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Constructing Brand Identity in Digital Communication: A Comparative Corpus-Based Analysis of Co-Branding Practices in Smeg, Porsche and Dolce & Gabbana

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ITALIAN ABSTRACT

Con la presente tesi, sviluppata nell'ambito della linguistica applicata e degli studi sulla comunicazione digitale, si analizzano in modo approfondito le strategie comunicative del co-branding online attraverso un approccio che combina la linguistica dei corpora e l'analisi multimodale. L'obiettivo dell'analisi è comprendere come i brand costruiscano identità condivise, valori comuni e narrative coerenti attraverso l'uso di testi, immagini, emoji e interazioni con il pubblico. La ricerca prende in esame le collaborazioni Smeg x Porsche e Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana su Instagram, analizzando corpora composti da didascalie, commenti ed elementi interattivi come le emoji, con particolare attenzione alle scelte linguistiche, alle strategie visive e alle dinamiche di coinvolgimento. L'approccio adottato permette di osservare come la componente verbale contribuisca alla definizione dello stile comunicativo, mentre quella visiva articola estetiche, simbolismi e riferimenti culturali che rafforzano la coerenza narrativa delle collaborazioni. L'analisi dei commenti, seppur limitata dalla natura frammentaria delle interazioni e dalla presenza di una grande quantità di emoji, offre una prospettiva significativa sulla percezione del pubblico e sulle forme di partecipazione. I risultati mostrano che il co-branding digitale non si classifica solamente come una semplice strategia promozionale, ma come un processo complesso di negoziazione identitaria, in cui i partner costruiscono uno spazio condiviso capace di generare riconoscimento, coinvolgimento e valore simbolico.

La tesi evidenzia inoltre il ruolo centrale della comunicazione multimodale nel branding contemporaneo, mostrando come i social media richiedano una gestione integrata di risorse verbali, visive e interattive. L'integrazione di metodi qualitativi e quantitativi si rivela particolarmente efficace per cogliere la complessità dei contenuti digitali e per analizzare in modo sistematico le strategie discorsive dei brand. Il modello proposto si dimostra replicabile e adattabile a diversi contesti comunicativi, aprendo prospettive di ricerca verso analisi su altre piattaforme digitali, studi interculturali, applicazioni dell'intelligenza artificiale e indagini sul comportamento dei consumatori. In conclusione, la tesi contribuisce a una comprensione più ampia e teoricamente fondata del co-branding digitale, evidenziando come la comunicazione multimodale sia oggi una componente essenziale nella costruzione dell'identità di brand e nella definizione delle relazioni tra aziende e clienti nel panorama digitale contemporaneo.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a detailed analysis of the communicative strategies of online co-branding using an approach that combines corpus linguistics and multimodal analysis. The study aims to understand how brands construct shared identities, common values, and coherent narratives using texts, images, emojis, and interactions with the audience. The research examines the Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana collaborations on Instagram, analysing corpora composed of captions, comments, and interactive elements such as emojis. Particular attention is paid to linguistic choices, visual strategies and dynamics of audience involvement. The adopted approach makes it possible to observe how the verbal component contributes to defining the communication style, while the visual component articulates aesthetics, symbolism and cultural references that reinforce the narrative coherence of the collaborations. The analysis of comments, although limited by the fragmentary nature of interactions and the presence of a large number of emojis, offers a significant perspective on audience perception and forms of participation. The results show that digital co-branding cannot be classified merely as a promotional strategy, but rather as a complex process of identity negotiation in which partners construct a shared semiotic space capable of generating recognition, involvement and symbolic value.

The thesis also highlights the central role of multimodal communication in contemporary branding, showing how social media require an integrated management of verbal, visual and interactive resources. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods proves particularly effective in capturing the complexity of digital content and in systematically analysing brand discursive strategies. The proposed model is replicable and adaptable to different communicative contexts, opening new avenues for research on other digital platforms, intercultural studies, applications of artificial intelligence, and investigations into consumer behaviour. In conclusion, the thesis contributes to a broader and theoretically grounded understanding of digital co-branding, showing how multimodal communication is now an essential component in the construction of brand identity and in shaping relationships between companies and customers in the contemporary digital landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital communication has profoundly reshaped the ways in which brands construct their identities, establish relationships with audiences and articulate shared values. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have made the coordinated use of text, images, emoji and audience interactions central to brand discourse, giving rise to multimodal forms of communication that require analytical tools capable of capturing their complexity. Within this evolving landscape, digital co-branding has emerged as a significant phenomenon, allowing brands to collaborate in the construction of shared narratives and to strengthen their symbolic presence through the convergence of aesthetics, linguistic choices and discursive strategies.

This thesis is situated within the fields of applied linguistics and digital communication studies and aims to analyse how co-branding is constructed and perceived through multimodal practices on social media. The approach adopted combines corpus linguistics and multimodal analysis, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the linguistic, visual and interactional choices that characterise brand collaborations. This perspective makes it possible to observe not only the structure of the content produced by companies but also the audience's response, which actively contributes to meaning-making through comments, emojis and other forms of participation. The analysis focuses on two recent and particularly relevant collaborations: Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana. These case studies offer an opportunity to explore how brands with different aesthetic and cultural identities negotiate a shared communicative space, articulating narratives that combine tradition, design, luxury, and the concept of heritage. Through the examination of captions, images, and comments, the thesis investigates how partners construct narrative coherence, define common values, and activate forms of audience involvement. Attention to perception and participation also makes it possible to understand how audiences contribute to the circulation and reinterpretation of content, influencing the visibility and meaning of the collaborations.

First of all, this thesis presents the theoretical foundations on which the analysis is based. It begins with the concepts of brand and brand image, which constitute the foundations for understanding corporate identity and corporate reputation. It then focuses on corporate communication, with particular attention to how companies develop corporate storytelling. The discussion subsequently moves from corporate communication to communication on social media, which have become key tools in the current and constantly evolving digital environment.

The theoretical framework then addresses corporate communication in the luxury sector, introducing the three brands analysed in this thesis. First, Smeg is presented as the focal brand, followed by an introduction to its two partner brands, Porsche and Dolce & Gabbana. This theoretical discussion is followed by the empirical analysis, which is divided into quantitative and qualitative components and focuses on both textual and visual content. Finally, the results are discussed, and the conclusions bring the study to the end.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BRAND AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

In contemporary competitive markets, brands represent one of the most valuable strategic assets for companies. Far beyond a simple name or symbol, a brand embodies a system of meanings, values, and associations that shape how consumers perceive products and organizations. As globalization intensifies competition and digital media multiply the quantity of messages circulating online, the ability to build, communicate, and maintain a strong brand has become essential for corporate success.

Understanding how brands communicate their identity and how audiences interpret such communication requires a clear theoretical foundation. Therefore, this chapter introduces the key concepts underlying the analysis, beginning with an examination of the concept of brand and its key components, such as brand image and brand equity. It then moves to broader organizational constructs, including corporate identity and corporate reputation, before addressing the role of corporate communication and its main functions. The chapter subsequently explores how digitalization and social media have reshaped the corporate-stakeholder interaction, introducing new forms of dialogic communication. This theoretical framework provides the basis for the analysis of brand communication strategies developed in Chapter 3.

1.1. THE CONCEPT OF "BRAND"

The importance of brands has grown rapidly over the past decades, as companies increasingly rely on them to differentiate their products and establish long-term relationships with stakeholders. They allow organizations to position themselves in the minds of consumers, to communicate values and promises, and to go far beyond the functional attributes of products. In this sense, brands operate simultaneously on economic, symbolic, and cultural levels, shaping how individuals interpret and interact with the market.

1.1.1 DEFINITIONS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAND

The brand functions as a coordinating tool to guide communication, influence corporate behaviour, and support strategic decision-making. From a consumer perspective, it serves as a sort of cognitive

shortcut that reduces uncertainty and enables the expression of personal identity. Because of this dual role, the concept of brand has evolved significantly over time. As a matter of fact, early interpretations tended to emphasize the brand as a distinctive sign or trademark. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007: 39) described the brand as "a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible, symbolized in a trademark, which, if managed properly, creates value and influence". This definition clarifies the idea that brands are not static entities but dynamic systems of meaning that must be actively shaped and maintained.

More recent perspectives reinforce this view, as brands can be conceived as 'empty boxes' that need to be filled with a specific set of core values, such as integrity, respect, transparency, and social responsibility, combined with product quality and the perceptions that customers develop over time. As a matter of fact, Hollis (2014) described a brand as something that may evoke the ideas, memories, values, and feelings whenever a stakeholder thinks of it. Moreover, Kucuk (2019) affirmed that stakeholders see the brand as a useful and convenient tool to express their beliefs and values.

These interpretations converge on a crucial idea: brands generate mental images. They create associations that shape how consumers perceive companies and their products. Indeed, by engaging customers' thoughts, emotions, and their behavioral responses, brands can evoke mental associations and establish an immediate connection with consumers (Smith et al., 2017: 25-55). Therefore, understanding the nature of brands is essential for analyzing how organizations communicate, how consumers interpret messages, and how reputations are built over time. This leads directly to the concept of brand image, which captures how these associations are stored and activated in consumers' minds.

1.1.2 BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND EQUITY

Keller (1991: 7) defined brand image as "consumer perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations that consumers hold in memory". Brand image is therefore a cognitive and emotional construct shaped by communication, experience, and social interaction. It is not controlled entirely by the company: while organizations can attempt to influence brand image through communication strategies, consumers actively interpret and negotiate meanings based on their own values and expectations. The relevance of brand image lies in its impact on consumer behavior. A strong and positive brand image increases trust, facilitates decision-making, and enhances loyalty by providing consumers with a coherent set of associations that guide their evaluations. Consequently, the influence of brand image goes beyond individual purchasing decisions: it contributes directly to

the formation of corporate reputation, a broader and more stable construct that reflects stakeholders' overall assessment of a company over time. While brand image concerns the perceptions linked to a specific brand, corporate reputation encompasses the cumulative judgement of multiple stakeholder groups regarding the organization's credibility, reliability, and social conduct (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). In this sense, brand image can be understood as one of the foundational components of corporate reputation, since the associations consumers hold about a brand feed into the wider evaluative processes through which reputations are built and maintained (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

Building on this perspective, it becomes essential to consider the close relationship between brand image and brand equity. If brand image captures the associations that consumers hold in memory, brand equity refers to "the set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service" (Aaker, 1991: 15). In this sense, it represents the value generated by the associations that consumers develop and consolidate over time. In other words, once stakeholders have developed a set of perceptions about a brand, these perceptions are translated into a more stable value that strengthens the relationship between consumer and brand. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) affirmed that brand equity must be enhanced by establishing the brand in the stakeholder's memory through new associations and by creating motivation, ability, and opportunity to process persuasive messages and retrieve brand information when making a choice or recommendation. For this reason, in order to succeed, companies should develop and maintain positive relationships with their stakeholders through an efficient corporate communication strategy, based on a well-established identity. This enhances performance and reputation, making it easier to acquire additional resources, profits, and success.

Taken together, brand image and brand equity represent how consumers form and consolidate their perceptions of a brand over time. These perceptions are rooted in the way the organization defines, expresses, and communicates its own identity. For this reason, it is essential to examine the concepts of corporate identity and corporate reputation, which represent the organizational foundations on which brand meanings are constructed and interpreted.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE IDENTITY AND REPUTATION

While brand image and brand equity describe how consumers perceive a brand, these perceptions originate from different organizational elements. At the core of these elements lies corporate identity,

which is composed of the distinctive features through which an organization defines itself. It plays a decisive role in shaping how audiences interpret corporate behaviors, values, and communication. Closely connected to identity is corporate reputation, which is a broader and more stable construct that reflects stakeholders' judgements about the organization's credibility and reliability over time.

1.2.1 CORPORATE IDENTITY MIX

Identity stands at the core of any communication strategy and consists of the distinctive and recognizable features of a company. Margulies (Margulies 1977: 66-72, as cited in Van Riel and Fombrun 2007: 66) defined it as "the sum of all ways a company chooses to identify itself to all its publics". This concept is closely connected to corporate culture, since identity reflects the values, behaviors, and symbolic elements that characterize an organization.

In this perspective, corporate identity can be understood as the combination of all factors that define what an organization is, what it stands for, what it does, how it operates, and the direction toward which it is oriented (Melewar and Saunders, 1999). These elements are expressed through communication, behaviors, and symbols, which are grouped and defined as "Corporate Identity Mix". This mix shapes how stakeholders interpret the organization and contributes to the formation of corporate image, although the two constructs must not be confused. Corporate identity refers to the internal, strategic, and intentional definition of the organization, while corporate image represents the external perception held by audiences. The model proposed by Birkigt and Stadler in 1986 and further examined by Van Riel and Fombrun in 2007 (see Figure 1) has been widely discussed, as it shows the reflection of Identity Mix on corporate image. It tends to overlook the influence of contextual factors on image formation, treating image as an end rather than a tool, without distinguishing between static elements (such as culture) and dynamic ones (such as communication). Nevertheless, it remains a foundational framework for understanding how identity is constructed and projected.

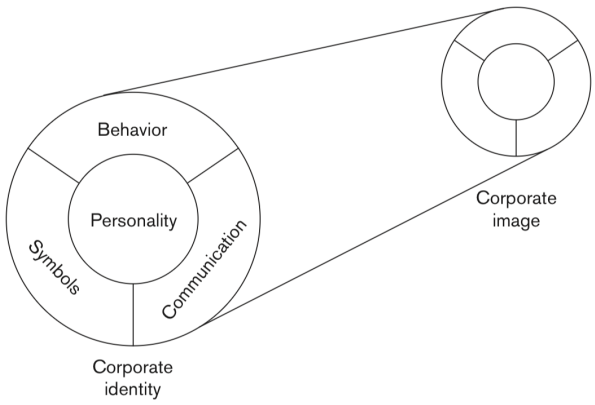


Figure 1. The reflection of Identity mix on corporate image (Source: Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007: 68)

At the same time, corporate identity is not a fixed or static entity; it is the result of a continuous process of identity creation, through which organizations construct, negotiate, and adapt their values. This process involves internal and external factors, including culture, values, and interactions with stakeholders and markets. Therefore, identity is shaped through discourse, behavior, and symbolic choices, evolving as organizations respond to new contexts. Building on this framework, Balmer and Wilson (2002: 634-658) distinguished four types of identity that help clarify how organizations express and manage who they are. Perceived identity refers to how stakeholders view the organization, while projected identity concerns the attributes the organization communicates about itself. Furthermore, while desired identity is the identity the organization aspires to achieve, applied identity corresponds to the signals conveyed through concrete behaviors. According to Balmer (2001), the perceived, projected, and applied identity are to be considered as a natural development and consequence of the desired identity, which is rooted in the actual identity that a company owns.

Understanding how corporate identity is defined and expressed is essential, because the way an organization presents itself constitutes the basis upon which stakeholders form their evaluations. This means that identity does not remain an internal construct, but it progressively translates into corporate reputation. Corporate reputation indeed represents the external and cumulative judgment that stakeholders develop over time in response to the organization's behavior, communication, and performance.

1.2.2 CORPORATE REPUTATION

Corporate reputation is a collective assessment of a company's character, performance, and credibility. It emerges from the interaction between brand image, corporate behavior, and communication. Holzauer (1991) argues that corporate reputations are formed based on the information that stakeholders have about an organization, also known as brand advertising, which may determine its reputation. For this reason, corporate reputations depend partially on the communication and advertising strategies implemented by a company. The more efficient the communication system, the better the reputation stakeholders hold.

This view is somewhat reductive because it underestimates the importance of communication in shaping reputation. According to Van Riel and Fombrun (2007), an efficient communication strategy must be in relation to "the business cycle" (see Figure 2), which includes all business activities addressed to build financial performance. When implemented correctly, these two cycles work simultaneously to help the company achieve a good reputation.

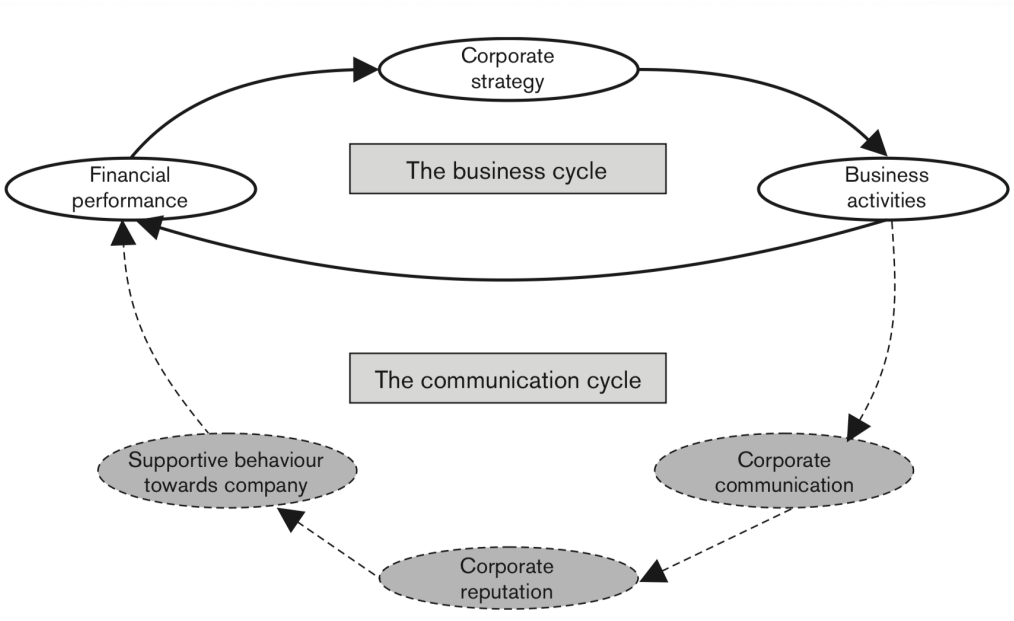


Figure 2. Communication strategies and their effect on the business cycle **(**Source: Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007: 60)

However, it is crucial to specify that reputations do not depend solely on these strategies. As suggested by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007), there are three levels of information processing that affect consumers' impressions:

1. Primary level: based on direct personal experience.
2. Secondary level: based on what trusted people think of an organization or product.
3. Tertiary level: based on mass media information, advertising, and unpaid publicity.

Whenever companies achieve positive reputations, their attractiveness becomes stronger for customers, employees, and new sources of financial capital. Reputations are general assessments of companies by their stakeholders, who hold expectations and feelings about the nature of the company itself. These may derive from four domains: the product, social, financial, and employment domains (see Figure 3).

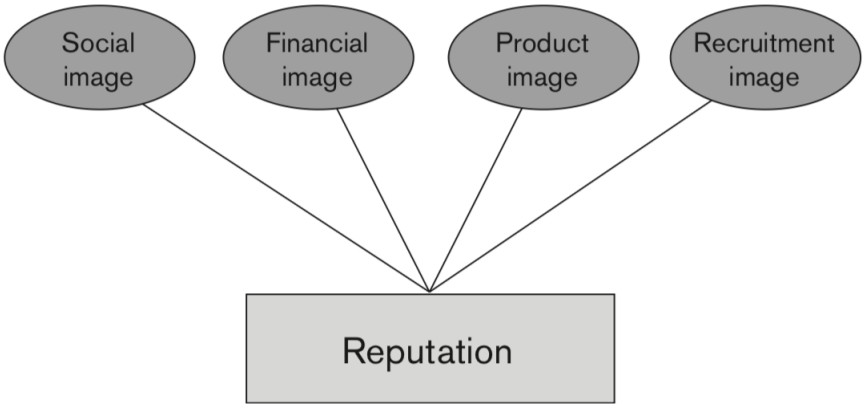


Figure 3. Reputation's domains (Source: Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007: 43)

Essentially, positive reputations work like magnets and are used by stakeholders as mental shortcuts when having to make complex or rapid decisions. Beyond this function, corporate reputation also operates as a behavioral guideline: when stakeholders perceive a company as credible and trustworthy, their level of engagement tends to increase, making them more likely to purchase its products and to share favorable evaluations with others.

According to Knecht (1986), the notion of reputation can be applied to seven levels of analysis. These include the product class, which concerns the reputation of an entire category of goods; the brand, referring to the reputation of a specific product line; and the company, which reflects the perceived integrity and credibility of the organization. Reputation also operates at the level of the sector, linked to the trustworthiness of the industry in which a firm operates, and at the level of the shop, meaning the reputation of a specific retailer or point of sale. The user level relates to the social identity or status typically associated with the consumers of a product. Finally, as a particularly relevant concept for this work, the country level captures the country-of-origin effect, whereby national stereotypes influence how products and companies are evaluated.

From this perspective, corporate reputation is closely connected to the perceptions consumers hold about the country where a company operates or manufactures its products. These perceptions often rely on cultural stereotypes: for instance, Italian brands may evoke craftsmanship and attention to raw materials, while German brands are frequently associated with precision and technical reliability. As a result, consumers may be more inclined to purchase products originating from these countries, as the national reputation reinforces the perceived quality and credibility of the brand. To manage reputation effectively, businesses need "reputation platforms", which are defined by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007: 136) as "the root positioning that a company adopts when it presents itself to internal and external observers, a strategic choice". For this reason, it is important to build strong reputation platforms that respect the identity of a company while being relevant, realistic, and appealing. According to Van Riel and Fombrun (2007), three themes characterize reputation platforms:

1. Activity theme: reputation is built based on the activity performed by the company (for example, Apple as a multinational technology company).
2. Benefits theme: how people may benefit from the products of the company (e.g., Apple as a provider of a cohesive ecosystem featuring seamless device integration).
3. Emotional theme: trying to establish an emotional relationship with the consumer, which might evoke specific feelings related to personal experiences (e.g., Apple's focus on safety and reliability).

1.3 STORYTELLING IN CORPORATE BRANDING

The concepts of corporate identity, corporate reputation, and brand are deeply interconnected and must be interpreted as parts of a single communicative and strategic process. Corporate identity represents the internal definition of an organization, the values it embodies, and the way it chooses to present itself to its stakeholders. This identity, expressed through communication, behavior, and symbolic choices, provides the foundation upon which all brand-related meanings are constructed.

By contrast, corporate reputation reflects the external and complete evaluation that stakeholders develop over time in response to the organization's actions, performance, and communicative coherence. While identity is intentional and internally generated, reputation emerges from the perceptions and judgments formed by external audiences. The degree of alignment between identity and reputation is therefore a crucial indicator of organizational consistency and credibility.

As a result, the brand functions as the interface between the organization and its markets. It translates corporate identity into a set of recognizable signs, values, and promises directed at stakeholders. Through this process, brand image emerges as the immediate perception that audiences develop about the brand, while brand equity represents the long-term value generated by such perceptions. In other words, the brand uses corporate identity to shape corporate reputation, since the associations linked to the brand influence stakeholders' evaluations. As a matter of fact, a coherent and well-managed identity strengthens the brand; a strong brand contributes to a favorable reputation, and a solid reputation reinforces both identity and value. These three dimensions, therefore, operate simultaneously and help the brand position in the market through communicative practices. Among these practices, storytelling emerges as a strategic tool, since it translates identity into a narrative form, reinforces brand meaning, and communicates who the organization is and what it stands for. A corporate story is "a structured textual description that communicates the essence, or identity, of the company to all stakeholders, helps strengthen the bonds that bind employees to the company, and successfully positions the company against rivals" (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007: 144).

