Roberts, 2020).

It can also be seen that certain brands have a predilection for certain content strategies. Thus, Dior, Burberry, Fendi and Chanel make more use of branded content strategies, even though they also make extensive use of traditional formats. This is partially in line with Hanke's (2015: 15) data, which stated that Dior, Chanel and Burberry were using entertainment formats effectively on YouTube. In this study, it was found that Burberry and Dior are using entertainment formats, but have also incorporated informative content strategies. In the case of Chanel, they are opting for more informative formats. However, it should be highlighted that the difference between conventional content and branded content is narrow, and only concentrated in certain brands. This shows, on the one hand, that the luxury sector has been late to enter the digital medium, as previous studies have already reported (Anjelic, 2019; Blank, 2020), and, on the other hand, that this distrust is affecting the professional content creation. Nevertheless, the innovations made by some luxury fashion brands in the digital medium demonstrate that it is possible to carry out a profound renovation of content without losing the exclusivity of this kind of products. In this way, certain brands seem to be focusing on audiovisual content to bring the brand universe closer to other audiences, which could be affecting the collections themselves that seem to be conceived for on-screen consumption (Rocamora, 2016).

5. Conclusions

The study data allow us to affirm that the behaviour of luxury fashion brands is uneven on YouTube. Despite the fact that the evolution is increasing throughout the entire period analysed—2008-2019—, the individual results by brand reveal that the use of this video platform is actually very irregular, alternating periods of inactivity with phases of frenetic activity. Similarly, 2010 and 2016 are key years in the evolution of luxury fashion brands on YouTube. In 2010, 5 out of the 12 brands analysed started using it, which shows that the sector is beginning to take this social network into account. For its part, 2016 became the year in which the boom in video production began. Therefore, it can be concluded that the luxury fashion sector is reluctant to innovate in the use of new tools such as YouTube.

It can also be seen that luxury fashion brands do not have a relationship with their audience, and that, on most occasions, the channels are used as a repository of videos that are consumed asynchronously and without paying attention to the conversation generated by their viewers. Moreover, this space is often used by brands to link to these videos both on their websites and on other social platforms. Therefore, luxury tends to be distant from its viewers on YouTube, keeping the natural exclusivity of this kind of product.

Similarly, it is confirmed that YouTube channels are used to broadcast advertising content and fashion shows. Thus, the format most used by the brands analysed is the advertisement. These are the same advertising spots produced for conventional campaigns that are used for promotional content on social media. However, it is also used to broadcast fashion shows, key events of the sector's communication strategies, and other informative or entertaining content. This proves that the luxury sector is achieving this communicative independence from traditional media.

Regarding branded content strategies on YouTube, the data reveals that brands are reluctant to innovate in content production. However, entertainment and informative content has increased in the last three years—2017-2019—. It can even be concluded that in 2019 luxury fashion brands are betting more on informative branded content formats, which could be a trend in the sector that will have to be confirmed in future analyses.

This descriptive and exploratory work on the use of YouTube by luxury fashion brands is a novelty in communication studies, as it is the first time that such a long period of time—2008-2019 and more than 4000 videos— has been analysed. The evolution over time of the formats could be useful for communication managers of luxury fashion brands. However, the selected brands behave unevenly and the comparison by years and brands has made it difficult to analyse the results. In addition, another difficulty encountered is the instability of the brands' channels, which add and delete videos as they see fit. On the other hand, the identification of formats has been complex due to the diversity of styles found. In future research, we propose to compare these results with other studies on the creation of content on other social networks, such as Instagram or TikTok.

6. Person-specific contribution

Contributions	Full name
Idea and design of the work	Gema Macías-Muñoz; Marina Ramos-Serrano; Antonio Rueda Treviño
Documentary research	Marina Ramos-Serrano; Gema Macías-Muñoz
Data collection	Gema Macías-Muñoz; Antonio Rueda Treviño
Data analysis and critical interpretation	Marina Ramos-Serrano; Gema Macías-Muñoz; Antonio Rueda Treviño
Writing, format, review and approval of versions	Marina Ramos-Serrano

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Translator: Lucía Otaola Puche.

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