

# INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

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# PATRONAGE, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PHILANTHROPY: «FENDI FOR FOUNTAINS» CASE STUDY

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#### ABSTRACT

The present study addresses an academic review of the concept of patronage, its evolution and application nowadays, in order to specify its application with public relations and with corporate philanthropy. In addition to theoretical deepening on the object of study, we analyzed, through a quantitative and qualitative exploration, the patronage campaign "Fendi for fountains" and its repercussion on the media. The fashion industry seems to have relieved the Renaissance patrons and become one of the most active sectors in this field. We try to contextualize patronage, justify its application as part of the business strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and confirm its coincidences with ancient patronage and with its philanthropic essence. The analysis confirms that a good campaign patronage serves to consolidate the image of a company and its commitment to the strategic public as well as to improve the corporate relations of the company with the community in which it operates. Although patronage can be susceptible to be used for purposes other than its raison d'etre, if it is well managed in terms of nature, messages and targets, it can become one of the most important parts in management of corporate intangible assets.

#### **KEY WORDS**

Patronage – Sponsorship - Public Relations – Philanthropy – Fashion - Corporate Social Responsibility.

# MECENAZGO, RELACIONES PÚBLICAS Y FILANTROPÍA: «FENDI FOR FOUNTAINS» ANÁLISIS DE CASO

RESUMEN

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El presente estudio aborda una revisión académica del concepto de mecenazgo, su evolución y aplicación al momento actual, en aras de fundamentar su aplicación con las relaciones públicas y la filantropía corporativa. Además de la profundización teórica sobre el objeto de estudio, analizamos, a través de una exploración de carácter cuantitativo y cualitativo, la campaña de mecenazgo "Fendi for fountains", y su repercusión mediática. La industria de la moda parece haber tomado el relevo de los mecenas renacentistas, convirtiéndose en uno de los sectores más activos en este campo. Tratamos de contextualizar el mecenazgo, justificar su aplicación como parte de la política empresarial en el siglo XXI, y confirmar sus coincidencias con el mecenazgo antiguo, y por ende, con su esencia filantrópica. El análisis confirma que una buena campaña de mecenazgo sirve para consolidar la imagen de una empresa y su compromiso con los públicos estratégicos, así como para mejorar las relaciones corporativas de dicha empresa con la comunidad en la que opera. Aunque el mecenazgo sea una herramienta susceptible de fines ajenos a su razón de ser, bien gestionada en cuanto a naturaleza, mensajes y objetivos, puede convertirse en uno de los ejes más importantes en la gestión de intangibles corporativos.

#### PALABRAS CLAVE

Mecenazgo – Patrocinio - Relaciones Públicas – Filantropía – Moda - Responsabilidad Social Corporativa.

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

Patronage as a tool for public relations and, therefore, as part of the communication strategy of companies, has grown at a rapid pace over the last thirty years. The reasons for this growth have their raison d'etre in the development of the social responsibility of companies, and in the budgetary crisis of governments to cope with the social demands. But not only these two compelling reasons explain the progression of patronage, there is another cause that was presented by Szybowicz and Magistrali: "*It is no longer about finding public to understand a message but rather about finding a message to reach the public*" (1990 : 22).

Patronage, as inherent to rich societies, is seeing its best in the midst of a crisis that a priori would make it difficult to implement it. However, corporate philanthropy, responsibility, social commitment and sustainability are high on the business policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, academic deepening that delves into the reasons explaining the growth of patronage as one of the strategies of the business project seems appropriate.

According to Admical (1999), business patronage was founded in France in the late 1970s "*at the time when companies discovered the virtues of communication*"<sup>2</sup>. According to the same source, although advertising, promotion and marketing were used as tools to introduce products and brands, it had not been considered necessary "*to reflect on a communication strategy that would add value to its institutional image*." This is how it becomes strategic. Patronage as understood this way, and this is how we think

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Quoted by Clotas (2003: 11)

it should be considered from Caius Maecenas to date, it pursues revenues in terms of influence, power, image, reputation and visibility, and it is designed around objectives in terms of public and messages.