In particular, Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) described the process of constructing an effective corporate story through a structured model (see Figure 4). Their framework illustrates how storytelling must emerge from the synergy between a company's identity and its reputation to function as a credible and persuasive communication tool. When these two dimensions are aligned, the resulting narrative is coherent, authentic, and capable of reinforcing stakeholders' perceptions of the organization.

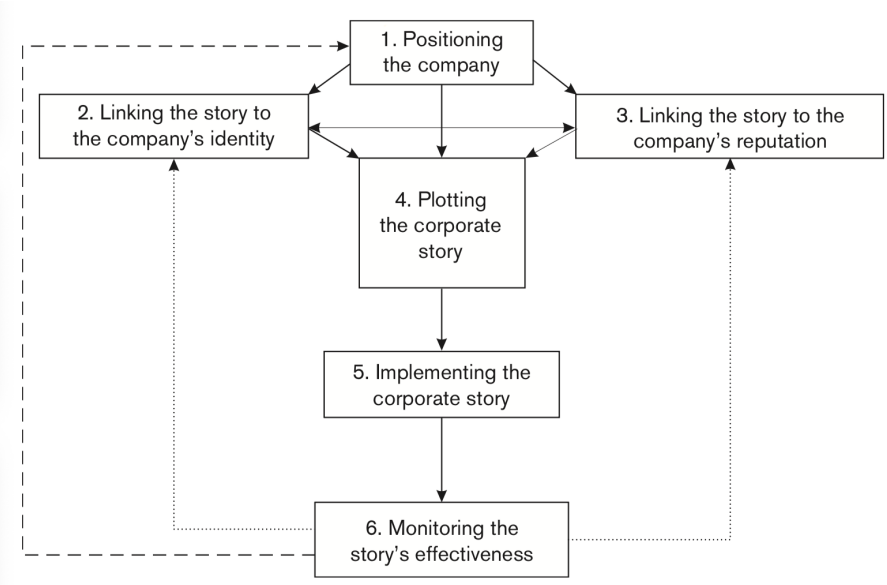


Figure 4. Constructing effective corporate stories (Source: Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007: 149)

Corporate stories also serve an emotional function: they help companies evoke feelings, create symbolic meaning, and foster a deeper connection with their audiences. As Urde (2009: 619) argues, "the corporate brand identity should represent emotional as well as functional and symbolic dimensions", a perspective that highlights the importance of integrating affective elements into brand communication. Storytelling, as Balmer (2012) notes, enhances this process by translating identity and values into narratives that stakeholders can relate to, remember, and share. In this sense, storytelling operates as a bridge between what a company is and how it wishes to be perceived, reinforcing the coherence of its communication system and supporting the construction of a strong and distinctive brand.

1.4 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Building on the previous considerations, it becomes evident that communication plays a crucial role in understanding how companies operate and position themselves in the market. Indeed, businesses would not exist without a strong internal and external communication strategy, which has become the lifeblood of the organization itself. It is the indispensable tool used to obtain vital primary resources (such as capital, materials, and labor) and profits, while building secondary resources (like reputation) (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

Communication makes it possible to interact with buyers and sellers, negotiate, and enter the market in a way that creates a more favorable operating environment. This communicative environment encompasses several domains, such as marketing communications, public relations, investor relations, employee communications, and institutional communications. Communication systems are defined as "the multiple tactical and strategic media a company relies on to communicate with its stakeholders, as well as the message content it chooses to diffuse through those media" (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007: 2).

Companies organize their internal structures into departments such as human resources, customer relations, or marketing, to target specific audiences. Although these units operate independently, they must coordinate their activities to ensure that the overall communication strategy remains consistent. When internal coordination is weak, organizations risk disseminating contradictory or misaligned messages, which can undermine credibility and damage reputation. A well-known example illustrating the consequences of poor communicative alignment is the 1999 Philip Morris case in the Czech Republic. That year, the company commissioned a study on the economic effects of smoking,

which controversially suggested that premature deaths of smokers generated savings for the national economy. It came up that smoking helped the country save more than $140,000,000 in a year. This entire sum could have been devolved to health care, pensions, and housing, but was saved due to the premature death of smokers. Philip Morris was then strongly criticized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a US anti-smoking group. Its president, Matthew Myers, condemned the company's stance, stating that Philip Morris was prioritizing its financial interests over public health and demonstrating the extent to which it was willing to manipulate information when unobserved:

> Philip Morris's only interest is its own bottom line, not the protection of our children or the public health, and this report shows the lengths to which it is willing to go to get its way when it thinks no one is watching. […] It is the same Philip Morris that has been invited by the Bush administration to negotiate a settlement to the federal tobacco lawsuit. A company that goes out of its way to rationalise as a good thing the fact that its products kill people does not deserve such a seat at the table[1]

This clearly shows that these kinds of episodes can happen and cannot always be avoided, but what is certain is that a solid and well-structured strategy is functional to limit the negative effects of business communication failures.

In addition, reliable strategies for strengthening corporate brands are essential for the creation of economic value. According to Van Riel and Fombrun (2007: 4), "corporate brands are the features of a company that employees, investors, customers, and the public associate with an organization as a whole". A coherent, well-functioning communication system is therefore essential, especially given the rapid changes affecting contemporary markets. Among these changes, globalization plays a central role, as it intensifies competition by blurring national boundaries and facilitating access to international markets. In this context, corporate brands become crucial tools for establishing an international presence, attracting attention, and competing effectively with global rivals.

Moreover, the market is currently overexposed to advertising messages and has become saturated, leading to an increasing need to differentiate from others. Customers are always targeted and bothered by immense quantities of advertisements, making them so overloaded that they tend to pay less attention to messages, which have lost effectiveness in their advertising space. Concerning the concept of differentiation, it is considered of vital importance also in the field of new media, where the urge to present unique features and be in the spotlight is strong.

[1] M. Myers, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1120774/#:~:text=Its%20attitude%20was%20criticised%20by,courtesy%20of%20BMJ%20Publishing%20Group

In such a saturated communicative environment, the ability of an organization to distinguish itself no longer depends solely on the quantity of messages it produces, but also on the strategic coherence with which these messages are articulated across different communicative domains. Corporate communication must therefore be understood as a structured system composed of multiple functions, each contributing in a specific way to the differentiation of the organization within an overcrowded media landscape. This makes it necessary to examine the types of corporate communication through which organizations develop their communicative strategies and respond to the increasing complexity of contemporary markets.

1.4.1 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Corporate communication is generally divided into three domains: management communication, which supports managerial decision-making and internal coordination; marketing communication, which promotes products and services to external audiences; and organizational communication, which manages relationships with internal stakeholders and ensures coherence across the company's communicative practices (Van Riel and Fombrun 2007: 14). These domains address different audiences and objectives, yet they must operate in a coordinated manner to ensure consistency across the company's overall communication strategy. Although each area has its own functions, they are interdependent and contribute collectively to the organization's reputation and strategic positioning. For the purpose of this work, the focus is on marketing communications, which concern external strategies to support sales, such as advertising, direct mailing, personal selling, sponsorship, and social media.

In particular, Product Advertising is described by Franzen (1984) as a process oriented toward purchase, based on indirect persuasion and information about product benefits. Because of its importance, extremely high budgets are devoted to marketing communications within companies. In fact, in 2025-2026, global advertising expenditures are projected to surpass 1 trillion dollars for the first time, driven by digital growth, the role of AI, and retail media.[2]

Digitalization is the leading element for modern marketing communications, requiring companies to adapt to an evolving landscape. As markets evolve and media channels diversify, companies must

[2] https://abbeymecca.com/worldwide-ad-spending-to-hit-1-trillion-in-2025-what-it-means-for-businesses-marketers-and-nonprofits/#:~:text=Digital's%20Unrelenting%20Growth,of%2Dhome%20advertising%20remain%20dominant

adapt their strategies to remain competitive and to reach audiences across multiple platforms. This shift has led to the development of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMCs), a strategic approach that coordinates different communication tools to deliver a unified and coherent message. IMCs are customer-centric and rely on a systematic process that involves "identifying all target audiences relevant to achieving objectives, segmenting audiences on the basis of stage in the purchase decision cycle, determining messages and communications tools to reach each segment and allocating appropriate levels of resources" (Moore and Thorson, 1996: 135-152 as cited in Van Riel and Fombrun 2007: 28). The goal is to ensure that every communicative touchpoint conveys a consistent message aligned with the company's identity and values.

Within IMCs, integrated media advertising refers to the coordinated use of multiple media channels to transmit a unified message. This involves aligning traditional advertising with direct communication tools and packaging strategies. Integrated media communication then expands this coordination by linking media, advertising, and packaging with other marketing levers such as product placement, sponsorships, pricing strategies, and distribution choices. The underlying principle is that effective communication depends not only on how messages are delivered but also on what they convey. The "what" refers to the core content of communication, the company's values, identity, and strategic positioning, which must remain stable across all channels.

Furthermore, another relevant component of marketing communication is the use of "Visual Identity Systems" (VISs), which are visual elements used for communicating themes on products and services. Examples of VISs could be logos, such as the Nike "Swoosh" or the Ferrari "Prancing Horse", sounds, such as McDonald's jingle, and smells. A VIS provides immediate recognizability and reinforces the associations that stakeholders form about the brand, contributing to both brand image and corporate reputation.

Given the strategic relevance of tools such as VISs in strengthening brand recognizability and shaping stakeholder perceptions, it becomes essential to assess whether these communicative efforts actually achieve the intended impact. The increasing sophistication of marketing communication practices requires methods for evaluating their effectiveness and determining how they contribute to consumer engagement and corporate reputation. For this reason, several scholars have proposed models and approaches aimed at assessing the performance of integrated communication strategies and understanding their contribution. Firstly, Schultz suggested calculating a "return on investment" as a tool to verify the effectiveness of an integrated marketing communication strategy (IMC strategy)

(Schultz, 1994). Secondly, Katz and Lendrevie (1996) proposed examining media coverage, product impressions, and personal contacts as part of consumer exposure. Lastly, Baldinger (1996) attempted to measure the impact of Integrated Marketing Communications by focusing on the final three stages of the Advertising Research Foundation's model, namely recall, communication, and persuasion, which he considered essential indicators of IMCs' effectiveness.

These contributions highlight the growing need for systematic approaches capable of assessing whether integrated communication strategies truly generate the intended effects on audiences. However, the rapid evolution of the media landscape has deeply transformed the conditions under which communication takes place, challenging traditional models of evaluation. As organizations increasingly operate in a digital environment characterized by immediacy, interactivity, and continuous information flows, it becomes essential to reconsider how corporate communication functions and how its effectiveness can be understood. This shift leads to the necessity to analyze corporate communication in the digital era, where new dynamics, platforms, and stakeholder expectations redefine both communicative practices and the criteria used to evaluate them.

1.5 SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Due to the digitalization process, corporate communication strategies have been urged to adapt to new means of communication. As a matter of fact, companies can avail themselves of a vast range of digital media to convey their messages and to build their reputation. Their corporate communications content can be displayed in web pages, blog posts, social media posts, online articles, videos, pictures, and in many other ways that are supported by electronic devices. Naturally, digital content must respect specific formats and organizational structures that are required by the platforms and the target audience: they must be attractive, engaging, and user-friendly. They must capture the attention of large audiences.

The digitalization process has significantly transformed corporate communication, making it more synchronous, dynamic, and interactive. Digital channels enable online users to exchange information rapidly and in real time, particularly through social media, which have become essential platforms for corporate–stakeholder interaction. Indeed, social media platforms are digital tools that enable symmetric and dialogic communication, allowing users to interact on an equal footing and participate actively in the exchange of information. Their design is intentionally structured to maximise engagement, encouraging users to create, share, and respond to content in real time through

interactive features such as comments, likes, shares, and direct messaging. These kinds of online content can also go 'viral', thanks to the possibility of re-posting something that is perceived as trustworthy. In fact, organizations are highly exposed to word-of-mouth publicity.

Van Zyl (2009: 909) stated that social networks are "applications or web sites that support the maintenance of personal relationships, the discovery of potential relationships and should aid in the conversion of potential ties into weak and strong ties, by utilizing emergent Web 2.0 technologies". According to this definition, social networks create an online ecosystem to develop interactions between users, and in this case, between companies and possible stakeholders. Among these platforms, the most used ones and those with the highest numbers of subscriptions are certainly Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, X, and LinkedIn. As a matter of fact, in 2020, almost 80% of Internet users accessed social networks. Facebook counts more than 2.45 billion users, followed by Instagram with 1 billion users and LinkedIn with 310 million users (Camilleri, 2021: 18). Each of these digital platforms follows specific patterns and has a particular function: for example, LinkedIn works perfectly in terms of personal branding, while Instagram allows the dissemination of visual content.

Due to the widespread use of social media, companies have also adapted their communicative style and the way they distribute information. These platforms allow businesses to produce content that is highly personalized, self-managed, and interconnected. Images, videos, and hyperlinks can be blended to illustrate values connected to corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate governance, and a company's commitment to environmental issues, for example. According to Bruce and Solomon (2013: 307-318 cited in Camilleri 2021: 20), "the social media have transformed the communicative dynamics within and between corporations and their external environment".

Naturally, the success that social media platforms have achieved in recent years would not have been possible without the digital environment introduced by Web 2.0. In fact, the arrival of Web 2.0 has enabled richer interactions between individuals and organizations, allowing online users to adopt a more active role as they engage with others through digital media. As Capriotti, Zeler and Camilleri (2021: 40-42) note, web 2.0 has transformed users from passive into active participants who interact, create and share content in digital environments. Therefore, people are engaged in a two-way communicative situation, where they can evaluate the effectiveness of the content they receive and share, thanks to comments, likes, and mentions. With the arrival of Web 2.0, the focus has shifted to online users, leading to a drastic change in communication management. From a more informative approach, communication departments have started to prefer a conversational and dialogic approach

(Camilleri, 2021: 40-42), with a communicative style that can be defined as bidirectional and symmetric. For this reason, users' engagement is stronger, and consumers' expectations appear to be more considered and effectively respected.

This shift towards a more interactive and participatory environment has redefined the nature of corporate communication, transforming it from an informative practice into a relational process grounded in continuous exchange. As users gain the ability to respond, evaluate, and co-create content, communication no longer flows in a linear direction but develops through reciprocal interactions that shape both meaning and stakeholder expectations. These dynamics form the basis of dialogic digital communication, a model that emphasizes openness, responsiveness, and mutual engagement as essential components of contemporary organizational communication.

1.5.1 DIALOGIC DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Capriotti and Pardo Kuklinski (2012: 620) defined dialogic communication as "an ongoing interaction between organizations and their publics by using Internet tools, which enable information, comments, opinions, assessment and experiences to be exchanged on a continuous basis". However, there still appears to be a gap in terms of perceptions, perspectives, and expectations. Companies design communication plans according to their strategic objectives, yet these intentions do not necessarily coincide with users' expectations or with the ways in which messages are interpreted. For this reason, dialogic communication must be periodically evaluated and studied by companies that need to implement their communication plans. The Key Dimensions to evaluate dialogic communication are summarized in Figure 5.

Presence	*Active Presence*	Predisposition to Interaction	Dialogic Communication
Activity			
Informational	*Interactive Attitude*		
Interactive			
Graphic resources	*Interactive Resources*		
Audiovisual Resources			
Hypertextual Resources			
Support	*Responsiveness*	Effective Interaction	
Viralization			
Intensity	*Conversation*		
Reciprocity			

Figure 5. Key Dimensions to evaluate dialogic communication (Source: Camilleri, 2021: 42)

The figure shows that two main dimensions can determine the effectiveness of dialogic communication: the "predisposition to interaction" and the "effective interaction". The first one considers "active presence", "interactive attitude", and "interactive resources". The second one includes "responsiveness" and "conversation".

"Predisposition to interaction" constitutes the essential element of dialogic communication, which brings people to exchange content and interact with one another. The core dimensions that characterize this predisposition must be prioritized when developing a strategic and efficient corporate communication plan. As a matter of fact, they represent continuous online activity, interaction, and promotion through digital platforms, such as social media.

Maintaining a strong and active presence on social networks is seen as a vehicle to promote online content, while analyzing the use of social networks that enable, facilitate, and encourage online users to share the organization's information with others (Capriotti, Zeler and Camilleri, 2021). Consequently, the levels of activity, presence, and interaction are fundamental. The higher these levels, the better the achieved results in terms of performance and engagement. Engagement is crucial, as organizations face the risk of annoying followers if posting frequently or being forgotten if posting infrequently. Users may then demonstrate higher levels of responsiveness and conversation when appreciating original and engaging content. It can be measured thanks to likes and shares, but also comments. In this specific case, non-verbal expressions are highly diffused, especially among the youngest, who prefer to interact with emojis.

Resources need to be as interactive as possible, offering communication formats that combine graphic, audiovisual, and hypertextual resources. The first ones include images and static content, while the second ones include videos and podcasts. Hypertextual resources include links, hashtags, and users' tags, instead. All together, these constitute the so-called "multimodal dimension". Indeed, digital communication involves the use of multiple modes of communication, including texts, images, and videos.

The increasing reliance on multimodal resources demonstrates how digital communication now operates through integrated formats that combine textual, visual, and audiovisual elements to enhance user engagement. This shift has redefined how meanings are constructed and how brands interact with their audiences across digital platforms. These dynamics become even more significant in the context of luxury brands, whose communication strategies rely heavily on symbolic value, experiential depth, and aesthetic coherence. As a result, the digital environment not only transforms the tools available to luxury brands but also reshapes the ways in which exclusivity, heritage, and brand identity are conveyed to online audiences.

1.6 LUXURY BRAND COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

For the purpose of this project, it is relevant to focus also on luxury brands' communication, as the companies that are analyzed in this work are considered significant examples in this high-end landscape. Nowadays, with the development of media technology, the way in which firms communicate their cultural identity has changed radically. As already explained in the previous section, the diffusion of digital media has impacted the relationship between brands and stakeholders.

In the past, high-end brands used to communicate in a slightly unidirectional way, conveying messages to a public that just received them passively. Today, digital platforms have changed the nature of luxury brands' communication, making it bidirectional and interactive. People are not simply receiving messages, but they can interact and participate actively thanks to comments, shares, and likes. It can be affirmed that online users contribute to the construction of brand image. This has led high-end brands to express their previously hidden values and identity. As a result, the luxury brand identity loses, to some extent, its exclusivity and mysterious aura, becoming more accessible and closer to the public (Cai, 2023). Luxury products have become cultural and symbolic experiences; they express a lifestyle, an identity, and a set of values that make them comparable to art. Their value does not lie in the object itself, but in the experience and in the meaning they convey.

In this Digital Era, luxury brands' communication strategies follow specific approaches. The first one is related to interactivity, which fosters engagement. Secondly, it is crucial to establish a targeted communication strategy based on the analysis of users' behaviors. This means that possible stakeholders will receive personalized content based on their preferences. Thirdly, collaborations with influencers and celebrities play a fundamental role in terms of brand visibility, even though it carries risks related to scandals and reliability loss. Another relevant strategy is co-branding, which can be defined as the collaboration between brands or artists to strengthen brand image and attract new stakeholders. Also in this case, the risks are present and could lead to a brand identity weakening. (Washburn, Till and Priluck 2000: 591-592).

Focusing more on linguistic choices, luxury brands tend to prefer and adopt a specific vocabulary designed to support their communicative strategies and to serve precise purposes. The linguistic repertoire becomes a tool for differentiation and uniqueness. For example, high-end brands tend to refer to themselves as a "house" or "maison" rather than "company", and they describe their products and brand universe using adjectives such as "exclusive", "emblematic", and "timeless".[3]

Evoking emotions through words becomes the major point of interest, as they are what makes stakeholders think that it would be an exceptional experience to own a specific luxury product. Among the most common idea–adjective associations, luxury brands frequently pair abstract concepts with carefully selected descriptors to reinforce their desired brand image. (see Figure 6).[4] For instance, the idea of elegance is often expressed through adjectives such as "refined" or "sophisticated", which help construct an aura of exclusivity and timelessness around the brand.

IDEA	**ADJECTIVES**
Elegance	*Refined, sophisticated, graceful, polished, luxurious*
Timelessness	*Eternal, enduring, classic, iconic, everlasting*
Heritage	*Legacy, traditional, established, time-honoured, historical, ancestral*
Prestige	*Distinguished, esteemed, renowned, acclaimed, notable, prestigious*

[3] https://www.acolad.com/en/industries/luxury/translation-luxury-industry
[4] https://translatewithstyle.com/luxury-language-for-brands/

Craftsmanship	*Artisanal, meticulous, masterful, hand-finished, precision-made*
Innovation	*Pioneering, cutting-edge, revolutionary, advanced, visionary*
Authencity	*Genuine, unparalleled, pure, original, quintessential*
Quality	*Exceptional, pristine, superior, immaculate, flawless*
Experience	*Curated, tailored, personal, extraordinary, transcendent*
Rarity	*One-of-a-kind, unique, singular, distinct, exceptional*
Excellence	*Masterpiece, perfection, supreme, exemplary, pinnacle*

Figure 6. Words associated with luxury brands (Source: https://translatewithstyle.com/luxury-language-for-brands/)

Such linguistic and symbolic choices illustrate how luxury brands construct a distinctive emotional universe around their products, reinforcing perceptions of exclusivity, refinement, and experiential value. When these brands engage in collaborative initiatives, the challenge becomes even more complex, as the meanings associated with each partner must be aligned without diluting their individual identities. In this context, the communicative strategies adopted in co-branding play a crucial role in ensuring that the partnership enhances, rather than compromises, the symbolic capital of the brands involved. This leads to an examination of co-branding communication, where the interaction between two brand narratives must be strategically managed to generate mutual value while preserving the uniqueness that characterizes luxury brands.

1.6.1 CO-BRANDING COMMUNICATION

As introduced in the previous section, co-branding represents a key strategy for brands that want to enhance consumers' perception of brand images. Li and Wang (2019) discussed how co-branding influences brand image and reviewed several foundational definitions of the phenomenon. Grossman and Till (1998) describe co-branding as a partnership in which two brands appear together on a single product or service, thereby combining their symbolic and market value. Blackett and Boad (1999) define it as a cooperative arrangement between recognizable brands, emphasizing that each

participating brand must preserve its own name and identity within the collaboration. Moreover, Chang (2009) argues that co-branding should not be understood merely as the practice of attaching multiple brand names to a single offering, but rather as a broader joint-branding strategy through which partner brands collaborate to achieve their respective objectives.

"Under the trends of consumption upgrading and brand rejuvenation, co-branding has gradually become an important tool for raising heat and expanding market influence, […] showcasing new trends in brand-value fusion and innovative experience" (Zhou, 2025: 36). As market competition is nowadays becoming more intense, co-branding emerges as a strategy to obtain reciprocal advantages from the collaboration of two brands. This generates a synergy that, possibly, will lead both brands to results that would not be achievable individually. Indeed, thanks to the collaboration, each brand can access a wider range of stakeholders, including those of the partner. This would enhance visibility and fidelity. Furthermore, co-branding favors brand notoriety and contributes to attracting other potential brands for future partnerships.

Another fundamental element consists in achieving a better brand image. Each brand tries to capture and take advantage of the other's positive elements, integrating them into its own identity. This process appears to be advantageous for small and niche brands, which can benefit from more established brands. Moreover, co-branded products are generally perceived as having enhanced value, which is superior thanks to the combination of 'technical' features, reputation, and identity. Washburn, Till and Priluck (2000: 594) argued that "consumers develop a set of associations with brand names that may subsequently be paired in a co-branded product". Furthermore, "strong brand associations (i.e., high brand equity) of one brand can lend credibility to the other brand by acting as an augmenting cue in consumer evaluations and […] consumers tend to infer that high equity brands will only allow association with other high equity brands" (Washburn, Till and Priluck., 2000: 594).

Nevertheless, co-branding's success depends mostly on the partner's choice. It is crucial to select the right partner, since a good collaboration may eventually lead to a profitable situation and favor a sustainable progression of both brands. On the other hand, a bad choice might jeopardize brand image and profits. In this sense, a determining element is the so-called "fit" between partners, which is generally based on product fit and brand fit. When these elements align, stakeholders perceive a coherent and credible collaboration. This is particularly relevant for high-end and luxury brands, which might face the risk of an inappropriate partnership more frequently.

Taken together, the perspectives described in this chapter provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding how brands operate within increasingly complex communicative environments. Building on this theoretical foundation, the next chapter introduces the empirical component of the study. Chapter 2 presents the brands selected for the analysis and outlines the methodological approach adopted to examine their communication strategies, detailing the criteria guiding brand selection, the analytical procedures employed, and the structure of the investigation.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, MATERIALS AND CASE STUDY OVERVIEW: SMEG, PORSCHE AND DOLCE&GABBANA

Building on the theoretical framework established in Chapter 1, this section aims to provide a general overview of the companies involved in this study. The brands involved are Smeg, Porsche, and Dolce&Gabbana, which were selected for their relevance in understanding how contemporary organizations construct and communicate brand identity within collaborative initiatives. Within this research design, Smeg functions as the constant reference point, whereas Porsche and Dolce&Gabbana are the two partner brands in the co-branding collaborations examined. By analysing these two cases—one rooted in high-end automotive engineering and the other in luxury fashion and Italian cultural symbolism—the study investigates how Smeg's brand identity interacts with partners that differ markedly in market positioning, symbolic capital, and communicative style. This comparative approach allows for a deeper understanding of how co-branding dynamics vary depending on the identity of the collaborating brand.

The chapter is organized to ensure a progressive and coherent understanding. A detailed presentation of the three brands is provided first, in order to give a clear description of their identities, values, and communicative positioning. By examining these dimensions, the chapter aims to establish a solid knowledge of the brands involved, which is essential for interpreting the communicative strategies analyzed in the following sections. Then, the analysis focuses on the two co-branding collaborations at the center of this study. The examination begins with the partnership between Smeg and Porsche and subsequently shifts to the collaboration between Smeg and Dolce&Gabbana, allowing for a comparative interpretation. In addition, the chapter outlines the research questions guiding the analysis and describes the methodological approach adopted to address them. The discussion includes the criteria used for selecting the brands and content, the analytical tools employed, and the procedures through which the data were collected and interpreted. Through this structure, the chapter clarifies the rationale behind the chosen methods and illustrates how they support the objectives of the study.

2.1 SMEG: A UNIQUE IDENTITY

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, Smeg constitutes the central company in this research. It operates as the constant element within the comparative framework, providing a stable reference point across both co-branding collaborations. Positioning Smeg at the centre of the analysis makes it possible to investigate how its brand identity engages with two markedly different partners. It is therefore necessary to clarify how Smeg has shaped its current identity, its core values, and its communicative approach. Overall, Smeg's identity appears multifaceted, rooted in distinctiveness, aesthetic refinement, and ongoing technological advancement.

Vittorio Bertazzoni, the chairman of Smeg Group, affirmed that the group was established based on the value of quality, as stated in the company's Sustainability Report published in 2024. The company continues to build upon this value, which distinguishes, guides, and shapes Smeg's evolution over time, allowing it to develop in a coherent and consistently refined manner. Quality represents the root from which the brand has grown and developed its identity and reputation. This principle has always been present and remains constant in their business model, from the birth of an idea or a product, through the purchasing experience and customer care. It translates "into attention and commitment to the environmental, social and economic sustainability aspects involved" (Bertazzoni, 2024: 5) but also into establishing new objectives and respecting transparency, while bringing continuous improvement.

Protection of the environment and people stands as one of the two pillars of the Group's business model, designed to capture users' attention on environmental protection and workers' health and safety.

> Sustainability is a core value in the Group's strategy: through the progressive assessment and integration of the environmental, social and governance aspects most pertinent to the Group and its stakeholders, the company aims to develop increasingly innovative technological solutions in order to maximize the efficiency of its processes and contribute to the sustainable development of the territories in which it operates (Smeg Group, 2024: 26)

The Group works to limit the carbon footprint and the environmental impact, with a commitment that has made it possible for them to carry out projects related to sustainability, both in Italy and abroad. These projects aimed at contributing to the global strategy against climate change and the protection of the planet. They included the installation of photovoltaic systems, optimization of deliveries and shipments (by sea and rail), improved waste-management practices aimed at reducing the overall

volume of waste produced, as well as measures designed to limit both direct and indirect emissions. As a matter of fact, the company was able to reconstruct its carbon footprint and identify suitable strategies to implement for the reduction of emissions.

The Group also works constantly for the preservation of natural diversity and participated in an initiative promoted by the Emilia-Romagna region to encourage urban forestation and the expansion of green areas. For this reason, the Smeg Forest was created: 766 plants of different species were planted, distributed over an area of 11,000 square meters.

> The creation of a forest is not just an act of planting, but a lasting commitment to the protection of our planet. It is a gesture of love and respect that transcends the present and moves us towards a greener, more sustainable future for all. Our contribution to this important project of peri-urban forestation in the local area is a concrete way of demonstrating our corporate sustainability policy beyond the perimeter of the company itself, aiming to promote responsible and environmentally friendly development; the forest will become a natural habitat for birds, insects and small mammals, promoting biodiversity and the ecological balance of the area. We are convinced that investing in nature is an investment in the future, as it contributes to preserving the environment and ensuring a better quality of life for present and future generations. (Bertazzoni, 2024: 101)

Smeg works with respect to local communities and promotes sustainable development. It contributes to the general well-being of local communities with solidarity projects, sponsorships, donations, and dialogue with stakeholders to improve every human aspect of the community. Sustainability and social responsibility are cornerstones for the company, which works continuously to minimize environmental impact, reduce emissions and waste, and provide an ethical point of view on industrial development. The culture of responsibility among employees and along the supply chain is promoted and protected, while key organizational indicators continue to show steady growth. In 2024, Smeg employed 2,570 people, 53% of whom were between 30 and 50 years old, and 96.3% held a permanent, open-ended contract. Among these employees, 929 were women, with an increase of 8% compared to 2023. “The technological evolution of processes - through the introduction of automation, servo systems and ergonomic solutions - has progressively expanded employment opportunities for women, favoring a more balanced distribution of roles within the production environment” (Smeg Group, 2024: 59). Equal conditions and opportunities are fundamental when describing Smeg Group, as it promotes an inclusive environment that pays attention to human and individual rights. It goes against every form of discrimination, isolation, exploitation, or harassment.

“Creating products that combine user safety, a high technological content, distinctive and innovative design, and respect for the environment, aimed at a discerning clientele that recognizes the importance of elegance and quality” summarizes the Group’s business model while designing beauty (Smeg

Group, 2024: 19). Consequently, quality has come to be synonymous with appeal and Italian craftsmanship, their distinctive feature for over 75 years. Founded in 1948, this family business has achieved a combination of innovation, design, diversification, and loyalty to the territory with huge success. "Technology with style" reflects their brand identity, a response to contemporary and practical needs through elegant and refined domestic appliances that contain an Italian soul. Their identity goes beyond aesthetics, even though their vast selection of products surely presents distinctive and trendy features, appreciated worldwide. As a matter of fact, following the "country-of-origin effect" principle, the "*Italianness*" of an appliance makes it valuable, appreciated, and desired as a one-of-a-kind product, all over the world. These products are an authentic expression of the company's roots, passion, and dedication to ambition, enhancing the distinctive features of Italian design. Inventiveness, originality, high quality, and a strong sense of distinctiveness emerge as defining characteristics, forming another cornerstone of Smeg's identity. Smeg represents an example of "Made in Italy" excellence nationally and internationally, with its 7 Italian and 19 international commercial distribution companies that strengthen the Group's presence. Italian vision, intuition, and design are also displayed thanks to stores and showrooms, spaces where the brand's identity is reflected in detail through iconic products and important partnerships.

Smeg interprets quality also in terms of durability, safety, flexibility of use, and energy efficiency of products, which are carefully manufactured both at Smeg HQ and at the company's branches all around Italy. Indeed, Smeg Group has acquired factories in Abruzzo, Lazio, Tuscany, Veneto, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Each of them is highly specialized in the production of a specific type of appliance, ranging from washing, cooking, refrigeration, and coffee ones to medical and professional refrigeration products. Product excellence is considered the second pillar of the business model, which refers to safety, advanced technology, and distinctive design, ensuring satisfaction, functionality, and efficiency. As a consequence, both technological innovation and user safety have become the other cornerstones for the brand, which is always looking for cutting-edge solutions that ensure quality, high international standards, user safety, and durability.

2.1.1 THE GROUP'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Smeg Group demonstrates its commitment also through its corporate communication strategies, which can be defined as well-established, functional, and efficient. Indeed, the company has always affirmed its desire to establish a culture oriented to creating value with stakeholders. This has been

achieved through activities and analyses to define the main stakeholders and communication channels and consequently manage relationships in a structured way. The identification of the key stakeholders was based on three crucial criteria. Firstly, the level of interest and dependence on the Group's activities, followed by the degree of influence on operational and strategic decisions. Thirdly, the presence of contractual or normative obligations. This led to coherence and continuity in the dialogue, while favoring a shared and inclusive evaluation in relation to sustainability topics. Building on this approach, stakeholders have been recognized and divided into groups, and a tailored communication strategy has been shaped for each. This suggests that the Group still uses specific communication channels for each category and focuses on continuous dialogue, transparency, and collaboration (Smeg Group, 2024: 33).

The first category that was identified is the one composed of B2C customers, those stakeholders that can be considered final and private consumers. As stated in the 2024 Annual Report, the dialogue is developed through physical stores, fairs, events, customer service, press office, and PR, but also using digital platforms, such as social networks and the website. These tools serve as fast, easily accessible, and interactive supports for marketing and sales purposes. They allow direct communication and can help to manage higher numbers of interactions. Language is simple, clear, and persuasive, focusing on benefits, usability, and experience of the Group. It must be immediate and easily understandable.

Secondly, Smeg Group identified the B2B range of consumers, which is composed of other businesses. In this case, dialogue tends to be more structured, and relationships are more professional. They are managed through the website and social media, but also through reciprocal site visits, meetings with organizational departments, business meetings, and questionnaires. Relationships are generally more complex and need to be more personalized with respect to B2C ones. They require negotiation, trust, and operational coordination to align on strategic themes and create valuable and long-lasting relations. In this case, language seems to be both technical and commercial, including data to support negotiations. (Smeg Group, 2024: 125).

This category is followed by local communities and public administration, which constitute another fundamental group of stakeholders for Smeg Group. In this case, the Group builds relationships through social networks, events, and institutional speeches. These favor visibility, social legitimation, and involvement, while enabling a clearer assessment of the impacts on local communities. In communicative terms, the brand adopts an institutional register that remains accessible and trustworthy, balancing formal authority with clarity and transparency in its linguistic choices. Other

groups include financial and insurance institutions, employees, suppliers, and universities. In these cases, social media play a crucial role together with public events and projects that favour innovation while evaluating performance and risks.

To summarize, the selection of communication channels is guided by three main criteria: scale, complexity, and objective, each of which determines how the brand structures its interaction with stakeholders. Scale differentiates broad, mass-oriented communication from more relational and targeted forms of interaction. Complexity concerns the nature of the communicative approach, distinguishing between informational exchanges and negotiation-oriented processes. The objective, in turn, relates to the specific purpose of the interaction, whether oriented towards sales, control, collaboration, or reputation building. Within this framework, the company adapts its strategies and linguistic choices to ensure coherence with the ongoing digital transformation that characterizes contemporary societies, maintaining a balance between institutional authority and the clarity required in digital communication.

2.1.2 THE GROUP'S APPROACH TO CO-BRANDING

Over the years, Smeg Group has invested a lot in co-branding projects. As a matter of fact, the company is "well known for its collaborations with important and influential brands involved in high-fashion, art and design, together creating truly individual design-forward appliances. More than products, creations."[5] These special projects highlight Smeg's core values and identity, representing new opportunities for both partners to promote themselves and their products. Through these projects, Smeg places itself as a leading company in luxury co-branding projects, working with iconic brands to create unique home appliances that combine design, art, and technology. Consequently, these products become effective works of art and lifestyle symbols, while maintaining Smeg's strong reputation through innovative design and quality.

The first case of a co-branding project that was proposed by Smeg Group dates back to 1979, representing more of a sponsorship than an effective collaboration. Smeg decided to sponsor the Ferrari Formula 1 motor racing team, which raced with the legendary driver Gilles Villeneuve (see Figure 7). This choice gave birth to an historical bond that combined two major Italian excellences, with the Smeg logo on vehicles and team materials.

[5] https://www.smeg.com/special-project



Figure 7. Gilles Villeneuve sponsored by Smeg. (Source: https://www.smeg.com/it/azienda/la-storia?srsltid=AfmBOopUo-JEb83s_zYMQJ0IrKrN9oRW6EFChBS1Wo407vAH-PVkcA9G)

This sponsorship was then followed by the collaborations with major architects, such as Guido Canali in 1985, Mario Bellini, and Renzo Piano in 1990. Giving birth to exclusive domestic appliances such as ovens, hobs, fridges, and domestic greenhouses, Smeg reached high popularity and positioned itself as a leading company in its industrial field.

In the 2000s, Smeg started to develop a well-established strategy of co-branding projects with brands operating in several fields, starting from fashion to automotive and entertainment.

Dealing with the fashion industry, the Group states that

> Design and fashion share an intertwined history, inspiring each other's evolution. Smeg recognized this synergy, collaborating with various fashion brands to craft exclusive FAB refrigerator models. These partnerships showcase how aesthetics transcend boundaries, marrying style with functionality, and transforming kitchen appliances into iconic fashion statements.[6]

As a matter of fact, Smeg continues to invest part of its budget and efforts in partnerships with historic and iconic luxury fashion brands, such as Dolce&Gabbana, Italia Independent, and Swarovski. These collaborations are grounded in a shared set of values, including the celebration of Made in Italy, artisanal expertise, aesthetic refinement, and a strong connection to cultural traditions. Such elements align closely with Smeg's design philosophy and corporate identity, creating a coherent basis for co-branding initiatives that merge stylistic innovation with the brand's distinctive heritage. In 2012, Smeg collaborated with Italia Independent, an Italian creative and lifestyle brand founded by Lapo

[6] https://www.smeg.com/inspirations/a-history-of-collaboration.html

Elkann in 2007. It specializes in high-end eyewear and fashion and is well-known for the use of innovative materials. The Group brought together two icons: the FAB28 refrigerator and denim. “Thus, the first refrigerator entirely clad in denim is born, in a limited edition of 500 pieces, which becomes a symbol of functional decor and an emblem of Made in Italy.”[7]

The FAB28 refrigerator remains a constant in many other collaborations, such as the one with Swarovski, which gave birth to a product entirely in gold color and adorned with crystal logos. Each of these has been manually applied, representing the perfect expression of craftsmanship, uniqueness, attention to detail, and dedication.

Nevertheless, the most iconic partnership is surely the one with Dolce&Gabbana, which has always been destined to endure over time. It started in 2016 with the Frigoriferi D’Arte collection, followed by Sicily is My Love in 2017 and Divina Cucina in 2018. It culminated in 2023 with Blu Mediterraneo. This unbreakable and lasting union embodies the essence of both brands perfectly and still represents a pivotal element and distinctive feature of their communication strategies. The collections that were realized serve as a demonstration of the devotion to quality and excellence of “Made in Italy”. As this work investigates this partnership deeply, a more detailed description is provided in Subsection 2.2.3.

As mentioned above, fashion does not constitute the only industrial field in which Smeg has realized profitable and flourishing collaborations. The company had already manifested its enthusiasm for the automotive industry in 1979, “as automotive and domestic appliances worlds share a focus on technology and design […]”. The passion that the Group demonstrated for the rigor of technology, the importance of performance, and creativity led to the partnerships with Mini, Fiat, and Porsche. Indeed, in 2006, Smeg collaborated with Mini (see Figure 8), creating “275 numbered refrigerators based on the model of the Cooper S”. “The two brands share the same appeal to retro, the same passion for design, and the same role as a globally recognized cult icon”; for this reason, it quickly gained international acclaim.

[7] https://www.smeg.com/inspirations/a-history-of-collaboration.html



Figure 8. Smeg x Mini collaboration. (Source: https://www.press.bmwgroup.com/italy/article/detail/T0015794IT/nasce-il-frigorifero-in-stile-mini?language=it)

Following the success of this collaboration, the Group chose to work also with Fiat, which represents the perfect example of passion for creativity and the rigor of technology, without compromising the importance of classic style. In 2012, Smeg created the iconic SMEG500, a refrigerator for collectors or a stylish lounge bar for serving drinks. It was designed to represent the idea that a refrigerator "is not just an electrical appliance, and a bonnet is not just a car part".

> Reinventing looks, eliciting a smile, injecting the passion of creativity into the rigor of technology. It is the ability of art that allows you to see beyond appearances, beyond the limits. It is the ability of innovators who continually transform one thing into something else with ease and irreverence.[8]

Furthermore, 2025 saw the rise of a newly born co-branding project, the one involving Porsche. As this collaboration is crucial for this work, it is described in detail in Subsection 2.2.1.

Worthy of mention are also the partnerships in the entertainment and food & beverage fields, above all with Disney and Coca-Cola. While the first one stands as the celebration of the 90th anniversary of Mickey Mouse's birth and embodies the magical features of Disney, the second one celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Coca-Cola commercial.

In light of these initiatives, Smeg demonstrates a remarkable capacity to integrate diverse cultural and aesthetic narratives within its product design, allowing each collaboration to express its distinctive symbolic universe while remaining coherent with the company's identity. These special

[8] https://www.smeg.com/news/fiat-500-and-smeg.html

projects have become an integral component of Smeg's brand strategy, embodying values that reinforce its positioning and differentiate it from competitors in both the domestic appliance sector and the broader lifestyle market.

2.2 PORSCHE AND DOLCE&GABBANA: THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIPS

As outlined in the previous section, Smeg has engaged in a series of co-branding initiatives with many iconic brands operating both in the automotive and fashion industries. For the scope of this work, particular attention was devoted to two major emblematic case studies: Porsche and Dolce&Gabbana, selected for their positioning and leadership within their respective industrial sectors. These brands not only represent excellence in terms of product quality and heritage, but they also embody distinctive identities, making them relevant for the analysis. This section aims to explore both companies separately, define their core values, and examine how these values relate to those of Smeg Group.

2.2.1 PORSCHE

> Porsche is the brand for those who follow their dreams. We craft vehicles that epitomize freedom and independence, fueled by a legacy of excellence.[9]

Porsche positions itself as the leading manufacturer of exclusive sports cars that embody the spirit of freedom and independence, while caring for excellence, design, performance, and innovation. It is one of the major German manufacturers specializing in luxury and high-performance sports cars, SUVs, and sedans.

Founded in the 1930s by the German automotive engineer Ferdinand "Ferry" Porsche, it is nowadays driven by the spirit of making dreams come true. It is fueled by a vision and mission that blend innovation with heritage and demonstrate a commitment to performance and sustainability. These are combined with outstanding design and functionality, turning aspirations into real experiences. Through this approach, Porsche produces exclusive vehicles that embody the shared passion for driving, the relentless pursuit of excellence, and innovation. As a matter of fact, more than 70 years ago, Ferry Porsche affirmed: "I looked around but could not find the car I had dreamed of. So, I decided to build it myself". In 1948, he realized his dream with the Porsche 356 'No. 1' Roadster.

[9] https://investorrelations.porsche.com/en/about-porsche

Marking the birth of the legendary and unique brand, he gave birth to an endless process of innovation and technological commitment, the Porsche legend. Nowadays, this contributes to the company's mission and values, which remain oriented towards shaping the future while drawing on a distinctive and unparalleled heritage. Such heritage was built on the dedication to precision engineering, classic aesthetics, modern performance, and automotive passion, and led the brand to be ranked again as the most valuable luxury brand of 2025.

Consequently, heritage and innovation blend perfectly and construct brand identity in a way that reflects passion and commitment. Dreams stand as cornerstones for Porsche, which is "driven by a passion to make better cars through new technology, AI, electrification, digitization, and connectivity evolving our heritage cars for the future of mobility"[10]. These features are embodied in their products, which become the representation of exclusive technology, performance, and elegant design.

Moreover, Porsche has shaped a meticulous strategy over the years, focused on future improvement and sustainable development.

> The strategy serves to strengthen our iconic brand. With unique, emotional products and the focus on innovation, quality, and sustainable practices, we shape the transformation of the automotive industry and ensure robust financial performance.[11]

It is built on the idea of sustainability, which strengthens the company's position in the global market by supporting the production of attractive vehicles, the promotion of distinctive customer experiences, and the implementation of a clear strategy for guiding transformation within the automotive industry. In a context where change occurs rapidly, businesses must remain aligned with ongoing developments while preserving the distinctive features that define their identity.

For this reason, Porsche's Executive Board has established four main pillars to invest in, and these eventually reflect their main concerns. Porsche places customers at the forefront and cultivates the relationship with them by ensuring desirability and exclusivity, creating unique customer experiences, and pursuing a value-oriented growth path. Therefore, products appear to be the secondary pillar. They are tailored to customers' needs and embody brand vision thanks to technological leadership, cutting-edge connectivity, and seamless digital experiences. Thirdly comes sustainability, which has become the main focus for many companies nowadays. Porsche promotes "decarbonization and reducing CO2 emissions, circular economy, equal opportunities and inclusivity, being a Partner of

[10] https://investorrelations.porsche.com/en/about-porsche
[11] https://investorrelations.porsche.com/en/about-porsche/strategy

Society, (in which we empower and support communities), ensuring a sustainable supply chain as well as transparency and integrating sustainability and responsible governance".[12] Sustainability is followed by transformation, the fourth cornerstone for the company. As mentioned before, it is crucial for brands to keep up to date with changes and deliver transformation. To make it possible, they focus on innovation, digitalization, and AI, while fostering excellence and an inclusive workplace culture.