Patronage or "*cultural sponsorship*" arouses skepticism in much of the academic world, both in its definition and implementation. Much literature insists on explaining the differences between sponsorship and patronage, and in keeping the debate with the argument of lack of philanthropy and advertising concerns. Also, many theorists are reluctant to consider that patronage can be a public relations tool and, as such, be conceived under a communication strategy. We propose updating and interpretation that are slightly wider and adapted to the present time. On the one hand, because we deal with a tool that belongs to the social sphere and, in order to study social-communication-related issues, a dynamic framework should be considered in order to address social and technological developments impinging upon this communication. Moreover, public relations have emerged strongly in the absence of resources for major advertising investment and due to the crisis itself that plagues conventional advertising.

# 2. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives lie, firstly, in the analysis of patronage as a strategy of the business project. Furthermore, it is about arguing and identifying how patronage is a public relations tool at the service of corporate philanthropy. As secondary objectives, this paper seeks to demonstrate the consistency of the similarities between original and current patronage. That is, this study focuses on clarifying the application that is being done from the perspective of sense and meaning to help us explain the similarities with original patronage. To do so, we analyzed the sector of the fashion industry that has become one of the most active patrons of the global scene.

# 3. METHODOLOGY

To undertake this study, we used a bibliographic review on the most representative papers of the recent national and international scenario – except some more ancient classical studies – and analyzed the patronage campaign "*for Fendi fountains*", including its media coverage. In each section we argue about the specifics of patronage and its evolution, the similarities and differences between current and ancient patronage and we also explain the need for collaboration among companies and media as regards patronage.

Once the campaign chosen as case study had been described and contextualized in terms of the Italian artistic heritage, with the emptying of the press we tried to see how the media have covered the information on patronage of Fendi. We chose digital news of different national and international media. It is not a thorough empirical analysis but rather a quantitative and qualitative examination based on a small sample of reference media that do not belong to the world of fashion. We intend to determine the difficulty of publishing information on patronage without falling into excesses that result in disguised advertising for the brand and in public suspicions. We also want to determine how the media can, with their information, provide

coherence on facts such as the ones we are concerned with and therefore to realize the importance of current patronage.

# 4. DISSICUSION

# 4.1. Theoretical framework

Lack of consensus on what patronage is and the assimilations and comparisons that have been made with terms such as sponsorship make up the most common feature in its definition and consideration, both in worlds of the academia and business. We believe that the thematic differentiation between patronage and sponsorship is adequate and it has properly been documented and dealt with, which in practice makes it possible to identify both branches. However, it appears that the definitions and disagreements over the terms sponsorship and patronage will continue to flourish but we share what has been proposed by Antoine about the fact that "*sponsorship is a species within the broader framework of the activities of patronage*" (2003: 119). However, the purpose of this study is not to differentiate the two activities but rather to defend what concerns patronage and its proper application to present time and in its original sense<sup>3</sup>.

In order to define its meaning exactly, what kind of tool it is and what area it belongs to, and following a literature review, we believe that it is a form of social communication and, as such, it is part of the social sciences (Parés i Maicas, 2006); It is also a public relations tool serving the social responsibility of the company (Palencia-Lefler Ors, 2007: 155), it is a way of communication (Walliser, 2003: 6) as well as a mechanism that aims to improve the image and reputation through social commitment. So, we believe that patronage, in its own right, is part of management of the intangible assets of the company.

Some authors assimilate sponsorship and patronage as a technique for advertising and / or public relations (Antoine, 2003: 118) and even marketing (Andrew, 1994), mixing areas as if we were talking about the same realities. And they are not, given the fact that both advertising, through paid spaces, and marketing pursue the sale or promotion of products or services respectively, while public relations pursue the development of actions to improve the relations of a company with its public. Their being part of the comprehensive communication of a company or entity and their being able to develop complementary activities do not make them equal in terms of nature, interests and goals.