Due to its impressive growth as a high-end brand, Porsche currently operates in several automotive fields, each of which expresses the importance of excellence and product quality. They do not just produce tailored vehicles for private use, as everyone normally thinks, but they also make their own contribution to enriching the world of motorsport. A universe built on precision, speed, performance, risk, and adrenaline. As a matter of fact, they develop innovative technologies while respecting sustainability concerns within Formula E, following their dream to play a leading role also in the electrification and sustainability of motorsport. Furthermore, they bring their cutting-edge prototypes and cars in the areas of Hypercars, GTP, and GT racing, where excellent performance meets pressure and success. In fact, Ferry Porsche affirmed that "no technical progress is conceivable without sport. The greatest advances have always been realized during times of pressure and tension".[13]

Alongside motorsport, Porsche also positions itself within the lifestyle domain, as for many "the passion for Porsche does not stop at the garage door". As a matter of fact, Porsche produces refined design items related to clothing, home & lifestyle, and individual accessories that incorporate the same core values that are embodied in their vehicles. Therefore, the brand confirms its leading position also in this industrial field with exclusive lineups and partnerships with unique and emblematic brands that bring the essence of Porsche beyond automotive and into everyday life. Rooted in the heritage and design philosophy, the brand combines iconic aesthetics and an engineering mindset in a wide range of products. By doing this, consumers can engage with the essence of the brand while reinforcing emotional connection and brand loyalty outside the driving experience. Worthy of mention are the collaborations with Puma, Martini Racing, and Smeg. In this context, collaborations represent a strategic tool to enhance brand positioning, generate innovative products, reinforce exclusivity, and create a stronger emotional connection. Indeed, the lineups promoted by Porsche have achieved massive success and are appreciated all over the world.

[12] https://investorrelations.porsche.com/en/about-porsche/strategy?tab=Sustainability
[13] https://investorrelations.porsche.com/en/about-porsche/business-areas?tab=GT+Customer+Sports

2.2.2 PORSCHE X SMEG: DRIVEN BY PASSION, REFINED BY DESIGN

> In a bold celebration of heritage, innovation, and design excellence, Porsche and Smeg unveil a groundbreaking collaboration that redefines the intersection of automotive prestige and home lifestyle. This partnership brings together two iconic brands — each a symbol of performance, craftsmanship, and timeless style — to create a limited-edition collection of kitchen appliances that speak to the soul of design lovers and automotive enthusiasts alike.[14]

As mentioned in Subsection 2.2.1, Smeg and Porsche announced their collaboration for the creation of an exclusive collection of domestic appliances in 2025. Following the numerous partnerships that both brands have developed successfully over time, their collaboration arrived as a natural and extraordinary merge of their excellence. The encounter between Porsche and Smeg represents the union of design, craftsmanship, and innovation, rooted in a shared commitment to aesthetics and performance (see Figure 9). The intrinsic attention to detail and the pursuit of stylistic and technological perfection resulted in an exclusive and sophisticated collection, where functionality meets beauty. Everyday objects are consequently transformed into singular pieces that embody luxury, elegance, and timeless devotion.



Figure 9. Porsche x Smeg collaboration. (Source: https://www.smeg.com/it/porsche-x-smeg?srsltid=AfmBOoo70SedWryMCpUzpZxTedRJmACsO0HvqD2iDzE-ZgwL0nq9-a_D)

> Two brands, one ambition. Driven by mastery and united by purpose, crafting legends, delivering experiences that awaken all senses. Dreams come true.[15]

The collaboration between the two legendary brands was grounded in a shared commitment to core values, bringing together Porsche's motorsport heritage and Smeg's design legacy. Therefore, the aim of the project was to celebrate form, function, and "the emotional power of iconic design". The selection includes some of Smeg's most iconic products, revisited from Porsche's perspective, such as the popular FAB28 refrigerator, coffee machines, toasters, kettles, and blenders. All these items

[14] https://backend.press.porsche-design.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Press-Release_Porsche-x-Smeg_r.pdf
[15] https://www.smeg.com/za/porsche-x-smeg

are characterized by distinctive stylistic elements that recall Porsche, such as exclusive metallic finishes, sculptural and polished lines, and iconic stripes inspired by the world of motorsport.
Stefan Büscher, CEO of Porsche Lifestyle Group, affirmed that

> At the heart of this collaboration lies a shared philosophy: to craft objects that are not only functional but also emotionally resonant. Porsche, with its legacy of engineering excellence and motorsport triumphs, and Smeg, renowned for its iconic appliances and Italian design flair, have come together to create a collection that is as bold as it is beautiful.[16]

On the other hand, Vittorio Bertazzoni, Chairman of Smeg, stated that

> At Smeg, we believe in creating products that bring joy through design and performance. Collaborating with Porsche has allowed us to push the boundaries of what a kitchen appliance can represent. This collection is a tribute to craftsmanship, to legacy, and to the beauty of everyday rituals.[17]

The collection comprises three distinct product lines: 917 Salzburg Limited Edition, Carrara White Metallic, and Shade Green Metallic. The major inspiration has been the legendary Porsche 917 KH in its iconic Salzburg livery, the car that secured Porsche's first overall victory in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1970.

> It started with a race, back in 1970, when Porsche achieved its first overall victory at 24 Hours of Le Mans with the 580 hp 917 KH sports car and the start number 23. That racing legend is now reimagined for contemporary living. The 917 Salzburg Porsche x SMEG Limited Edition embodies the spirit of endurance and precision that defined Porsche's most iconic victory.[18]

The collection includes a limited number of pieces (1,970) that go beyond being simple appliances; they are design statements "infused with motorsport heritage and crafted for those who appreciate the extraordinary"[19]. They have been realized in the legendary "Salzburg Red", but also in Carrara White and Shade Green, reinterpreting iconic colors for Porsche in a plainer but still sophisticated aesthetic. As a matter of fact, Carrara White is associated with refined surfaces and an unmistakable silhouette, revealing a cool, mineral clarity that emphasizes lines and proportions (see Figure 10).

[16] https://backend.press.porsche-design.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Press-Release_Porsche-x-Smeg_r.pdf
[17] https://backend.press.porsche-design.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Press-Release_Porsche-x-Smeg_r.pdf
[18] https://www.smeg.com/za/porsche-x-smeg/917-salzburg-collection
[19] https://newsroom.porsche.com/en/2025/company/porsche-smeg-collaboration-kitchen-appliances-collection-40838.html



Figure 10. Carrara White collection. (Source: https://www.smeg.com/it/porsche-x-smeg/carrara-white-shade-green-collection)

On the other hand, Shade Green is connected to sophistication, without excess. It brings a contemporary tone that subtly changes according to light conditions, enriching products that combine refined aesthetics with everyday functionality (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. Shade Green collection. (Source: https://www.smeg.com/it/porsche-x-smeg/carrara-white-shade-green-collection)

This aesthetic combines perfectly with functionality; each element reflects a perfect balance between design and performance. There are clear references to automotive design, such as handles inspired by high-performance sports cars and the use of premium materials and finishes. Details are meticulously curated, resulting in products that embody technical excellence and visual sophistication.

The collaboration goes beyond commercial objectives; it positions itself as the expression of contemporary design culture. It tries to redefine domestic appliances by transforming them into objects of "functional luxury", where routine actions are transformed into premium experiences. Passion stands as the main concept of the collection, together with precision. "When two visions align, beauty becomes function and function reveals beauty"[20]. It represents a tribute to legacy and to the allure of everyday rituals.

[20] https://www.smeg.com/za/porsche-x-smeg

The collaboration between Porsche and Smeg was officially announced on October 15, 2025, through the institutional channels of both brands. Smeg Group and Porsche Newsroom published official press releases synchronically, while promoting it also on social networks through teasers and carousels. The digital platform chosen by the companies was Instagram, where both brands included visual content accompanied by texts, which highlighted the relationship between automotive and domestic appliances. The official slogan for the collaboration was "Driven by passion. Refined by design", which reinforced the aspirational dimension and the concept of the project.

2.2.3 DOLCE & GABBANA

> Dolce&Gabbana's creations are the result of a vision that blends Italian excellence with a commitment to the planet, making every decision an act of responsibility. […] By integrating craftsmanship, innovation, and environmental responsibility, we aim to make a positive impact on the fashion industry, while preserving our cultural heritage and identity.[21]

Dolce & Gabbana positions itself as one of the most iconic Italian luxury fashion houses, which was founded in 1985 by designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana. It is known internationally as a symbol of glamour, Italian craftsmanship, excellence, sensuality, and ambition. Indeed, their vision is clear and aims to promote the culture and tradition of Made in Italy all over the globe. Italian craftsmanship has become their distinctive feature and leading value, and it is fostered thanks to continuous collaborations with local communities. Each of their products appears as a unique artwork that embodies the beauty of Italy's traditions, heritage, and culture. More than a mere geographical indication, "Made in Italy" functions as a cultural construct rooted in national identity, where elegance is not just garments, but a holistic lifestyle. For this reason, Dolce & Gabbana is internationally recognized for its artisanal mastery and stylistic refinement, rooted in a long-standing heritage of meticulous production.

In the contemporary context, this legacy intersects with global concerns such as environmental impact, ethical labor practices, and sustainable innovation. As a response, many Italian fashion houses, including Dolce &Gabbana, are adopting sustainable practices, embracing eco-friendly materials and responsible supply chains, without compromising their characteristic elegance. This alignment reflects a strategic evolution to meet the expectations of contemporary consumers, while reinforcing the cultural and commercial strength of the brand. This ability to blend sustainability with tradition highlights a broader evolution in luxury fashion, where heritage, innovation, and ethical responsibility are interconnected and collectively reinforce a strong, enduring brand identity. This

[21] https://sustainability.dolcegabbana.com

luxury brand has played a pivotal role in shaping and maintaining Italian fashion, extending its influence beyond style and business and contributing to the construction of "*Italianness*" as a global cultural reference.

> Dolce&Gabbana is committed to advancing the values of Made in Italy by fostering continuous collaboration with local communities and future generations. Our ambition lies in creating long-term social value through the preservation of cultural heritage and ecosystems, while driving innovative sustainability efforts within the fashion industry. We believe that by embracing the beauty of Italy's traditions and integrating them into modern sustainable practices, we can contribute to a more harmonious and responsible world.[22]

As a matter of fact, the brand invests in extending sustainability beyond its products to show how it conducts its business activities. Environmental care, social responsibility, and the preservation of values in which the company is rooted are prioritized. Among these, "Made in Italy" and Heritage Preservation are certainly crucial for brand identity. Indeed, the company promoted the culture and the traditions of Made in Italy "through the beauty and excellence of craftsmanship and the artisanal expertise",[23] while integrating partnerships and creating economic and social value.

Moreover, the company highlights the relevance of climate change, a concern that has consistently led the brand to adopt strategies aimed at reducing both direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions. The Group is now focusing on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green logistics as part of its commitment to achieving the "net zero carbon" target. Consequently, sustainability becomes not only an objective but a process of effective transformation that includes several practices. These comprise product design, manufacturing processes, supply chain management, and collaborations with partners and stakeholders. The goal is to create value while preserving cultural identity and reducing environmental impact, to build a sustainable legacy over time.

This sustainable legacy is rooted in seven key pillars that concern emissions reduction, heritage preservation, human care, zero-waste approach, ecosystem collaboration, circularity, transparency, and traceability[24]. As mentioned above, emissions reduction constitutes the primary goal for the 'Net Zero Carbon' project, while heritage preservation is related to the concept of "Made in Italy". Furthermore, the company also emphasizes the importance of human care, understood as social responsibility and a commitment to investing in new generations, fostering talent, and providing

[22] https://sustainability.dolcegabbana.com/ambition/
[23] https://sustainability.dolcegabbana.com
[24] https://sustainability.dolcegabbana.com

structured support for their development. Consequently, inclusion and diversity become fundamental in the workplace, where people are regarded as a form of human capital.

Moreover, the brand is focused on collaborations with companies, startups, and organizations to promote innovation across the supply chain. This enhances a systemic, collaborative approach to sustainability, while offering visibility and credibility. These features are further developed through the focus on supply chain transparency, which implies product traceability, supplier monitoring, and improved consumer information.

Another sustainability driver is related to waste reduction. It implies reusing, recycling, and recovery practices to optimize resources and develop a circular production model. Therefore, materials must be sustainable, durable, repairable, and recyclable. This promotes a circular consumption model, which gives importance to raw materials as limited resources that need to be preserved. As a matter of fact, in 2022, Dolce&Gabbana announced its 'fur-free' policy, affirming that the brand would have no longer used animal fur in its designs or new products. This strategy was developed with the Fur Free Retailer, an international initiative of the Fur Free Alliance.

> Dolce&Gabbana will preserve the work and professionalism of the fur masters, using their know-how to make garments and accessories in faux fur, enhancing the experience of craftsmanship.
>
> Dolce&Gabbana believes that the entire fashion system has a significant social responsibility role that must be promoted and encouraged to develop environmentally friendly production processes, while at the same time preserve artisans' jobs and know-how. [25]

While being a leading company in the fashion industry, Dolce&Gabbana also operates in other areas, still demonstrating its prestige and exclusivity. Indeed, they introduced beauty, jewellery, food & beverage, and home décor collections that reflect the same values that are embodied in clothing lineups. Worthy of mention is the "Dolce & Gabbana Casa" collection, which was first introduced in 1994. After being discontinued, the brand reintroduced it in 2021, with a preview in Venice during the 'Alta Moda' event. This chic collection presents four signature motifs that reflect their essence: Mediterranean Blue, Carretto, Leo, and Zebra. Much like their clothes, these products also seem to embody the aura of glamour, sensuality, vibrance, and refined excess, meant for those who are passionate about maximalism.

[25] https://world.dolcegabbana.com/corporate/fur-free-policy

The collection includes sofas, coffee tables, rugs, lamps, chairs, and other furnishing accessories that are defined by stylistic refinement, craftsmanship, and artisanal artistry. The collection aims to create a distinctive lifestyle, where details are crafted with care, respect for tradition, and pursuit of innovation. Consequently, the brand reaches such a level of exclusivity that it offers a fully immersive 360-degree experience. The stakeholder can deeply engage with the brand's universe, perceiving its values, aesthetics, and identity across every touchpoint.

2.2.4 SMEG AND DOLCE & GABBANA: INDUSTRIAL DESIGN MEETS ITALIAN HERITAGE



Figure 12. Smeg and Dolce e Gabbana (Source: https://www.smeg.com/special-products)

> When design and fashion meet in an unconventional project it can only result in a bold, unexpected and visionary creativity, which continues over time to spark new stimuli and interactions between both worlds.[26]

Through several co-branded collections, Smeg and Dolce & Gabbana bring together their artistic visions in a journey that explores the colors and beauty of Italy, particularly Sicily, creating an authentically "Made in Italy" project. Rooted in a shared commitment to creativity, art, and design, their collaborations have achieved great success all over the world. Indeed, over the years, their partnership has given rise to a series of lineups that reinterpret iconic household appliances through the lens of Italian artistry and craftsmanship. They do not just celebrate the excellence of Made in Italy, but they also transform everyday objects into true works of art, reinforcing the brands' shared vision of design as a tool for cultural expression.

Their partnership has led to several iconic collections: from the most recent one, Blu Mediterraneo, to Sicily is My Love, Frigoriferi d'Arte, and Divina Cucina. From vividly decorated household

[26] https://www.smeg.com/special-products

appliances inspired by Sicilian folklore to small objects enriched with their signature motifs, every lineup reflects the dialogue between innovation and heritage.

> Divina Cucina is a tribute to Italy's roots, its traditions and popular festivals in the form of a new freestanding kitchen set and cooker hood with a coordinated FAB28 fridge. The collection is presented in two variants: the first characterized by representations inspired by the Sicilian puppet theatre and the traditional hand-painted cart, the second by a majolica print in shades of blue and white.[27]

Divina Cucina, as mentioned above, constitutes a design project born from the collaboration between Smeg and Dolce & Gabbana, in order to celebrate Italian cultural roots and traditions. The collection transforms kitchen appliances into expressive and refined design items, redefining them as one-of-a-kind artworks that embody the essence of Made in Italy.

Basically, the collection consists of a freestanding kitchen set and a coordinated refrigerator (the iconic FAB28), all characterized by a strong aesthetic identity. Advanced technological innovation is combined with a highly decorative visual element, merging Smeg's expertise with Dolce & Gabbana's artistic Sicilian heritage. It was presented in two main variants: the first drew on the imagery of the Sicilian puppet theatre and the traditional hand-painted Sicilian motif, characterized by vibrant colors such as red and orange. The second one featured instead majolica-inspired patterns, presenting more refined tones of blue and white, recalling traditional ceramic craftsmanship (see Figure 13).



Figure 13. Divina Cucina collection. (Source: https://www.smeg.com/news/divina-cucina-launch-azulejos-in-the-kitchen.html)

[27] https://www.smeg.com/special-products

Thanks to these variants, the collection represents Italian identity: its history, folklore, craftsmanship, landscapes, and culinary culture. The appliances evoke a sense of timelessness and represent the synthesis of art, design, and technology.

Divina Cucina is followed by another crucial collaboration between these brands, represented by Frigoriferi d'Arte.

> Dolce&Gabbana and Smeg have teamed up once again for the design of a special edition of the FAB28 refrigerator, transforming it into a work of art. The two companies belong to two different creative sectors but are united by strong values and a tradition of "Made in Italy" excellence: sharing similar backgrounds rooted in the family and local territory, they have a deep respect for tradition, and their creativity allows them to skillfully combine eras, different specialties, and sensibilities.[28]

In this case, the project was conceived to be an elevation of a functional household appliance into a unique masterpiece. The iconic Smeg's FAB28 refrigerator was reinterpreted and transformed into a canvas for artistic expressions of Sicilian painters. The collection consists of 100 exclusive refrigerators, each entirely hand-decorated, representing individual artworks. A defining aspect of the project is surely the strong connection to Sicilian culture and heritage, including elements such as lemons, the Trinacria symbol, cart wheels, and other symbols inspired by traditional Sicilian folklore. This collaboration highlights the fusion of different areas, concerning industrial design, high fashion, and fine art.

> Dolce&Gabbana and Smeg combine their artistic souls, giving life to unique, original Made in Italy projects such as Sicily is my Love. The new collection of small appliances is created by Smeg with design by Matteo Bazzicalupo and Raffaella Mangiarotti (deepdesign) and unmistakable creativity by Dolce&Gabbana.[29]

Another iconic project that was born from this exclusive partnership regards the "Sicily is My Love" collection. Representing a complete celebration of Italian identity through vibrant small domestic appliances, it transformed everyday kitchen tools into expressive design objects. These items were designed to combine high-level functionality and a strong visual identity. Indeed, it was inspired by Sicilian culture and Mediterranean vibes. The appliances are decorated with motifs such as golden lemons, citrus fruits, bright red cherries, and geometric patterns. These elements evoke the colors, landscapes, and traditions of Southern Italy, reflecting artisanal mastery.
From a conceptual point of view, the collection embodies the fusion of design, art, regional identity, durability, and performance. It exemplifies how collaborations between fashion and industrial design

[28] https://www.smeg.com/special-products/refrigerator-of-art
[29] https://www.smeg.com/special-products/sicily-is-my-love

can elevate appliances into icons of Made in Italy, recognizable all around the world. These same features have also been highlighted in the most recent collection, “Blu Mediterraneo”. It consists of a design project that represents a further evolution of their creative partnership. It draws inspiration from the colors, atmosphere, and cultural imagery of the Mediterranean, translating them into a refined design language.

At its core, the collection includes several products organized into sets. The breakfast set, the coffee set, and the kitchen set have become icons with a unique identity. The latter is defined through the distinctive decorative style, characterized by deep blue and white majolica-inspired motifs. These patterns evoke the sea, the sky, and a strong connection to peaceful places.

For the purpose of this analysis, this is the lineup selected for a deeper examination, which is later compared with the collaboration between Porsche and Smeg. By doing this, the analysis allowed to understand to what extent co-branding influences Smeg’s communication.

2.2.5 BLU MEDITERRANEO

“The colors of the sea, the scent of freshly baked sweets and the homely atmosphere that warms the heart: Dolce&Gabbana and Smeg give life to the new “Blu Mediterraneo” collection” (see figure 14).[30]



Figure 14. Blu Mediterraneo collection. (Source: https://smegshop.sg/?srsltid=AfmBOoryVWBRwV2dljRp8-Wuf3r6CG-XsuZabMxCwt-tBnCPC7baw5c3)

It was with this statement that Smeg announced its fourth collaboration project with Dolce & Gabbana on June 15, 2023. Through an immersive and iconic reel published on the @SmegItalia Instagram

[30] https://www.instagram.com/reels/Ctgh_NWKpqr/

page, the brand affirmed its commitment to a new lineup, characterized by a new perspective. The perceived concept was one related to living the typical Italian “Dolce Vita”, with a slow routine, made of details, scents, colors, and memories.

The defining element of “Blu Mediterraneo” is its distinctive decorative style, a visual narrative that conveys tranquility, elegance, and a strong connection to place. The use of geometric and floral designs reflects traditional Italian craftsmanship, reinterpreted in a contemporary way through Dolce & Gabbana’s aesthetic vision. It highlights the importance of safeguarding artisanal knowledge while translating it into a contemporary design context, where tradition and innovation coexist. At the core of the collection is a selection of small kitchen appliances, including toasters, kettles, citrus juicers, coffee grinders, espresso machines, and milk frothers. These objects combine advanced functionality with a strong decorative identity, embodying the synergy between Smeg’s technological expertise and Dolce & Gabbana’s artistic vision.

Moreover, the project reinforces the idea of the kitchen as an experiential and aesthetic space, where everyday rituals, such as preparing breakfast or coffee, are elevated through design. The appliances become vehicles of storytelling, capable of evoking the sensory and emotional atmosphere of the Mediterranean lifestyle, regardless of geographical context.

The “Blu Mediterraneo” collaboration between Smeg and Dolce & Gabbana was officially introduced as part of the ongoing creative partnership between the two brands, through their institutional communication channels and digital platforms. The communication strategy was strongly focused on digital storytelling, with particular emphasis on visual platforms such as Instagram, where both brands shared content. It included product close-ups, atmospheric imagery, and lifestyle-oriented visuals. These materials highlighted the aesthetic identity of the collection, characterized by deep blue majolica-inspired patterns and a strong connection to Mediterranean heritage. The campaign was further reinforced through evocative copywriting and narrative-driven captions, which positioned the collection within a broader cultural framework linked to the sea, Italian tradition, and artisanal craftsmanship. The overall tone of the communication emphasized elegance, authenticity, and emotional engagement, aligning the product line with a luxurious and aspirational lifestyle. Through this integrated communication approach, “Blu Mediterraneo” was framed not only as a product line but as a cultural and sensory experience, capable of translating the essence of the Mediterranean into contemporary design objects.

2.3 CO-BRANDING DISCOURSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this analysis, the partner brand is the variable element across the two case studies, while Smeg functions as the constant point of reference. Each partner introduces its own symbolic universe, stylistic conventions, and tone of voice, making it possible to observe how linguistic strategies shift depending on the collaboration and how these shifts influence Smeg's brand image and reputation. The communicative register associated with Porsche reflects the brand's core values: rationality, speed, precision, performance, and German engineering excellence. When this semantic field is projected onto Smeg, it generates a more technical and performance-oriented tone, enriching and partially reshaping how the focal brand may be perceived by stakeholders. By contrast, the communicative register associated with Dolce&Gabbana conveys a markedly different symbolic universe, centred on emotions, heritage, craftsmanship, design, and lifestyle. Applied to Smeg, this perspective reframes the brand through a more expressive and culturally rooted narrative that foregrounds aesthetic richness and Italian identity.

Since the two partner brands embody almost opposite identities, they offer a productive contrast for examining how Smeg's strategic projects are communicated. The tension between an engineering-driven discourse and an emotion-oriented narrative makes it possible to observe how different communicative registers shape the representation of the same focal brand. This contrast is essential for identifying the linguistic patterns characteristic of each project and for understanding how different semantic fields, tones of voice, and communicative strategies are employed. The analysis therefore considers not only the content of the messages but also the processes through which meaning is constructed and conveyed, drawing on Digital Discourse Analysis and brand-specific communicative registers to interpret how each collaboration contributes to shaping Smeg's identity within the co-branding discourse.

Moreover, the relevance of this analysis is reinforced by the absence of previous academic research specifically addressing these two collaborations. Although co-branding and linguistic strategies have been widely examined, no study appears to have analyzed the partnerships between Smeg and Porsche or between Smeg and Dolce&Gabbana. This gap, likely due to the recent nature of these projects, allows the present research to offer new empirical insights into how language operates within co-branding strategies.

The main research questions that guide this analysis can therefore be outlined as follows:

1. How does the communication strategy of Smeg change when collaborating with Porsche compared to Dolce & Gabbana?
2. Which are the lexical choices and rhetorical strategies that emerge in each collaboration?
3. To what extent does the partner influence the overall identity and positioning of Smeg?
4. How do these variations contribute to reshaping the stakeholders' perceptions?

Consequently, the analysis conducted in this thesis enables a systematic comparison between different co-branding projects, in which the partner brand is the element that changes. By keeping Smeg constant, it becomes possible to understand how language functions as a strategic tool in co-branding, shaping communication and contributing to the construction of brand identity and reputation.

2.4 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a methodological framework designed to analyse systematically the linguistic and multimodal features that characterize the two co-branding collaborations under investigation.

The following subsections detail the criteria applied to identify the relevant digital content, the steps taken to gather and structure the dataset, and the methodological approach adopted for the analysis. Particular attention is given to the principles of Digital Discourse Analysis and to corpus-assisted techniques, which provide the theoretical and operational basis for examining how linguistic choices contribute to the construction of brand meaning within the collaborations

2.4.1 DATA SELECTION AND COLLECTION

This section outlines the main criteria adopted for the selection of the empirical materials, the procedures followed for data collection, and how such data were employed.

Once the case studies had been identified, the following step consisted in selecting the corpus of materials to be analyzed. Given the focus of this work on the evolving digital landscape, particular attention was paid to the platforms through which the collaborations were presented, promoted, and advertised. Among the various available channels, three main sources were selected: official websites, press releases, and Instagram.

The choice of these platforms can be motivated by several factors. First, they represent the primary and most content-rich channels through which both collaborations were communicated. Second, they offer a combination of textual and visual materials, allowing for a more comprehensive multimodal analysis. Third, Instagram provides access not only to brand-generated content, but also to user-generated responses and opinions. These take the form of comments that enable an examination of stakeholders' perceptions in relation to the linguistic strategies employed by the brands. Instagram was chosen because this social media platform plays a crucial role in modern brand communication, enabling brands to implement targeted marketing strategies, engage audiences, and establish strong connections with customers. Social media, alongside websites, also serves as a powerful tool for storytelling, allowing brands to express their core values. Other platforms were considered but consequently excluded due to the limited presence of relevant material.

For each collaboration, all the available materials were collected within the identified sources. The materials were then systematically divided according to their type and content, which was classified into images, carousels, and videos. On the other hand, captions and user comments were collected separately as textual data. The textual material was subsequently divided into brand-generated and user-generated content. This distinction made it possible to analyse the brands' communication strategies separately from users' responses and perceptions.

The collected materials were organized in Excel sheets, with an indication of the source, type of content, publication information and corresponding links, ensuring the traceability of the dataset. The visual materials were used for the multimodal analysis, with particular attention to the ways in which visual elements contributed to the construction of meaning and brand positioning. The textual materials were instead used for the linguistic and corpus-based analysis. In particular, the textual data were converted into .txt format and processed using corpus analysis tools such as AntConc and Sketch Engine, allowing for the identification and examination of recurring linguistic patterns.

The analyzed materials are summarized in the tables provided in the appendices. Appendix A presents the materials collected for the Smeg × Porsche collaboration, while Appendix B presents those related to Smeg × Dolce&Gabbana. Appendix C provides an overall summary of the dataset and its composition.

In particular, the collected data was used in different ways, depending on their nature and communicative function. Materials sourced from press releases and official websites were used for a

contextual and descriptive purpose: to present the brands, outline their identity, and frame the collaborations from a conceptual perspective. In contrast, the content from Instagram constituted the core dataset for the linguistic analysis. Such materials are particularly relevant as they reflect both the intended communication strategies of the brands and the perception of the audience. The inclusion of comments allows for an additional layer of analysis, providing insights into how linguistic choices influence stakeholders' engagement. Furthermore, the visual materials collected in the third dataset supported a multimodal analysis, enabling the examination of the interplay between verbal and visual elements. This is particularly important in the context of digital communication, where meaning is often constructed through the integration of visual and textual elements (see Section 3.1 and Appendix A, B and C).

Having defined the criteria, the selection process, and the intended use of the materials, the following subsection outlines the analytical framework adopted for this study. It provides a detailed explanation of the methodologies employed and the theoretical tools used to interpret the data.

2.4.2. ANALYTICAL APPROACH: DIGITAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (DDA)

Digital Discourse Analysis (DDA) provides the methodological foundation for examining how language operates within the two co-branding collaborations analyzed in this study. As an interdisciplinary field, DDA investigates how language is used in digital environments and how it is shaped by social, cultural, and technological factors (Moshinsky, 2022; Gredel, 2017; Jones et al., 2015; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2012). It focuses on the contexts in which discourse is produced, the interactional dynamics that characterize online communication, and the textual practices through which meaning is constructed. Digital texts such as websites, emails, chat logs, social media posts, blogs, and online forums all fall within its scope.

DDA is particularly relevant in the contemporary digital landscape, where new forms of expression, such as emojis, acronyms, and other abbreviated linguistic formats, play an increasingly central role in communication. Its applications extend across multiple domains, including marketing, advertising, political communication, and public relations, as it offers insights into how language shapes public opinion, constructs identities, and influences social behavior.

Within DDA, several thematic dimensions are commonly explored. These include identity construction, power dynamics, social norms and expectations, multimodality, creativity and

innovation, contextual influences, emotional expression and audience design. Such dimensions are especially pertinent to brand communication, where linguistic choices are strategically calibrated to convey values, engage audiences and reinforce positioning. The main data sources for DDA typically include social media platforms, online forums, blogs, websites, digital archives, reviews and mobile applications.

From an operational perspective, DDA involves a series of steps that ensure coherence between the analytical process and the research questions. The first phase is data collection, guided by explicit criteria related to time frame, audience, or communicative relevance, in order to obtain a representative dataset. The collected material is then pre-processed and converted into formats suitable for analysis. This is followed by coding and categorization, through which recurring patterns, themes, and linguistic features are identified and systematically organized. The analytical phase may combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative analysis, often conducted with tools such as AntConc or SketchEngine, highlights salient linguistic patterns through frequency lists, collocations, concordances, and other corpus-based measures. These findings are subsequently examined qualitatively to interpret their communicative function within context. Interpretation is followed, when relevant, by visualization of results through graphs or diagrams, and by comparative analysis across datasets. The final stage consists of reflection, which assesses the strengths and limitations of the analysis and identifies potential directions for future research.

Corpus-assisted discourse analysis plays a central role within this framework. A corpus is a collection of authentic texts in electronic format, selected to represent a language or one of its varieties. Corpus linguistics enables the systematic examination of large quantities of text and supports both monolingual and multilingual analysis. When combined with discourse analysis, it allows for a detailed investigation of lexical and semantic patterns across different texts, making it possible to compare linguistic features and identify recurring tendencies.

In this work, corpus-assisted techniques were applied to both the brand-generated content and the user-generated comments collected from the selected social media posts. Once the empirical materials had been collected and organised into the relevant sub-corpora, the textual data were examined by identifying recurrent lexical patterns and key words within each dataset. Their occurrences were then considered in context, through the analysis of their concordances, in order to determine the meanings and functions they acquired in the specific communicative environment. This procedure made it possible to move beyond frequency and investigate how particular lexical choices contribute to the

construction of brand-related meanings and values. This same approach was applied to the comments, which were analysed as a separate form of user-generated discourse. Their linguistic features were examined comparatively across the Italian and English sub-corpora, with particular attention to recurring lexical choices, expressions of evaluation and emotion, and patterns of engagement with the brands and their content.

The analysis also adopts a multimodal perspective, as the posts are not considered exclusively as textual contents, but as combinations of linguistic and visual elements. Accordingly, each post was examined in its full multimodal structure, including the textual caption, user comments and visual components. The visual dimension of the posts is examined through imagery, layout, and distinctive brand aesthetics, with particular attention to how these multimodal elements shape brand identity. These elements were considered in relation to the verbal content in order to investigate how different semiotic resources interact in the construction and communication of brand meanings.

The combination of corpus-assisted techniques, DDA and multimodal analysis therefore provides a structured framework for examining the interaction between language, discourse and visual communication. While the corpus analysis highlights recurrent linguistic patterns across the selected datasets, DDA enables their interpretation within their broader communicative context and the multimodal analysis extends this interpretation to the visual dimension of the posts. This integrated approach is used to investigate how Smeg and its partner brands construct and communicate brand identity and values through their digital co-branding communication, while also considering how users respond to and engage with these communicative strategies.

CHAPTER 3

LINGUISTIC AND MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE TWO CO-BRANDING PROJECTS

This chapter presents the linguistic and multimodal analysis conducted on the two co-branding projects examined in this study: Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo. Building on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 1 and the methodological structure defined in Chapter 2, the analysis investigates how Smeg's brand identity interacts with two distinct partners. Moreover, it focuses on how this interaction shapes the communicative strategies adopted across digital platforms. The chapter opens by describing the composition of the corpora constructed for the analysis, detailing the number of posts collected, the distribution of content among the brands, and the linguistic characteristics of the textual material. It subsequently explores the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of discourse, identifying recurrent lexical patterns, rhetorical strategies, and tone of voice. Particular attention is devoted to the comparison between the communication produced by Smeg and that produced by its partners, in order to understand whether the partners' values influence Smeg's communicative positioning and, if so, in what ways.

This chapter also includes an analysis of user-generated content, with a specific focus on comments written in Italian and English, as well as comments composed exclusively of emojis. This material provides insight into how audiences interpret and react to the communicative strategies employed by the brands. Finally, the chapter offers a qualitative interpretation of the visual dimension of the collaborations, examining how images contribute to the construction of meaning and how they reinforce or diverge from the verbal discourse. Through this structure, the analysis aims to answer the research questions formulated in Chapter 2 and to demonstrate how language functions as a strategic tool in co-branding initiatives.

3.1 PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis is based on two corpora created from the digital content published on Instagram for the collaborations Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo. Each corpus includes only the textual material contained in the posts published by the brands involved. The main carachteristics of the corpora and sub-corpora are summarized in the following table:

Collaboration	Brand	Number of posts	Italian tokens	English tokens	Total tokens
Smeg x Porsche	Smeg	34	710	150	860
	Porsche	10		717	717
Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana	Smeg	17	585	740	1325
	Dolce&Gabbana	5		162	162
Total		66	1295	1769	3064

The choice to construct distinct corpora for each collaboration, and to differentiate between Smeg's content and that of its partners, is grounded in the methodological assumption that every brand adopts a distinct communicative register. This distinction is essential for understanding how Smeg adapts its discourse when interacting with different partners and for identifying possible convergences or divergences in the values expressed.

For the collaboration between Smeg and Porsche, 44 posts were collected. 34 of them were published by the official account of @SmegItalia, while 10 were published on @PorscheNewsroom and @PorscheLifestyle. However, some of them appeared on both profiles due to the collaborative nature of the project (see Figure 15).

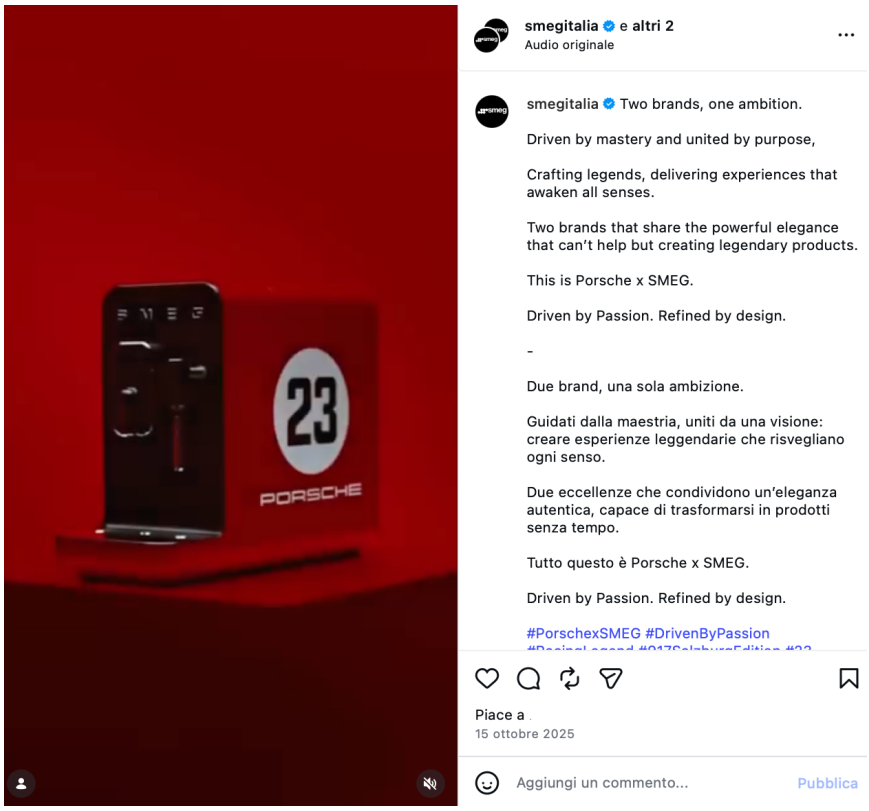


Figure 15. Announcing the collaboration between Smeg and Porsche. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DP0bl50Ddwm/)

The textual material generated by Smeg consists of approximately 710 Italian tokens and 150 English tokens, while the posts produced by Porsche include 717 English tokens. This reflects the way in which each brand distributes its communication across different languages, with Smeg adopting a bilingual strategy and Porsche relying exclusively on English. In the case of Smeg, the consistent use of Italian is not accidental: it reflects the company's desire to preserve and project its national identity, which represents one of the core elements of its brand positioning. As an Italian company strongly rooted in its territory, Smeg continues to emphasize its connection to the values traditionally associated with "Made in Italy", such as craftsmanship and cultural heritage. The use of the Italian language therefore functions as a marker of authenticity and territorial belonging, reinforcing the symbolic universe that the brand has cultivated over time.

At the same time, Smeg integrates English into its communication to address an international audience and to ensure accessibility across global markets. This bilingual approach allows the company to maintain a balance between local identity and global reach, preserving the cultural specificity that distinguishes the brand while simultaneously engaging with a broader public. The coexistence of Italian and English thus becomes a strategic linguistic choice: Italian anchors the brand to its roots and reinforces its identity, whereas English enhances its international visibility and

supports its positioning within the global landscape. Therefore, the linguistic distribution observed in the subcorpora reflects not only practical considerations related to audience reach, but also deeper strategic choices concerning identity construction and brand coherence.

For the collaboration between Smeg and Dolce&Gabbana, 22 posts were collected, of which 17 were published by @SmegItalia and 5 by @DolceGabbanaCasa. As in the previous case, several posts appeared on both profiles (see Figure 16).



Figure 16. Collaborative post. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/C0UCAJdIqwZ/

The textual material produced by Smeg consists of approximately 585 Italian tokens and 740 English tokens, while the content generated by Dolce&Gabbana amounts to 162 English tokens and 0 Italian tokens. This distribution highlights a more balanced bilingual strategy on Smeg's side and a predominantly English-oriented approach on the part of Dolce&Gabbana. Smeg's use of Italian, as in the previous collaboration, maintains a connection with the brand's cultural roots. At the same time, the presence of Italian in Smeg's communication reflects the shared cultural background of the two brands involved. Both Smeg and Dolce&Gabbana are Italian companies whose communication has historically drawn on the symbolic capital of "Made in Italy". For this reason, the use of Italian within the collaboration reinforces a common narrative grounded in heritage and aesthetic tradition, elements that constitute a central component of the identity of both brands.

Dolce&Gabbana, however, relies almost exclusively on English in its posts. This choice does not give less importance to the brand's Italian identity; rather, it reflects its long-standing global orientation and its consolidated presence in international luxury markets. At the same time, the collaboration between Smeg and Dolce&Gabbana presents a distinctive linguistic pattern, because both brands share the same national background. Their Italian origin creates a natural alignment in terms of cultural references, symbolic universe, and aesthetic values, which emerges not only through visual elements but also through the linguistic balance observed in the dataset. In this collaboration, the coexistence of Italian and English results in a more harmonious interplay between local identity and international projection. Over time, the communication surrounding Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana has grown organically, allowing the two brands to refine a bilingual strategy in which Italian reinforces shared cultural roots while English ensures global accessibility.

This historical continuity and the shared Italian heritage create a communicative environment in which the two languages complement each other rather than competing. The result is a well-defined linguistic pattern that appears more balanced and integrated, especially when compared to the Smeg x Porsche collaboration, where the recency of the project and the absence of a common national identity produce a more marked asymmetry between the linguistic choices of the two brands.

Moreover, a separate dataset of user-generated comments was collected. For the Smeg x Porsche collaboration, 279 comments were gathered, while the Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana collaboration generated 264 comments. Only comments written in Italian and English, as well as comments composed exclusively of emojis, were selected. This distinction allows for a clearer and more systematic interpretation of audience engagement, since each type of comment reflects a different communicative function. Emoji-only comments, which constitute a significant portion of the dataset, provide insight into immediate reactions, while verbal comments enable a qualitative examination of users' evaluations, perceptions, and attitudes towards the collaborations. The comments are therefore analysed through a dual approach: a quantitative observation of their distribution across languages and formats, and a qualitative interpretation of their content. This makes it possible to identify whether reactions differ between Italian- and English-speaking users, whether the two linguistic communities emphasise similar aspects of the collaborations, and how the strategies adopted by users relate to the communicative choices of the brands.

Starting from the analysis of the collected materials, the corpora and the comment dataset were kept separate to maintain methodological clarity and to account for the different communicative functions

of the two types of content: brand-generated discourse constructs meaning, whereas user-generated discourse reflects and negotiates it.

3.2 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF BRAND-GENERATED POSTS

The present section focuses primarily on the quantitative distribution of lexical items across the different sets of collected materials and on the phrasological patterns that emerge from them. A more detailed qualitative analysis of the semantic, rhetorical, and discursive implications of these patterns is developed in Section 3.3.

3.2.1 SMEG AND PORSCHE

The following quantitative analysis builds directly on the corpus description provided in the previous section. By observing which words recur most often in each subcorpus, and by analysing their concordances, it becomes possible to identify the dominant semantic fields, the values emphasised by each brand, and how the two identities interact within the co-branding discourse. Therefore, the quantitative analysis provides the empirical foundation for the qualitative interpretation that follows, allowing for a systematic comparison between the communicative strategies adopted by Smeg and Porsche.

The first subcorpus examined was composed of the Italian material produced by Smeg for the Smeg x Porsche collaboration. The most frequent lexical items include *design, tempo, eleganza, precisione, passione, eccellenza, dettaglio, leggenda, stile, forma, anima* and *innovazione* (see Figure 17).

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓	
1	smeg	22	•••
2	porsche	17	•••
3	porschexsmeg	9	•••
4	design	8	•••
5	collezione	8	•••
6	drivenbypassion	8	•••
7	porschelifestyle	8	•••
8	tempo	6	•••
9	eleganza	6	•••
10	precisione	6	•••
11	passione	5	•••
12	eccellenza	5	•••
13	dettaglio	4	•••

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓	
14	carrara	4	•••
15	leggenda	4	•••
16	stile	4	•••
17	green	4	•••
18	forma	4	•••
19	anima	4	•••
20	shade	4	•••
21	innovazione	4	•••
22	white	4	•••
23	raffinatezza	3	•••
24	racinglegend	3	•••
25	colore	3	•••
26	bollitore	3	•••

Figure 17. Word frequencies Smeg x Porsche, Smeg, Italian

These items reveal a strong emphasis on aesthetic refinement, craftsmanship, and emotional resonance, which are central components of Smeg's brand identity. The prominence of design reflects the company's positioning within the Italian tradition of industrial design, where form, aesthetics, and cultural heritage play a decisive role. The recurrence of *eleganza, stile* and *forma* reinforces this orientation, suggesting that prominence is given to visual harmony and the symbolic value of objects. At the same time, the use of *precisione, innovazione*, and *eccellenza* indicates an alignment with Porsche's technological and performance-driven identity, showing how Smeg integrates elements of its partner's value system into its own communicative repertoire.

The concordance analysis conducted on the most frequent lexical items confirms these tendencies. The term *design* frequently co-occurs with modifiers such as *italiano, raffinato*, and *iconico*, which connect design to the cultural and aesthetic tradition of "Made in Italy" (see Figure 18).



Figure 18. Concordance of "design"

These associations highlight the brand's intention to present its products not merely as functional objects, but as expressions of a distinctive cultural identity. Similarly, the concordance lines of *eccellenza* show that it regularly co-occurs with *design italiano*. A representative example is the line *"…un omaggio all'eccellenza e al design italiano, dove tradizione e creatività si incontrano…"*, which illustrates the strong relationship between excellence and Italian design. The term *eleganza* co-occurs with *italiana* and *autentica*, reinforcing the idea that elegance is conceptualised as an inherently Italian quality, rooted in tradition and authenticity (see Figure 19).