We do not agree that patronage is that tool used by a company to "*sneak*" information or even, taken to the limit of academic practice, notice that it is used as "whitewash" "*Dares to clean up an image are endless and the systems are various. These include patronage and sponsorship*". (Alvarez and Caballero, 2004: 56). Regardless of whether there have been or may be circumstances or campaigns in which these tools have been used with ambiguous means and purposes, especially in cases of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and sports sponsorships, we cannot consider that patronage in the twenty-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> How the various Spanish communication groups make reference to this term can be consulted, confirming that only the group Godó uses the concept of "patronage" in: (Fernández Vázquez, 2012: 124).

first century has in general dark goals that are far from being related to seeking wellbeing and giving back to society part of what is obtained from it.

Palencia-Lefler Ors includes patronage and sponsorship in what is known as corporate philanthropy (2007: 155). First let us specify what the Royal Spanish Academy of Language considers philanthropy to be: "*love for mankind*". We are interested also in including what altruism means: "*diligence in seeking the good of others even at the cost of one's own*."

This section seeks, through a bibliographic review, to clarify an ambiguous issue still keeping the academic world in discrepancy. We will begin to include those definitions that, from our point of view, approach a precise definition of the term.

"Financial or material support provided without any direct compensation by the beneficiary to a piece of work or a person for the exercise of activities which are of general interest. (French decree of 1991) "(Solano, 2009: 26-27).

Activity of public relations that consists of financing and supporting events and social and cultural initiatives. While it aims to arouse a favorable image of the entity in society, in general, it does not directly pursue positive predisposition of a particular target audience towards the products or initiatives of the sponsoring company or entity (Solano, 2009: 27).

Organized action or activity through which a private person, a company or any social structure makes an economic or material contribution, usually established by contract, to an activity or event of public interest, usually of a social, cultural or educational nature, in order to obtain a benefit of reputation in return (ibid).

### 4.2. Patronage, Social Responsibility and Philanthropy

Corporate Social Responsibility consolidates in the business world since the nineties as a result of a number of aspects of a social, economic and political nature leading to the conclusion that "*you cannot maintain the absurd waste of previous decades*" (from Andrés, 1993: 14). A new model is needed where "*the vectors of the new paradigm are clearly strategic: identity, culture, action, communication and image*" (Costa, 2003). It is a model where products and services "are replaced with each other", they are "alternative" and even "generic" (Ibid). So, what really matters and brings value translates into responsibility turned into image, identity, acts and communication.

Stakeholders (Freeman, 1984) no longer require from a company to produce the best products or to provide the best services but rather to return the benefits and to address social demands. Corporate social responsibility is thus integrated into the corporate communication and the public relations of the company in order to take on social commitment and get image and reputation.

Organizations have played a role on various social programs that had previously corresponded to governments and all encompassed in corporate social responsibility, which has enabled companies to acquire a personality and a vocation through social commitment. Corporate social responsibility, and patronage within it, is a strategic instrument for giving value to the intangible assets of the company and for fulfilling its social commitment. And they do it through communication, necessary and essential, between companies and society. So it is necessary to return to the concept of patronage used by Szybowicz and Magistrali as an action of "*communication for the event*" (1990: 16).

Summarizing some of the concepts presented herein, we will consider that corporate social responsibility includes all actions related to any social and environmental commitment taken on by a corporation due to the impact caused by its business activities. "*Corporate responsibility makes a company look beyond the conventional parameters of the economic gain or loss and consider the social implications of its activity*" (Argenti, 2014: 256). As pointed out by that author, the research concludes that most managers "consider corporate responsibility to be vital for business strategy and operations" (255).

Then we deal with the differences and similarities of both activities. Patronage, as an ingredient of corporate social responsibility, is a release of funds for philanthropic projects. Corporate social responsibility reflects a strategy designed and implemented around long-term goals and interests; Likewise, we understand that such philanthropic donations by a company are also due to a communication strategy, although they are different activities. Patronage may or may not be directly related to the activity of the company, while corporate social responsibility delves into the effort to cushion the impact derived from the operations of the corporation, beyond a specific donation. However, both activities agree on a long-term vision as well as on developing a clear strategy carrying a voluntary and proactive effort with it. Corporate social responsibility addresses the requirement that a 21st-century company can not only receive benefits without abating the damage caused in obtaining them; on the other hand, patronage is the ethical obligation to participate in the common good by returning some of its profits and serving needs of various kinds. While the former repairs the damage caused, patronage does good to the community.