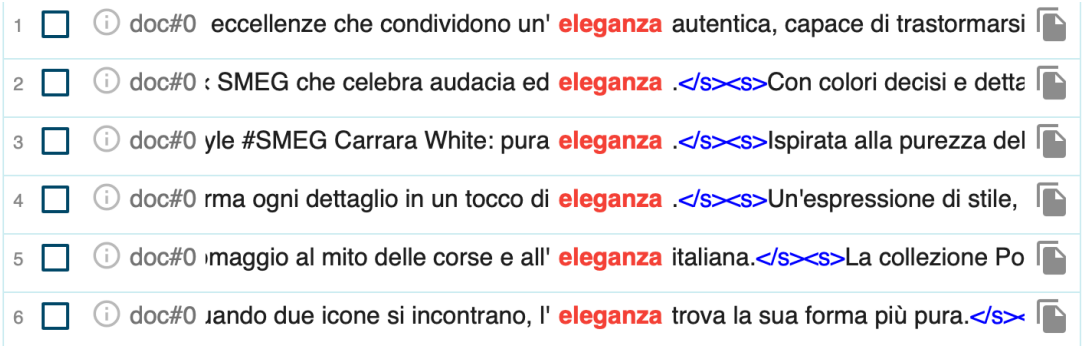


Figure 19. Concordance of "eleganza"

Similarly, the term *precisione* often co-occurs with *passione, estetica*, and identity-marking expressions such as *è la nostra firma*. This pattern can be observed in the following example: "*Alcune forme parlano da sole: immediate, riconoscibili, memorabili. Un solo tratto e rivelano forza e personalità. La precisione è la nostra firma"*. This example illustrates how precision is framed not only as a technical attribute but also as an emotional and stylistic trait of the brand. Finally, *innovazione* tends to co-occur with *precisione, estetica, eccellenza,* and references to the technological world, showing how innovation is conceptualised as a synthesis of aesthetic refinement and technical mastery. A representative concordance line, "*…la nostra innovazione nasce dalla*

precisione e dall'estetica, unita all'eccellenza delle soluzioni tecnologiche più avanzate.", suggests that innovation is conceptualised as a synthesis of aesthetic refinement and technical mastery. These concordances demonstrate how Smeg constructs a narrative in which aesthetic, emotional, and technological dimensions converge, reflecting both its own identity and the influence of Porsche's performance-oriented values.

The English subcorpus produced by Smeg for the same collaboration is considerably smaller, consisting of only 150 tokens. The most frequent items include racing l*egend, passion, elegance, precision,* and a series of hashtags such as *#racinglegend, #porschelifestyle*, and *#drivenbypassion* (see Figure 20).

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓	
1	porsche	6	•••
2	#drivenbypassion	4	•••
3	#porschexsmeg	4	•••
4	#porschelifestyle	4	•••
5	#racinglegend	4	•••
6	917salzburgedition	4	•••
7	smeg	4	•••
8	@porsche	3	•••
9	#smeg	3	•••
10	passion	3	•••
11	design	3	•••
12	lifestyle	3	•••
13	legend	3	•••
14	#craftedforconnoisseur	2	•••
15	precision	2	•••
16	elegance	2	•••

Figure 20. Word frequencies, Smeg x Porsche, Smeg, English

These items reflect a clear alignment with Porsche's communicative universe, which is centred on performance, heritage, and emotional engagement. The recurrence of racing legend and driven by

passion shows how Smeg adopts the partner's narrative framework when communicating in English, emphasising speed, performance, and the emotional dimension of driving. The presence of *elegance* and *precision*, which are terms that also appear frequently in the Italian subcorpus, suggests that Smeg maintains its aesthetic and stylistic identity even when drawing on Porsche's performance-oriented repertoire.

The posts produced by Porsche present a different lexical profile. The most frequent items include *design*, *collection*, *kitchen*, *class*, *consumption*, *status*, *detail*, *emission*, *driven by passion*, *heritage*, and *mastery*. These items reflect Porsche's established communicative identity, which combines performance, technological excellence, and lifestyle positioning (see Figure 21).

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓
1	porsche	22
2	smeg	12
3	design	12
4	km	6
5	g	6
6	x	6
7	collection	6
8	link	5
9	bio	5
10	kitchen	4
11	piece	3
12	class	3
13	consumption	3

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓
14	_germany	3
15	@smegitalia	3
16	status	3
17	@smeg	3
18	wltp	3
19	l	3
20	co2	3
21	detail	3
22	emission	3
23	kettle	3
24	element	3
25	#drivenbypassion	2
26	appliance	2

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓
27	purpose	2
28	machine	2
29	the	2
30	mastery	2
31	heritage	2
32	green	2
33	door	2
34	#porschexsmeg	2
35	prep	2
36	rs	2
37	product	2
38	series	2
39	shade	2

Figure 21. Word frequencies, Smeg x Porsche, Porsche, English

The prominence of *design* is particularly significant, as it frequently co-occurs with modifiers such as *timeless*, *refined*, *Italian*, *excellence*, *design without compromise*, and *language of design*. These associations reveal how Porsche frames design as a universal language that transcends product categories, allowing the brand to extend its identity from automotive engineering to domestic appliances. The expression *design without compromise* is especially meaningful, as it encapsulates Porsche's core value of uncompromising quality and performance. Its recurrence in the concordance lines, such as "From brushed steel to racing red, the details all said the same thing: design without compromise", suggests that Porsche positions the collaboration with Smeg as an extension of its own design philosophy, emphasising continuity rather than divergence. Moreover, the presence of *heritage*

and *mastery* reinforces this interpretation, as both terms evoke the brand's long-standing tradition of engineering excellence and craftsmanship. At the same time, the use of terms such as *kitchen*, *collection* and *detail* indicates an adaptation of Porsche's discourse to the domestic appliance context, showing how the brand negotiates its identity when dealing with a new product category. This concept can be understood by the following examples: "*Whether you're getting it for the smoothie enthusiast, the weekend baker, or the friend who believes that good design should be a part of every corner of the home, these pieces are sure to spruce up any kitchen countertop*" or "*Some designs speak for themselves. Even if it's just a shape, a line or a detail. You'll recognize it when you see it*".

Furthermore, the inclusion of *consumption* and *emission* reflects Porsche's institutional communication style, which often integrates references to sustainability and commitment to contemporary environmental issues. A representative concordance line, "*...engineered to reduce consumption and emission, reflecting our commitment to contemporary environmental challenges*.", illustrates how these lexical patterns allow Porsche to maintain its core values while adapting its discourse to the collaborative context, creating a hybrid communicative space in which performance, design and daily environmental challenges converge.

Taken together, the quantitative results indicate that the Smeg x Porsche collaboration gives rise to a structured interplay of lexical patterns that reflect the communicative priorities of both brands. Smeg's posts in Italian foreground the aesthetic and cultural dimensions, while the English material aligns more closely with Porsche's performance-oriented discourse. Porsche's posts, in turn, incorporate elements associated with Smeg's design culture, suggesting an initial convergence around themes such as excellence, innovation, and stylistic refinement. These tendencies are consistent with the brand values outlined in Chapter 2 and provide a preliminary indication of how the two identities begin to interact within the co-branding context. As such, the quantitative analysis offers a solid empirical basis for the qualitative interpretation developed in Section 3.3.

3.2.2 SMEG AND DOLCE & GABBANA: BLU MEDITERRANEO

The quantitative analysis of the Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo collaboration follows the same methodological approach adopted for the Smeg x Porsche corpora.

The first subcorpus examined includes the Italian content produced by Smeg. The most frequent lexical items include *#madeinitaly, colore, collezione, mare, cucina, arte, atmosfera, tradizione*, and *raffinatezza* (see Figure 22).

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓		Noun	Frequency ? ↓
1	smeg	16	14	pezzo	3
2	dgcasa	9	15	set	3
3	dgblumediterraneo	8	16	cuore	3
4	madeinitaly	8	17	profumo	3
5	smeglovers	8	18	collaborazione	3
6	gabbana	7	19	esperienza	3
7	colore	7	20	caffè	2
8	collezione	7	21	mondo	2
9	mare	6	22	motivo	2
10	cucina	5	23	casa	2
11	arte	4	24	cielo	2
12	atmosfera	4	25	colazione	2
13	dolcegabbana	3	26	bellezza	2

Figure 22. Word frequencies, Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana, Smeg, Italian

These items reveal a lexical profile strongly oriented toward aesthetic, cultural, and sensorial dimensions. The prominence of *#madeinitaly* is particularly significant, as it relates the collaboration to the symbolic universe of Italian craftsmanship and cultural heritage. The recurrence of *colore, collezione,* and *mare* reflects the visual and thematic identity of the Blu Mediterraneo line, which draws on Sicilian and Mediterranean imagery, chromatic intensity, and artistic references. Terms such as *arte, atmosfera,* and *raffinatezza* reinforce this orientation, suggesting a discourse centred on sensorial immersion, stylistic refinement, and cultural depth. The presence of *tradizione* indicates continuity with the values associated with both brands, which often draw on Italian heritage as a source of authenticity and distinction. Therefore, the frequency list highlights a narrative in which aesthetic experience, cultural symbolism, and territorial identity converge, reflecting the conceptual foundations of the Blu Mediterraneo project.

In addition to these lexical items, the Italian subcorpus also includes recurrent hashtags that contribute to shaping the thematic identity of the collaboration. Among them, *#smeglovers* plays a particularly

significant role, as it functions as a community-building marker that Smeg frequently employs across its digital communication. The hashtag does not merely label the brand's audience; it constructs a sense of belonging and shared appreciation for Smeg's aesthetic and cultural universe. Within the context of the Blu Mediterraneo collaboration, *#smeglovers* reinforces the idea of a collective experience centred on design, colour, and Mediterranean imagery, linking the products to an already established community of enthusiasts. Its presence alongside project-specific hashtags such as *#dgblumediterraneo* contributes to merging the identities of the two brands, creating a unified narrative space where lifestyle, artistic inspiration, and Italian heritage converge.

The concordance analysis conducted on the most frequent lexical items confirms these tendencies. The hashtag *#madeinitaly* frequently appears in contexts that emphasise craftsmanship, artistic heritage, and cultural authenticity, reinforcing the idea that Italian identity functions as a central narrative pillar of the collaboration, as in the following example: "*Dolce&Gabbana e Smeg insieme nel segno del Made in Italy."*

The term *colore* often co-occurs with references to the Mediterranean landscape, artistic motifs, and chromatic harmony, suggesting that colour is conceptualised not merely as a visual attribute but as a cultural and emotional signifier (see exampe 1).

Example 1: *Il colore del mare, il profumo dei dolci appena sfornati e l'atmosfera casalinga che scalda il cuore.*

The term *collezione* is accompanied by expressions that highlight exclusivity, artistic inspiration, and stylistic coherence, indicating that the collection is framed as a curated aesthetic universe rather than a simple product line (see example 2).

Example 2: *Il set cucina è composto dal frigorifero FAB28, icona del design Smeg, e dalla preziosa cucina freestanding con cappa, entrambi riccamente decorati con motivi geometrici e floreali, in perfetto abbinamento con la collezione Blu Mediterraneo dei piccoli elettrodomestici.*

Moreover, the recurrence of *mare* in metaphorical or evocative contexts reinforces the sensorial dimension of the discourse, linking the products to Mediterranean atmospheres and cultural imaginaries, as in the following example: *I colori del mare, il profumo dei dolci appena sfornati e*

l'atmosfera casalinga che scalda il cuore: Dolce&Gabbana e Smeg danno vita alla nuova collezione "Blu Mediterraneo".

Finally, *raffinatezza* and *tradizione* frequently appear together, suggesting that refinement is presented as the natural evolution of tradition, in line with the values associated with both brands. A representative concordance line, "*...una raffinatezza che nasce dalla nostra tradizione, trasformandola in un'esperienza estetica contemporanea.",* illustrates how these items contribute to a narrative in which aesthetic sophistication, cultural heritage, and sensorial immersion are tightly related.

The English subcorpus of posts produced by Smeg for the same collaboration is considerably smaller, consisting of a limited number of tokens. The most frequent items include *sea, appliance, collaboration, design, color, tradition*, and *Italy*. These items reflect a simplified version of the themes observed in the Italian subcorpus. The recurrence of *sea* and *color* confirms the centrality of Mediterranean imagery, while *design* and *tradition* indicate continuity with the brand's aesthetic and cultural positioning. The presence of *Italy* reinforces the territorial identity of the collaboration, although in a more direct and less nuanced manner than in the Italian posts. The limited size of the corpus suggests that English is used primarily for accessibility and international reach rather than for the construction of complex narrative structures. Nevertheless, the lexical tendencies observed here align with the broader thematic framework of the collaboration (see example 3).

Example 3: *#DolceGabbana and @smegitalia renew their collaboration, celebrating the essence and tradition of #MadeinItaly with the new #DGBluMediterraneo collection of small home appliances brought to life through the creative.*

The subcorpus produced by Dolce&Gabbana presents a lexical diversity that is both coherent with the brand's identity and complementary to Smeg's discourse. The most frequent items include design, life, boutique, appliance, essence, home, collaboration, and tradition (see Figure 23).

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓
1	collection	7
2	#smeg	5
3	design	5
4	#dgblumediterraneo	5
5	#dgcasa	5
6	#dolcegabbana	5
7	life	4
8	boutique	4
9	appliance	4
10	dolce	3

	Noun	Frequency ? ↓
11	essence	3
12	@smegitalia	3
13	home	3
14	collaboration	3
15	tradition	3
16	gabbana	3
17	smeg	3
18	vision	3
19	#madeinitaly	3
20	gift	1

Figure 23. Word frequencies, Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana, Dolce&Gabbana, English

These items reflect Dolce&Gabbana's established communicative universe, which combines luxury lifestyle, artistic inspiration, and cultural heritage. The prominence of *design* indicates a focus on aesthetic excellence and stylistic identity, while *life*, *home*, and *boutique* evoke the brand's lifestyle orientation and its emphasis on curated domestic environments. The term *essence* suggests an attempt to distil the conceptual core of the collaboration, linking the products to broader cultural and aesthetic values. The presence of *tradition* reinforces the shared Italian heritage of the two brands, while *collaboration* highlights the strategic and creative partnership underlying the project. The recurrence of hashtags such as *#smeglovers* and *#dgblumediterraneo* further contributes to the construction of a cohesive narrative, linking the collaboration to both brands' digital communities and reinforcing the thematic identity of the project. A representative concordance line, "…*a celebration of tradition shaped through our collaboration, connecting design, culture, and community*.", illustrates how these elements anchor the project within a shared cultural and community-driven framework.

These quantitative results indicate that the Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo collaboration generates a lexical variety centred on aesthetic refinement, cultural heritage, and Mediterranean imagery. Smeg's posts in Italian foreground sensorial and artistic dimensions, while its English material provides a simplified but coherent version of the same themes. Dolce&Gabbana's lexical choice reinforces these tendencies, integrating lifestyle, design, and tradition into a unified narrative.

Overall, the tendencies observed across the two collaborations reveal distinct lexical configurations that reflect the communicative priorities of each brand. However, these patterns become fully meaningful only when considered in relation to the rhetorical strategies that shape the discourse. For

this reason, the following section moves beyond frequencies and examines how language constructs and negotiates brand values within the partnerships.

3.3 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF BRAND-GENERATED POSTS

Building on the lexical tendencies identified in the previous section, the qualitative analysis examines how Smeg, Porsche, and Dolce&Gabbana articulate their identities. While the quantitative data highlight recurrent lexical patterns, it is through qualitative interpretation that the underlying values, symbolic structures, and rhetorical strategies become visible. The analysis focuses on how identities interact within the co-branding context and how the resulting discourse reflects broader cultural and strategic orientations.

3.3.1 SMEG X PORSCHE: SMEG'S DISCOURSE

In the Smeg x Porsche collaboration, Smeg constructs a discourse that positions the collection as the common point between Italian design and Porsche's engineering culture. This emerges clearly from the Italian posts, where the brand consistently employs a lexicon associated with refinement, harmony, and artisanal excellence. Rather than simply describing the appliances, Smeg frames them as aesthetic artefacts shaped by cultural heritage. In the opening formula of the post "*Velocità. Stile. Leggenda.*", the brand condenses its narrative into three nominal units that function as value markers rather than simple descriptors. Speed evokes Porsche's racing heritage, style activates Smeg's design identity, and legend projects both brands into a symbolic, almost mythic dimension. The second paragraph, "*Sta per iniziare un nuovo capitolo plasmato con rigore e guidato dalla passione. La pole position è per chi osa. Preparati allo scatto*", extends this frame by importing the semantic field of motorsport (*pole position, scatto*) into the domain of domestic appliances. The collaboration is thus framed as a "*new chapter*" shaped by *rigore* and *passione*, two terms that already fuse engineering discipline and emotional intensity (see Figure 24).

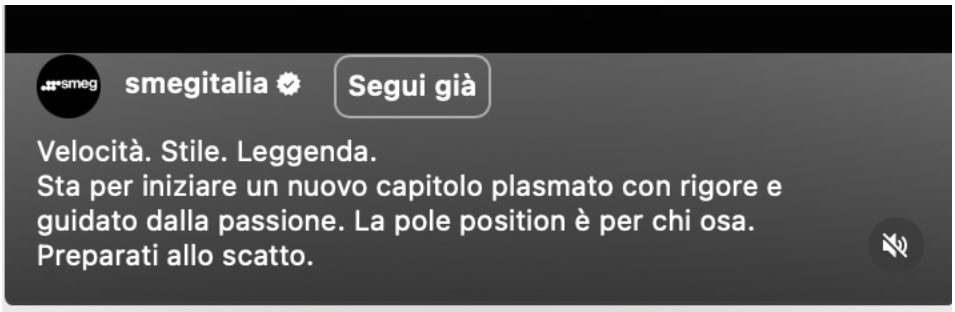


Figure 24. @SmegItalia reel. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/reels/DO7qjQvijY8/)

A central feature of Smeg's discourse is the personification of form and the transformation of design into a speaking subject. In the second post published for this collaboration, Smeg writes "*Alcune forme parlano da sole: immediate, riconoscibili, memorabili. Un solo tratto e rivelano forza e personalità. La precisione è la nostra firma*"[31], the appliance is presented as a subject capable of "*speaking*", "*revealing*" and "*expressing*" personality. This transforms the product into a cultural artefact equipped with identity and intentionality. The closing statement, "*la precisione è la nostra firma*", is particularly significant: it anchors the aesthetic discourse to a value, which is precision, that belongs to Porsche's engineering tradition. Here, Smeg appropriates a technical attribute and reframes it within its own stylistic vocabulary, turning precision into a mark of authorship rather than a purely mechanical property.

Moreover, the bilingual manifesto "*Two brands, one ambition. Driven by mastery and united by purpose, crafting legends, delivering experiences that awaken all senses*" and its Italian counterpart "*Due brand, una sola ambizione. Guidati dalla maestria, uniti da una visione: creare esperienze leggendarie che risvegliano ogni senso*"[32] further clarify how Smeg positions the collaboration. The repeated structure "*Two brands, one ambition / Due brand, una sola ambizione*" foregrounds unity of purpose, while *maestria*, *legends*, *esperienze leggendarie*, and *risvegliano ogni senso* shift the focus from product features to experiential and sensorial dimensions. The expression "*Driven by Passion. Refined by design*" encapsulates the hybrid identity: the first clause echoes Porsche's performance-driven narrative (*driven*), the second reasserts Smeg's core competence in design. The parallelism between the English and Italian versions reinforces the idea of a shared value system.

Furthermore, several captions explicitly stage the fusion between racing heritage and Italian design. In "*Precisione in ogni linea. Passione in ogni curva. Ispirata alla leggendaria vittoria della Porsche*

[31] https://www.instagram.com/reels/DPx1S-niGl-/
[32] https://www.instagram.com/reel/DP0bl50Ddwm/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==

917 a Le Mans nel 1970, la collezione Porsche x SMEG fonde l'anima racing con l'eccellenza del design italiano" (see Figure 25), the syntactic parallelism (*in ogni linea / in ogni curva*) maps visual and formal elements of the appliances onto the geometry of the racetrack. *Linea* and *curva* operate simultaneously as design and racing terms, creating a metaphorical overlap between car and object. The expression "*anima racing*" attributes a soul to the racing heritage, while "*eccellenza del design italiano*" reaffirms Smeg's cultural positioning. The final sentence, "*L'anima di una leggenda in ogni tuo giorno*", brings the mythic dimension (*leggenda*) into everyday life, suggesting that the user can "live" the legend through daily routines.

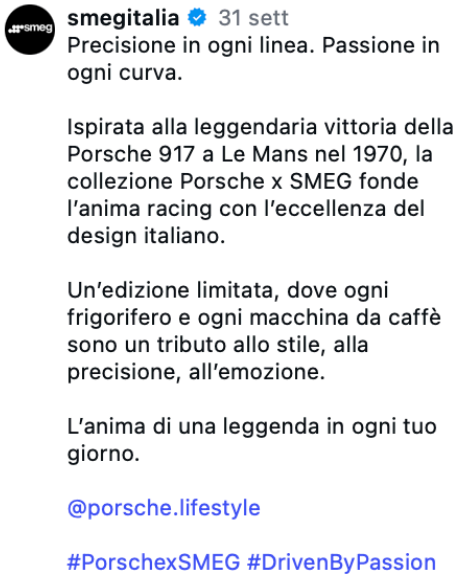


Figure 25. @SmegItalia image carousel. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DP2_lEICE4c/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D)

Colour also serves as a carrier of values. Carrara White is described as "*pura eleganza*" (see Figure 26), explicitly linking the nuance to Italian marble and thus to a tradition of art and architecture. Shade Green, by contrast, is "*il colore del carattere*" and "*incarna lo spirito dinamico della pista: vibrante, sicuro di sé, inconfondibile*" (see Figure 27). Here, colour becomes a metaphor for personality and dynamism, and the appliances are positioned as extensions of the user's character. The triad "*dinamismo, innovazione e eccellenza*" consolidates the alignment with Porsche's values while remaining embedded in Smeg's design-oriented lexicon.



Figure 26. Carrara White collection. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DQGcW6YCEKC/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D)



Figure 27. Shade Green collection. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DQLl_ZFDf7S/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D)

This aesthetic orientation is reinforced in other examples. In the post dedicated to Carrara White, Smeg writes that "*Quando due icone si incontrano, l'eleganza trova la sua forma più pura*"[33] ; the discourse shifts from the technical to the symbolic. The metaphor of "*trovare la forma più pura*" elevates elegance to an almost abstract ideal, suggesting that the product embodies a distilled essence of style. The meeting between Smeg and Porsche is presented not as a commercial partnership, but as the convergence of two symbolic universes.

Across these examples, Smeg's discourse consistently combines three dimensions: the mythic and emotional dimension of *leggenda* and *passione*; the aesthetic and cultural dimension of *eleganza, raffinatezza, design italiano,* and references to Carrara marble; and the technical dimension of

[33] https://www.instagram.com/p/DRKSg1njRqk/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

precisione, ingegneria, innovazione, and *prestazioni*. The brand does not simply juxtapose these elements; it fuses them through metaphors, parallelisms, and personifications that make performance feel aesthetic and design feel engineered. In doing so, Smeg linguistically constructs the collaboration as a space where Italian design and German engineering do not compete, but co-produce a shared narrative of iconic, high-performance elegance.

3.3.2 SMEG X PORSCHE: PORSCHE'S DISCOURSE

The English-language posts produced by Porsche construct a discourse that is markedly different from Smeg's one, which is characterised by an assertive, heritage-driven, and performance-oriented tone. From the opening formula of the post, "*Two legacies, one vision*", Porsche positions the collaboration within a narrative of continuity and authority: the term *legacies* evokes historical depth and institutional prestige, while *vision* projects the partnership into a future shaped by innovation. This dual temporal anchoring is reinforced by explicit references to motorsport history, such as "*the legendary Porsche 917 KH in its iconic Salzburg livery – the car that secured Porsche's first overall victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1970*" (see Figure 28). Here, the appliance is not merely inspired by a car; it inherits its symbolic capital. The racing heritage becomes a semiotic resource that elevates the domestic object, transforming it into a carrier of performance, triumph, and engineering mastery.



Figure 28. @Porsche_newsroom's post. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DPzaWI9jCH1/?igsh=MTd3cHBjb2hrZmo3Yg%3D%3D)

Porsche's discourse also relies heavily on technical specificity, a rhetorical strategy that reinforces the brand's engineering features. Descriptions such as "*a 270-litre refrigerator with a 26-litre*

freezer… special door and handle design that mirrors the Porsche 911 GT3 RS" or "*Carrara White Metallic and Shade Green Metallic colours, with a Porsche stripe running across the door*"[34] foreground precision, materiality, and design engineering. Even the inclusion of WLTP fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions data, irrelevant to the appliances, signals Porsche's institutional communication style, shaped by regulatory transparency and technical accountability. This level of detail contrasts sharply with Smeg's more sensorial and metaphorical language, highlighting Porsche's commitment to accuracy, performance, and functional excellence.

The tone of Porsche's captions is consistently declarative and authoritative, relying on nominalisations that function as identity claims rather than descriptions. Expressions such as "*design without compromise*", "*performance redefined*", and "*crafted for those who value tradition and live with purpose*" assert values rather than argue for them. The brand positions itself as the arbiter of quality and mastery, and the collaboration as a natural extension of its design philosophy. Even lifestyle-oriented captions maintain this authoritative stance: "*the sophistication of modern living*", "*crafted with care and styled with intention*" and "*the art of timeless design*" situate the appliances within a premium cultural imaginary, where design is not decorative but constitutive of identity (see Figure 29).

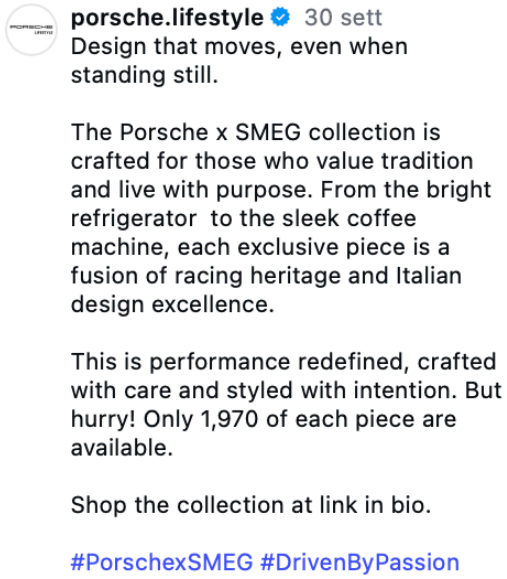


Figure 29. @Porsche.Lifestyle's post. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DQCQq-fE8Kg/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D)

[34] https://www.instagram.com/p/DP42s6viuph/?igsh=cTExNnhlbm5zZHhs

Porsche also employs event-based storytelling to reinforce exclusivity and community. The London launch[35] is described as "*an unforgettable evening celebrating form, function, and the art of timeless design… surrounded by craftsmanship, conversation, and the unmistakable hum of Porsche engines outside*". The juxtaposition of the store interior (*design, craftsmanship*) and the engines outside (*performance, heritage*) creates a multimodal narrative that merges the two worlds. The event becomes a ritual of belonging, accessible only to those who share the brand's values.

Finally, Porsche uses scarcity rhetoric to enhance desirability. Phrases such as "*only 1,970 of each piece are available*" (see Figure 29) frame the products as collectible artefacts. Scarcity is presented not as a marketing tactic but as a natural consequence of excellence and craftsmanship, reinforcing the idea that the collaboration produces objects worthy of preservation.

Therefore, thanks to these examples, Porsche's discourse appears to be consistently based on performance, precision, engineering mastery, heritage, and exclusivity. The brand linguistically constructs the collaboration as an extension of its automotive identity into the domestic sphere, maintaining its authoritative tone while selectively incorporating elements of Italian design. The result is a narrative in which the appliances become symbols of technical excellence and cultural prestige, fully aligned with Porsche's long-standing brand values. Consequently, Smeg and Porsche's perspectives reveal how both brands construct a hybrid and asymmetrical discursive space. Smeg adopts a sensorial and design-driven voice, translating Porsche's values of performance, precision, and engineering mastery into the language of Italian aesthetics, emotional resonance, and iconic form. Porsche, by contrast, maintains an authoritative and technically grounded tone, foregrounding heritage, racing history, material specificity, and uncompromising quality. While both brands converge on shared notions of excellence, craftsmanship, and iconicity, they articulate these values through different rhetorical strategies. Smeg uses metaphor, personification, and cultural symbolism while Porsche uses declarative statements, technical detail, and legacy-based storytelling. The outcome is a co-branding discourse in which the two identities remain distinct but complementary, each reinforcing the other's strengths.

This dynamic becomes even more evident when examining Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo, where the discursive configuration shifts significantly. Unlike the Porsche partnership, which is centred on performance, engineering, and racing heritage, the collaboration with Dolce&Gabbana embodies "*Italianness*", artistic tradition, Mediterranean culture, and sensorial

[35] https://www.instagram.com/p/DQE1b3LD5rS/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

immersion. The following subsection explores how Smeg reorients its linguistic strategies in this context, and how Dolce&Gabbana constructs its own narrative through references to craftsmanship, cultural memory, and Sicilian identity.

3.3.3 SMEG X DOLCE&GABBANA BLU MEDITERRANEO: SMEG'S DISCOURSE

In the Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo collaboration, Smeg constructs a discourse that is strongly different from the one employed with Porsche. Here, the brand abandons the lexicon of performance, precision, and engineering, and instead embraces a sensorial, evocative, and culturally saturated language that foregrounds "Italianness", Mediterranean identity, and artisanal tradition. The captions repeatedly open with immersive sensory imagery: "*I colori del mare, il profumo dei dolci appena sfornati e l'atmosfera casalinga che scalda il cuore*" (see Figure 30), which immediately situates the products within a domestic, emotional, and almost nostalgic universe. This strategy transforms the appliances into conduits of atmosphere rather than objects: the kitchen becomes a place of warmth, memory, and sensory pleasure.



Figure 30. @SmegItalia's post. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/reels/Ctgh_NWKpqr/)

A central feature of Smeg's discourse is the construction of Mediterranean culture as an aesthetic and emotional landscape. References to "*pittoreschi borghi costieri*", "*delicata brezza marina*", "*colazione del bar, a casa propria*" and "*un pezzo di paradiso a casa tua*"[36] evoke a world of leisurely rituals, sun-drenched coastlines, and everyday beauty. The Mediterranean is not described; it is felt. This sensorial immersion is reinforced by the chromatic vocabulary, expressed by "*toni vivaci di blu*",

[36] https://www.instagram.com/p/CtynP43K72p/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

which positions colour as a cultural signifier rather than a decorative element. The blue-and-white palette becomes a symbolic shorthand for the sea, the sky, and the artistic heritage of southern Italy.

Smeg also foregrounds tradition and craftsmanship, aligning itself with Dolce&Gabbana's long-standing celebration of Sicilian culture. Captions such as "*un tributo ai valori del #FattoAMano e dell'artigianalità d'eccellenza*" and "*pezzi unici che raccontano una storia di bellezza e tradizione*" elevate the appliances to the status of artisanal artefacts. The reference to "*prototipi dipinti a mano da talentuosi artisti-artigiani*" (see Figure 31) reinforces the idea that each object is the result of a creative process rooted in heritage and manual skill. This rhetoric positions Smeg not as an industrial manufacturer but as a custodian of cultural memory, capable of translating traditional motifs into contemporary design.



Figure 31. @SmegItalia's post. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/C-BEfABBW-Y/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D)

The metaphorical language used by Smeg further amplifies this cultural narrative. Expressions such as "*lasciati ispirare dal fascino del mare*" and "*trasforma i piccoli gesti della tua vita quotidiana in un'esperienza straordinaria*"[37] frame the appliances as gateways to an elevated lifestyle. The domestic sphere becomes a site of aesthetic experience, where everyday actions (making coffee, preparing breakfast) are reimagined as rituals of beauty and refinement. This aligns with Dolce&Gabbana's broader brand universe, where fashion, art, and lifestyle merge into a single expressive continuum.

[37] https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct88nOjqdT0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

Smeg also employs cultural symbolism through references to maiolica tiles, geometric patterns and floral motifs, "*un omaggio alla ricca tradizione mediterranea*"[38]. These elements are not merely decorative; they "tell the story" of southern Italian art and architecture. The appliances thus become narrative objects, carriers of cultural identity that visually encode the heritage of the Mediterranean. Finally, Smeg reinforces community and belonging through hashtags such as *#smeglovers, #DGCasa* and *#madeinitaly*. These markers situate the collaboration within a shared cultural and affective space, inviting users to participate in a collective appreciation of Italian design and Mediterranean beauty.

Overall, Smeg's discourse in the Blu Mediterraneo collaboration foregrounds "*Italianness*", tradition, craftsmanship, sensorial immersion, and Mediterranean cultural symbolism. The brand constructs a narrative in which the appliances are not functional tools but aesthetic artefacts that embody a world of colour, memory, and emotional warmth. This discursive configuration stands in sharp contrast to the performance-driven rhetoric of the Porsche collaboration, demonstrating Smeg's ability to recalibrate its linguistic strategies according to the identity of its co-branding partner.

3.3.4 SMEG X DOLCE&GABBANA BLU MEDITERRANEO: DOLCE&GABBANA'S DISCOURSE

While Smeg points out sensorial immersion, domestic warmth and Mediterranean atmospheres, Dolce&Gabbana constructs a narrative centred on Italian identity, artisanal excellence and cultural prestige. The captions repeatedly emphasise the values of Made in Italy, essence, tradition, and craftsmanship, as seen in formulations such as "*celebrating the essence and tradition of #MadeinItaly*"[39]. This expression does not describe the products; it positions them within a broader ideological framework in which Italian heritage becomes a mark of authenticity and cultural authority.

[38] https://www.instagram.com/reels/Ct1rxsTKAEP/

[39] https://www.instagram.com/p/CtrD8LLo10q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D



Figure 32. @DolceeGabbana_casa's post. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CtrD8LLo10q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D)

Dolce&Gabbana's rhetoric is also characterised by elevated, ceremonial language, which frames the collaboration as an event of cultural significance rather than a commercial launch. Captions such as "*Dolce&Gabbana and Smeg renew their collaboration, celebrating the essence and tradition of #MadeinItaly*"[40] adopt a declarative tone that asserts identity rather than narrates experience.

Another distinctive feature is the centrality of craftsmanship as a brand ideology. Dolce&Gabbana foregrounds the creative process and positions itself as the artistic mind behind the collection. The emphasis on vision, craftsmanship, spirit, and essence constructs a discourse in which the brand appears as a cultural curator, capable of transforming everyday objects into expressions of artistic identity. Even promotional captions, such as "*Gift Italian design with the #DGBluMediterraneo collection*"[41], maintain this elevated tone, presenting the appliances as embodiments of Italian cultural capital rather than consumer goods. Therefore, unlike Smeg's sensorial and domestic storytelling, Dolce&Gabbana speaks from the position of a fashion house with a strong cultural identity, framing the collaboration as an extension of its artistic universe. This creates a complementary but distinct narrative: Smeg brings atmosphere and everyday beauty, Dolce&Gabbana brings heritage, craftsmanship, and cultural prestige.

To conclude, the qualitative analysis reveals how Smeg adapts its discursive identity to each co-branding partner while preserving its core association with Italian design culture. With Porsche, the brand aligns itself with a rhetoric of performance, precision, and engineering mastery. On the

[40] https://www.instagram.com/p/CtwNkqiILW0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D
[41] https://www.instagram.com/p/C0UCAJdIqwZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

other hand, with Dolce&Gabbana, it shifts toward a language of "*Italianness*", craftsmanship, and Mediterranean sensoriality. These collaborations demonstrate the flexibility of Smeg's communicative strategies and the central role of language in negotiating shared brand values. These insights provide the foundation for the following section, which examines user-generated content.

3.4 USER-GENERATED CONTENT: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The dataset includes a substantial number of comments generated across the two collaborations, revealing clear tendencies in the forms of user engagement. The most frequent format is the emoji-only comment, which appears overwhelmingly across both collaborations. Emoji sequences such as 🔥🔥🔥, 😍😍😍, ❤️❤️❤️, or 😎 dominate the interaction space and function as expressions of enthusiasm, admiration, or emotional resonance. Their prevalence indicates a low-effort but high-intensity form of engagement typical of Instagram interactions. A second category consists of text-only comments, which represent a smaller but significant portion of the dataset. These comments vary in length and complexity, ranging from brief evaluative statements (e.g., "*Perfect!!!*", "*The best!*", "*Wonderful*") to more articulated reactions, questions, or critiques, such as "*Beautiful design, but the price is too high for me*" or "*Is it available in the UK?*"

Comments in both Italian and English were considered in the analysis. Italian comments tend to appear more frequently under posts published by @SmegItalia, while English comments dominate the @Porsche.Lifestyle and @Dolce&GabbanaCasa accounts. The presence of both languages reflects the international visibility of the collaborations and the global reach of the brands involved.

Generally, most textual comments express strongly positive evaluations, often using emphatic or hyperbolic language. Users praise the aesthetic qualities of the products:

- *"Beautiful piece of art"*
- *"Amazing performance"*
- *"Iconic Italian design"*
- *"How stunning* 😍*"*
- *"This is the best collaboration"*

In the Smeg x Porsche collaboration, admiration often focuses on design, performance, and exclusivity:

- *"The coolest colab"*
- *"Obsessed with all the Porsche lifestyle collabs"*
- *"Now THAT'S a damn toaster!"*
- *"The coffee machine hits hardddd"*

In the Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana collaboration, praise centres on beauty, craftsmanship, and Mediterranean aesthetics:

- *"True piece of art!"*
- *"Che meraviglia 💙"*
- *"So beautiful, I want everything here"*
- *"Amazing — like Iranian tiling!"*

The emotional tone is often amplified through emojis, which reinforce enthusiasm (😍🔥💙).

Moreover, a recurring theme is purchase interest, expressed through direct questions:

- *"Ma dove si compra il frigorifero?"*
- *"How much for the coffee machine?"*
- *"Is this available in the UAE?"*
- *"When can I buy this in South Korea?"*

These comments indicate high consumer engagement and curiosity, especially toward limited-edition items.

Although less frequent, negative comments are present and fall into three main categories: product quality concerns, criticism of the collaboration itself, and cultural appropriation claims (especially for the D&G collaboration). Some users express dissatisfaction with past Smeg products: "*Non vale quello che costa*", "*My kitchen hood has been leaking… very disappointed*", "*Ho comprato frigo e lavastoviglie Smeg: fine pessima!!!*".

Other users seem to question the logic or authenticity of the co-branding: "*This feels like a money grab*", "*Why exactly do these need to exist?*", "*That's one strange collab*" and "*You just put the sticker on a ready product*". These reactions highlight scepticism toward brand partnerships perceived as commercially driven. Furthermore, some comments criticize the origins of the Blu Mediterraneo motifs: "*This design exists in Uzbekistan for 100 years*", "*Iranian design*" and "*How is this not Russian Gzhel?*". These comments suggest that some users interpret the Mediterranean aesthetic through broader cultural lenses, sometimes contesting its originality.

A comparative analysis of comments in Italian and English highlights clear differences in engagement patterns. Italian users tend to be more emotionally expressive ("*Che meraviglia!*", "*Troppo bello*", "*Voglio tutto*") and to make more references to Made in Italy, tradition, and brand loyalty. On the contrary, English-speaking users tend to be more focused on design, performance, and lifestyle appeal, and to make more humorous or ironic comments ("*Marriage is scary. What if she doesn't want Porsche in your kitchen?*"). These differences surely reflect cultural variations in consumer expectations and in the way users relate to brand identity.

Overall, the comment analysis shows that emoji-only comments dominate, signalling high emotional engagement, while textual comments appear less. Despite their scarcity, they are mostly positive, with strong appreciation for design, aesthetics and brand prestige, while negative comments exist but remain marginal, focusing on product quality or scepticism toward co-branding. These reactions offer valuable insight into how meaning circulates beyond the brand's official communication.

3.5 VISUAL ANALYSIS

While user comments reveal how audiences interpret, endorse or contest the narratives constructed by the brands, the visual dimension plays an equally crucial role in shaping these interpretations. The meanings users negotiate in their reactions are not produced by language alone: they emerge from the interplay between textual discourse and images. For this reason, this section discusses the visual strategies adopted in the two collaborations, examining how images communicate values, reinforce brand identities, and contribute to the distinct narrative configurations.

The visual content that was collected, including announcement videos, product presentations, and image carousels, functions as a semiotic extension of the textual discourse. The images do not simply illustrate the products, but they translate brand values into visual form, guiding user interpretation

and anchoring the collaborations within distinct symbolic universes. In the Smeg x Porsche collaboration, the imagery consistently features an aesthetic aligned with precision, performance, and engineered purity. The controlled lighting, metallic reflections, cool chromatic palettes, and disciplined compositions found across the reels and carousels visually echo the linguistic emphasis on legacy, mastery, and technical excellence. These images construct a world in which the appliances appear as natural extensions of Porsche's automotive identity: objects defined by form, material, and aerodynamic logic. This visual minimalism mirrors the textual rhetoric of authority and performance, and helps explain why user comments frequently reference design, exclusivity, and engineering (see Figure 33).



Figure 33. Smeg x Porsche collaboration. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DQLl_ZFDf7S/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==)

By contrast, the Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo collaboration adopts a visual strategy rooted in ornament, cultural memory and Mediterranean sensoriality. The image carousels and videos published by @SmegItalia and @Dolce&GabbanaCasa are saturated with maiolica patterns, baroque motifs, warm tones, and symbolic references to Sicily and artisanal craftsmanship. This aesthetic abundance directly reflects the linguistic focus on Fatto a Mano, Made in Italy and Mediterranean beauty. It also resonates with user comments that praise the products as art, heritage, or craftsmanship, while simultaneously triggering debates about cultural origins: a dynamic that emerges precisely because the imagery foregrounds tradition and decorative identity (see Figure 34).



Figure 34. Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo collaboration. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CtjIKNDKpjx/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==)

Across both collaborations, Smeg demonstrates a high degree of visual adaptability, aligning its aesthetic choices with the symbolic universe of each partner while maintaining its own design recognisability. With Porsche, Smeg adopts a restrained, performance-oriented visual language. On the other hand, with Dolce&Gabbana, it embraces expressive, culturally saturated imagery. This flexibility mirrors the linguistic shifts identified in the previous sections and helps explain the divergent patterns of user engagement observed in Section 3.4, that is, the contrast between the more emotionally expressive reactions found in Italian comments and the more concise, informational tone typical of English-language interactions. In this sense, the visual analysis confirms and deepens the findings of the previous sections: co-branding operates through a multilayered negotiation of meaning, where language, imagery and audience reactions converge to construct hybrid brand identities.

3.6 RESULTS DISCUSSION

The analysis conducted across the previous sections allows us to address the research questions by integrating linguistic, visual and interactional evidence. The first research question concerned how Smeg's communication strategy changes when collaborating with Porsche compared to Dolce&Gabbana. The findings show that Smeg does not maintain a fixed communicative identity. Instead, it recalibrates its tone, aesthetic codes, and narrative focus according to the symbolic universe

of the partner. With Porsche, Smeg adopts a discourse centred on performance, precision and engineering mastery, aligning itself with the values traditionally associated with automotive excellence. With Dolce&Gabbana, the strategy shifts toward sensoriality, cultural heritage and Mediterranean identity, foregrounding craftsmanship, colour and artistic tradition. These shifts demonstrate that co-branding functions as a catalyst for strategic adaptation rather than a simple extension of Smeg's usual communication.

The second research question focused on the lexical choices and rhetorical strategies that emerge in each collaboration. The Porsche partnership is characterised by a lexicon of mastery, legacy, speed and technical refinement, supported by metaphors of performance and by a minimalist, authoritative tone. The Dolce&Gabbana collaboration, by contrast, relies on evocative language, sensorial imagery and references to tradition, beauty and artisanal excellence. The rhetoric becomes more emotional and culturally saturated. These linguistic patterns are not incidental: they mirror the core identities of the partners and help construct two distinct narrative worlds.

The third research question asked to what extent the partner influences Smeg's tone of voice and overall positioning. The evidence indicates that the partner's influence is substantial. Smeg's communicative identity becomes hybrid, absorbing and reinterpreting the symbolic capital of the partner while maintaining its own recognisable design ethos. With Porsche, Smeg positions itself closer to the domain of high-performance engineering; with Dolce&Gabbana, it aligns with luxury fashion, cultural storytelling and Mediterranean aesthetics. In both cases, Smeg's tone is reshaped by the collaboration, demonstrating a high degree of strategic flexibility and a willingness to let the partner's identity guide the communicative frame.

The final question concerned how these variations contribute to reshaping stakeholders' perceptions. The comment analysis shows that audiences respond directly to the discursive and visual cues provided by the brands. In the Porsche collaboration, users emphasise design, exclusivity, and performance, echoing the values foregrounded in the official communication. In the Dolce&Gabbana collaboration, reactions focus on beauty, craftsmanship, and cultural references, often engaging with the Mediterranean aesthetic or debating its origins. These responses indicate that stakeholders interpret the collaborations through the narrative lenses constructed by the brands, and that Smeg's adaptive strategies effectively guide audience perception. At the same time, negative comments reveal that co-branding also exposes brands to new forms of scrutiny, making the negotiation of identity more complex.

Generally, the findings show that co-branding is not merely a marketing operation but a process of discursive and visual negotiation, in which Smeg and its partners co-construct hybrid identities that shape how audiences perceive value, authenticity, and brand coherence. The variations observed across language, images, and user engagement demonstrate that Smeg's positioning is dynamic and relational, emerging from the interplay between its own identity and the symbolic worlds of Porsche and Dolce&Gabbana. This integrated perspective provides the foundation for the broader discussion developed in the next chapter, where the implications of these findings for brand strategy and stakeholder interpretation are examined in depth.

This perspective provides the foundation for the following chapter, which moves beyond the descriptive and analytical levels to examine the broader implications of the study. Chapter 4 discusses the strengths and limitations of this study, reflecting on what the multimodal approach has made visible and where its boundaries lie. It also considers how the insights generated here can be applied to future investigations of co-branding, digital communication, and brand identity construction. By situating the results within a wider theoretical and methodological framework, the chapter outlines how this study contributes to current debates in corporate communication and suggests possible directions for further research.

CHAPTER 4

FINAL REMARKS, STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND FUTURE APPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter brings together the analytical path developed throughout this study and offers a final and integrated reflection on its objectives, methods and findings. The analysis set out to investigate how digital communication strategies operate within co-branding collaborations, focusing specifically on the partnerships between Smeg and Porsche and Smeg and Dolce&Gabbana. Through this comparative lens, the thesis aimed to understand how linguistic, visual and interactional resources contribute to shaping brand identity, tone of voice and stakeholders' perceptions in contemporary digital environments. Indeed, the research was guided by four central questions: how Smeg's communication strategy changes across collaborations, which lexical and rhetorical choices emerge in each case, to what extent the partner influences Smeg's tone of voice and positioning, and how these variations contribute to reshaping stakeholders' perceptions. These questions framed the entire analytical process and provided the conceptual structure for interpreting the multimodal evidence collected.

To address them, the research adopted a mixed-method approach that combined corpus linguistics and multimodal analysis. The dataset included captions, emoji sequences, user comments, and visual materials drawn from Instagram posts published by the brands. This multimodal corpus allowed for a layered and detailed examination of how meaning is constructed through different semiotic tools and how audiences respond to these communicative choices. The two case studies were analysed both individually and comparatively, enabling the identification of recurring patterns as well as collaboration-specific strategies. For this reason, this final overview serves as a bridge between the analytical chapters and the interpretative discussion that follows. As a matter of fact, the next section summarizes the main findings, connecting them to the theoretical framework outlined in the first chapter and highlighting the broader implications of the study for understanding co-branding, digital communication, and brand identity construction.

4.1 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The analysis conducted in chapter three shows that digital co-branding is a process of identity construction in which linguistic, visual, and interactional resources converge to produce hybrid brand

meanings. The comparison between the Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana collaborations demonstrates that Smeg's communication strategy is not static but relational: it shifts according to the symbolic universe of the partner, while preserving a recognisable core grounded in design, aesthetics and product iconicity. This dynamic confirms the theoretical premise outlined in the first chapter, namely that co-branding operates as a negotiation of identity rather than a simple combination of brand attributes. Meaning emerges from the interplay between corporate discourse, multimodal representation, and audience interpretation.

In the collaboration with Porsche, Smeg adopts a communicative approach aligned with performance, precision and engineered mastery. The captions rely on a lexicon of control, legacy and technical refinement, supported by metaphors related to speed and excellence. The visual material reinforces this orientation through minimalism, cool chromatic palettes and material purity, creating an aesthetic environment that reflects Porsche's established identity. The convergence between verbal and visual modes produces a coherent narrative in which the appliances appear as extensions of automotive design. User reactions confirm this reading: comments emphasize design, exclusivity, and performance, showing that stakeholders interpret the collaboration through the values foregrounded by the brands. This alignment illustrates how multimodal communication guides perception and strengthens brand positioning.

On the other hand, the Dolce&Gabbana collaboration presents a radically different configuration. Smeg adopts a sensorial, culturally saturated tone of voice that reflects Mediterranean identity, craftsmanship, and artistic heritage. The captions rely on evocative language, references to tradition, and expressions of aesthetic admiration. The visual material amplifies these themes through ornamental abundance, warm chromatic palettes and majolica-inspired motifs, which situate the products within a symbolic landscape of cultural origins. The comments to the posts show that stakeholders perceive the collaboration as a form of cultural storytelling, which shapes their interpretation.

Across both collaborations, multimodality plays a central role. Meaning is not produced by captions alone, nor by single isolated images, but by the interaction between elements. Emoji sequences, for instance, function as affective amplifiers: they condense enthusiasm, admiration or critique into compact visual signs that complement the verbal content. Their prevalence in user comments indicates that audiences rely on multimodal resources to express emotional engagement, and that these resources contribute to shaping the overall communicative atmosphere. The combination of

text, emoji, and imagery therefore creates a layered semiotic environment in which brand identity is continuously negotiated. Indeed, this comparative perspective reveals both convergence and divergence. Convergence emerges in Smeg's ability to maintain a coherent design ethos across collaborations, preserving its iconic features and its emphasis on aesthetic value. Instead, divergence appears in the way Smeg adapts its communicative identity to the partner: with Porsche, it aligns with performance-driven minimalism, while with Dolce&Gabbana, it embraces expressive cultural richness. These variations demonstrate that the partner has a significant influence on Smeg's tone of voice and positioning, confirming the relational nature of co-branding. They also show that stakeholders perceive these shifts and respond accordingly, shaping the public meaning of the collaborations through their comments and interactions.

Overall, the findings indicate that co-branding in digital environments consists of a multimodal negotiation of identity, in which brands construct shared values through coordinated linguistic and visual strategies, and audiences participate actively in this construction. The results show that meaning does not reside in any single semiotic element but emerges from the interplay between verbal discourse, visual representation and affective hints such as emoji. This confirms the theoretical assumptions outlined in Chapter 1: contemporary brand communication is inherently multimodal, relational and participatory. The Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana collaborations exemplify how co-branding creates hybrid identity spaces where each partner's symbolic capital is preserved yet reinterpreted, and where Smeg's own positioning becomes fluid, adapting to the cultural, aesthetic and rhetorical frameworks of the partner. At the same time, user engagement demonstrates that audiences are not passive recipients but co-interpreters of brand meaning, reinforcing, contesting or expanding the narratives proposed by the brands. The integration of corpus-based linguistic analysis and multimodal interpretation proves essential for capturing this complexity, revealing how digital communication operates simultaneously at the level of language, imagery and interaction. This interpretative perspective provides the foundation for the following sub-sections, which examine the strengths and limitations of the study and outline possible directions for future research.

4.1.1 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

One of the main strengths of this study lies in its interdisciplinary orientation. In fact, by combining corpus linguistics with multimodal analysis, the research moves beyond the traditional boundaries of branding and marketing studies and adopts a perspective capable of capturing the complexity of

contemporary digital communication. This integration allows for a detailed understanding of how meaning is constructed across different semiotic modes and how linguistic choices interact with visual strategies and audience responses. The multimodal approach is particularly suited to the analysis of social-media environments, where text, imagery and affective hints coexist and shape brand identity.

A further strength is the combined analysis of captions, emoji sequences, images and user comments. Rather than isolating one dimension of communication, the study examines how these elements work together to produce coherent or contrasting narratives. This perspective makes it possible to identify patterns that would remain invisible in a single-mode analysis, such as the convergence between verbal minimalism and visual purity in the Porsche collaboration, or the alignment between sensorial language and ornamental imagery in the Dolce&Gabbana partnership. The inclusion of emoji as analytical objects also represents an innovative aspect, acknowledging their strategic role in shaping tone, emotional resonance and audience engagement.

Moreover, the comparative design of the study represents another strength in support of the relevance of the analysis. Indeed, by analysing two collaborations that differ in aesthetic orientation, cultural symbolism and brand positioning, the research demonstrates how Smeg adapts its communicative identity to the partner while maintaining a recognisable identity. This comparative lens allows for the identification of both shared strategies and collaboration-specific variations, offering insights into the relational nature of co-branding and the dynamics of identity negotiation. It also enhances the explanatory power of the findings, showing that communicative choices are not arbitrary but systematically aligned with the partner's symbolic universe.

Furthermore, the use of authentic social-media data represents an additional advantage. Drawing on real captions, comments, and visual materials published on Instagram ensures validity and situates the analysis within the actual communicative practices of contemporary branding. This choice makes the study relevant not only from an academic perspective but also for practitioners interested in understanding how brands construct meaning and how audiences respond to these strategies. The dataset, although circumscribed, is complete and representative of the communicative output of both collaborations, allowing for a reliable interpretation of patterns and tendencies.

Finally, the methodological framework adopted in this thesis is replicable and adaptable. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, the integration of multimodal resources, and the comparative structure can be applied to other co-branding cases, other sectors, and other platforms.

This flexibility enhances the value of the study, positioning it as a contribution to the broader field of digital communication research and offering a model that can be extended to future investigations. The focus on co-branding also aligns with current trends in marketing, where collaborations between brands are increasingly used to generate visibility, cultural relevance and differentiated positioning.

4.1.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the study offers a comprehensive and multimodal examination of digital co-branding, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualise the findings and delineate the boundaries of their applicability. These limitations do not call into question the validity of the research; rather, they highlight the related constraints of working with social-media data and multimodal analysis. Among these, a first limitation concerns the size and nature of the corpus. The dataset is relatively small, as it includes only the material made publicly available by Smeg and its partners during the period of the collaborations. This restriction is structural rather than methodological: the study incorporates the total accessible content, but the limited volume of posts inevitably narrows the range of communicative patterns that can be observed. While the corpus is complete and representative of the collaborations, its size prevents broader generalisations and needs to be treated with caution when extrapolating the findings to other contexts.

A second limitation relates to platform specificity. The analysis focuses exclusively on Instagram, a platform characterised by strong visual orientation, high aesthetic organization, and multimodal expressivity. As a result, the communicative strategies identified here may not fully reflect how the same brands operate on other platforms such as TikTok, X, YouTube or LinkedIn, where audience demographics, affordances and interactional norms differ substantially. The findings therefore capture Instagram-specific dynamics and should not be assumed to apply uniformly across the broader digital ecosystem.

In addition, temporal constraints also play a role. The data were collected within a defined time frame corresponding to the active promotion of the two collaborations, both of which are relatively recent and still in an early stage of their communicative development. As a result, the analysis reflects a specific communicative moment and does not account for potential evolutions in brand strategy, audience engagement, or co-branding narratives over time. It is plausible that, as the partnerships mature, new content formats, narrative directions or aesthetic choices will emerge, potentially reshaping the multimodal identity of the collaborations. A diachronic perspective would therefore be

necessary to capture these future developments and to observe whether the patterns identified in this study remain stable, intensify or shift as the collaborations evolve.

From a methodological point of view, the visual analysis presents interpretative limitations. While grounded in multimodal theory, the interpretation of imagery inevitably involves a degree of subjectivity, especially when dealing with aesthetic cues, cultural symbolism, and brand storytelling. Similarly, user comments present analytical challenges: many rely heavily on emoji, are fragmentary, or lack clear linguistic structure. This makes it more difficult to identify stable patterns and limits the level of detail that can be extracted from the linguistic analysis. Emojis convey affective stances effectively, but their polysemy and contextual variability limit the precision of interpretation. As a matter of fact, audience reception can only be partially inferred from comments. Although user reactions offer valuable insights into stakeholder perceptions, they represent a self-selected portion of the audience, those who actively choose to comment, and therefore do not capture silent engagement such as likes, shares, or passive consumption. This means that the study provides a meaningful but partial window into audience interpretation, without being able to represent the full spectrum of user response.

Finally, these considerations highlight the inherent complexity of analysing digital communication, where multimodal content, platform-specific dynamics and heterogeneous audience behaviours interact in ways that are not always fully accessible to the researcher. They also suggest that future studies could benefit from broader datasets, cross-platform comparisons or more advanced analytical tools capable of integrating different forms of engagement. In this sense, the limitations identified here do not weaken the study; rather, they outline the methodological and empirical boundaries within which the analysis operates and open the way for further refinement and expansion, which are explored in the following section.

4.1.3 FUTURE APPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The methodological framework developed in this study lends itself to several future applications and offers fertile ground for further research. Since the study focuses on Instagram, one of the most visually oriented platforms, an immediate extension would involve applying the same multimodal model to other environments such as TikTok, X, YouTube or LinkedIn. Each of these platforms presents distinct affordances, interactional norms, and audience demographics, and a cross-platform comparison would make it possible to observe how co-branding strategies change when the

communicative environment changes. Such an expansion would also test the strength of the analytical model and reveal whether the patterns identified in this study persist across different digital contexts.

A second possible future application concerns cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives. The collaborations analysed in this thesis operate within a predominantly Italian and English communicative space, but co-branding is increasingly global and involves audiences with different cultural backgrounds, interpretative habits and expectations regarding brand communication. Extending the methodology to markets characterised by diverse linguistic repertoires, such as Spanish-speaking, Arabic-speaking or East Asian contexts, would make it possible to observe how brand identity is negotiated across cultures and how multimodal cues are interpreted within different semiotic traditions. In some markets, for instance, visual symbolism may carry culturally specific connotations, while, in others, emoji use may follow distinct pragmatic norms; and in others still, the tone of voice may need to adapt to different politeness conventions or narrative preferences. Applying the same analytical framework to these contexts would therefore reveal whether the patterns identified in this study are culturally stable or whether they shift significantly when the communicative environment changes. Such an extension would also contribute to a broader understanding of how global brands shape their tone of voice, visual grammar, and engagement strategies to heterogeneous audiences. In fact, co-branding often requires negotiating multiple cultural identities simultaneously, and a cross-cultural perspective would illuminate how brands manage this complexity, how they balance global consistency with local relevance, and how audiences respond to these choices. In this sense, a comparative intercultural approach would not only enrich the empirical scope of the model but also deepen its theoretical contribution to the study of multimodal communication in global branding.

Further developments could also come from integrating AI-based tools and natural language processing techniques. Automated sentiment analysis, machine-assisted emoji interpretation and multimodal computational models would enrich the analytical depth of future studies and allow for larger datasets to be examined with greater precision. These tools could complement the qualitative insights offered by multimodal analysis and provide a more detailed understanding of audience reactions, emotional dynamics and discursive tendencies. They would also make it possible to capture subtle shifts in tone or engagement that may not be immediately visible through manual analysis. However, at the same time, the use of AI introduces its own methodological challenges. Automated systems often struggle with the contextual nuances that are central to multimodal communication, especially when dealing with culturally specific imagery, metaphorical language or the polysemy of

emoji. Sentiment analysis tools may oversimplify affective stances, reducing complex evaluative expressions simple categories that do not fully reflect the richness of user responses. Similarly, multimodal computational models can misinterpret visual cues or fail to recognise the interplay between modes, producing results that require careful human verification. These limitations suggest that AI should be used as a complementary resource rather than a substitute for interpretative analysis, and that future research will need to balance computational efficiency with theoretical rigour and contextual sensitivity.

Another promising direction involves the study of consumer behaviour and engagement. While this thesis focuses primarily on communicative strategies and on the audience responses visible through comments, future research could investigate more directly how co-branding influences brand perception, loyalty and community building. Understanding these dynamics would require integrating behavioural data, surveys or other approaches capable of capturing how users interact with branded content over time, how they internalise multimodal narratives and how these narratives shape their attitudes toward the brands involved. Such an expansion would make it possible to observe whether multimodal communication contributes to strengthening emotional attachment, fostering a sense of belonging or encouraging repeated interaction with the brand ecosystem. It would also allow researchers to explore how different audience segments respond to co-branding initiatives, whether certain multimodal cues resonate more strongly with specific demographic groups and how engagement patterns evolve as collaborations mature. By incorporating these behavioural dimensions, future studies could bridge the gap between linguistic analysis and marketing research, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how co-branding operates within contemporary consumer cultures and how multimodal communication participates in the construction of long-term brand relationships.

Furthermore, the methodology developed in this study could also be applied to a wider range of branding contexts. Luxury branding, sports marketing, automotive communication and influencer-brand collaborations all rely heavily on multimodal storytelling and identity negotiation. Extending the model to these domains would test its versatility and reveal how different sectors mobilise linguistic, visual and interactional resources to construct distinctive brand narratives. This would also contribute to a more systematic understanding of multimodal communication across industries.

Finally, a diachronic perspective would offer valuable insights into how co-branding strategies evolve over time. Both collaborations examined in this thesis are relatively recent, and their communicative trajectories are still developing. Longitudinal studies could track changes in tone, visual grammar, audience engagement and narrative direction, revealing whether the patterns identified here remain stable or shift as the partnerships mature. Such an approach would deepen our understanding of co-branding as a dynamic process and highlight the temporal dimension of multimodal identity construction.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this thesis confirm that digital co-branding is far more than a promotional strategy: it is a complex process of identity construction in which brands negotiate shared meanings through coordinated linguistic, visual and interactional choices. The analysis of the Smeg x Porsche and Smeg x Dolce&Gabbana collaborations demonstrates that multimodal communication plays a decisive role in shaping how partnerships are perceived, interpreted and emotionally experienced by audiences. Captions, images, emojis, and user comments do not operate in isolation; they form an integrated semiotic environment through which brands articulate values, aesthetic orientations, and cultural narratives. In this sense, the study highlights the importance of multimodality as a defining feature of contemporary brand communication. Digital environments require brands to construct identity across multiple modes simultaneously, balancing verbal precision with visual storytelling and affective cues. Co-branding amplifies this dynamic, creating hybrid identity spaces where each partner's symbolic universe interacts with the other, generating new meanings that extend beyond the sum of the individual brands. Audience engagement further contributes to this process, showing that stakeholders participate actively in the construction of brand narratives and that their responses shape the public meaning of collaborations.

The thesis also demonstrates the value of integrating corpus linguistics and multimodal analysis for studying social-media communication. This mixed-method approach proves effective in capturing both the linguistic patterns and the visual strategies that define digital branding, offering a replicable model for future research. By combining qualitative interpretation with systematic observation, the study provides a methodological framework capable of addressing the complexity of multimodal content and the fluidity of audience interaction.

Overall, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how brands communicate in collaborative digital contexts and how multimodal resources shape identity, engagement and shared values. At a broader level, the study shows that co-branding in the digital sphere is not merely a marketing device but a form of cultural production, where linguistic choices, visual storytelling and audience participation converge to create meaning. The methodological approach adopted here demonstrates that corpus linguistics and multimodal analysis are effective tools for examining this complexity, offering a structured yet flexible framework capable of capturing both the stability and the fluidity of contemporary brand communication. As digital environments continue to evolve, the ability to analyse how brands construct and negotiate identity across modes, platforms and audiences

will become increasingly important. In this sense, the findings of the thesis not only illuminate the specific collaborations examined but also point toward the growing relevance of multimodal approaches for understanding branding practices in the digital era, opening space for future research and methodological innovation.

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APPENDIX

COLLABORATION: Porsche x Smeg	
INSTAGRAM	
SmegItalia profile	
Type of content (video, image carousel, etc.)	Link
Video (to announce the partnership)	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQ7qiQvijY8/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video (to announce the partnership)	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DPx1S-niGl-/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video (to present the partnership)	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DP0bl50Ddwm/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DP2_IEICE4c/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video (to present the collection)	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQBSe4qCOEZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQGcW6YCEKC/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQLl_ZFDf7S/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQTquPijdQi/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQV_3eFinxv/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQbJlr2jaNj/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DRKSg1njRqk/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DRSKWbDDQ6h/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DRcSqP3DQu8/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DRulSGRjbfZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DS7HhZaCRS1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DVvr6UNjUI9/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DV3Fjo2jWc0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
	34
PorscheNewsroom profile	
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DPzaWI9jCH1/?igsh=MTd3cHBjb2hrZmo3Yg%3D%3D
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DP42s6viuph/?igsh=cTExNnhlbm5zZHhs
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQGb_KDEd2N/?igsh=Zzl1eGE4ZDNrZGtr
	3
PorscheLifestyle profile	
Video	https://www.instagram.com/p/DPyz88BjEIm/
Video (in collab with SmegItalia)	https://www.instagram.com/p/DP0bl50Ddwm/
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQCQq-fE8Kg/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQE1b3LD5rS/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DQHaS86iCOn/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSSkA6EJ72u/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DSP_MvPDQRj/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
	7
WEBSITES AND PRESS RELEASES	
Porsche	
Collaboration landing page	https://shop.porsche.com/it/it-IT/smeg
Press release	https://backend.press.porsche-design.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Press-Release_Porsche-x-Smeg_r.pdf
Smeg	
Collaboration landing page	https://www.smeg.com/it/porsche-x-smeg?srsltid=AfmBOorl-yomMjwLmY6yQdBat1iTGkEyVAGYtpAvFOWiKL1JGVT1Gi_8
Press release	https://www.smeg.com/it/news/2026/plus-x-award-2026.html

A. Primary data collection: Porsche x Smeg

COLLABORATION: Smeg Dolce & Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo	
INSTAGRAM	
SmegItalia profile	
Type of content (video, image carousel, etc.)	Link
Video (to present the collaboration)	https://www.instagram.com/reel/Ctgh_NWKpqr/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtjIKNDKpjx/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video	https://www.instagram.com/reel/CtjrKOVK4za/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with Dolce&GabbanaCasa)	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtrD8LLo10q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with Dolce&GabbanaCasa)	https://www.instagram.com/p/CttowcIo1Go/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with Dolce&GabbanaCasa)	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtwNkqiILW0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtynP43K72p/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video	https://www.instagram.com/reel/Ct1rxsTKAEP/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct3u5Vrqeww/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video	https://www.instagram.com/reel/Ct6xgH6KsqG/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct88nOjqdT0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Video	https://www.instagram.com/reel/Ct_fEkUKR3h/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image (in collab with Dolce&GabbanaCasa)	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0UCAJdlqwZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/C-REfABBW-Y/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/C-GOEKZN2MR/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel	https://www.instagram.com/p/C-LXqI7JYHG/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_vrx43PAZc/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
	17
Dolce&GabbanaCasa profile	
Image carousel (in collab with SmegItalia)	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtrD8LLo10q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with SmegItalia)	https://www.instagram.com/p/CttowcIo1Go/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with SmegItalia)	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtwNkqiILW0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with SmegItalia)	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0UCAJdlqwZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Image carousel (in collab with SmegItalia)	https://www.instagram.com/p/DGmUly6vcI0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
	5
WEBSITES AND PRESS RELEASES	
Dolce & Gabbana	
Collab news	https://world.dolcegabbana.com/it/news/dolce-gabbana-smeg-casa-maiolica
Smeg	
Collaboration landing page	https://www.smeg.com/it/progetti-speciali/blu-mediterraneo-collection?srsltid=AfmBOor9PvoTr2GgerB-Rtaf_8C2G6qpKVsxJ72rlqqJJS4CKhCJYH4O

B. Primary data collection: Smeg Dolce & Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo

General overview						
Brand/Dataset	**Total posts analyzed**	**Total videos analyzed**	**Static image contents**	**Content Type**	**Timeframe of collection**	**Language of contents**
Porsche x Smeg	46	11	22	Mixed social media content	23 September 2025 - 11 March 2026	Mainly English, Italian with English translation
Dolce & Gabbana Blu Mediterraneo	35	6	18	Mixed social media content	15 June 2023 - 28 February 2025	Mainly English, Italian with English translation

C. General data overview