The unprecedented efforts that are taking place in corporate social responsibility, in addition to mandatory ethics and social change, are closely linked to business yield. The results of studies and academic research suggest that stakeholders, ie consumers, employees and investors are increasingly inclined to reward corporate actions as regards responsibility and, in the same sense, to punish less committed corporations (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010: 8). Argenti says about a study conducted in 2010 that 64 percent of consumers considered "*that the good deeds of the company should be incorporated into the very structure of business*" (257). And to be part of that structure, activities should be included in the business policy, which can only be strategic.

Corporate Social Responsibility is the way of understanding business management in which companies begin to take more into account the social and environmental impact of their business, trying to generate profitability for entrepreneurs and social welfare. To do this, they try to take into account the needs and expectations of the social groups they impact (directly and indirectly) with the activity of the organization or company (Orjuela Córdoba, 2011: 141).

The company thus conceived is not only an entity that generates wealth, products and services, which communicates with society, that is, which is transparent; the company is also one that cares about its environment, creating value, meanings and culture to convey confidence and credibility. This way, we cannot agree that the actions of patronage are concrete actions masking anything but an act of generosity and sharing of the common good, both aspects being inserted in the essence of corporate philanthropy. "*The goodness of philanthropy does not lie in the reasons that originated it but in the act*" (Chuliá and Muñoz, 2008: 106)<sup>4</sup>.

Corporate philanthropy is born for the purpose of making profits without misleading the public and contributing to general welfare, and it encompasses all actions that a company dedicates to society in the form of time, talent and resources. And it does so from three axes as held by Palencia-Lefler Ors (155):

- Philanthropy as a donation: patronage, rewards, scholarships, social procurement, etc.
- Philanthropy through a Foundation.
- Philanthropy and commercial strategy, sponsorship and marketing with a cause.

From the perspective of the "sociology of elites" Chuliá and Muñoz (2008: 105) include three types of philanthropic reasons: pragmatic, ie related to tax relief; moral, which connect with the need to give back to society the money that allows us to gain wealth; and symbolic, that is to say, those who seek us prestige and power. A philanthropic act, according to the study by the authors, can respond to a combination of the three reasons. Philanthropy, in the Anglo-Saxon world in general and more specifically in the US, is conceived as a way to provide "*quality of life*" and "*welfare*" (Ostrower, 1995: 4). That is, it is not intended to fight poverty and address social problems, because, as he says, this is the task of governments. We assume, therefore, that philanthropy, from its approach of love for others, includes those actions that can integrate the company into society and facilitate understanding with their audiences, in addition to meeting their informational and general needs and, above all, it contributes culture in the form of art, music, education: "*Through philanthropy, the elite builds a distinctive culture, generates specific cultural capital and establishes criteria for assessing 'what is good*"" (Chuliá and Muñoz, 2008: 105).

# 4.3. Public Relations at the service of patronage

One of the discrepancies among those theorists who have approached the study of patronage is the fact of considering, on the one hand, the absence of altruism and philanthropy in its current development, -taking for granted that ancient patronage had a *stricto sensu* philanthropy- and, on the other hand, considering the activity as a public relations tool. Thus understood, patronage is applied according to strategies proper to public relations and it gets a return in terms of image. The arguments held in this regard have their raison d'etre and are solvent, but we understand that we must adopt a more open attitude that considers that patronage has been adapted to the current situation without falling into skepticism or theoretical discussions that are difficult to prove.

Clotas notes that:

Business sponsorship -meaning patronage- is not disinterested but rather is aimed at different goals, from simple notoriety and visibility of the brand or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Chuliá and Muñoz develop a full study on philanthropy and its assessment by the groups with more resources in Spain.

company to the association of that brand or company with the implicit message in the sponsored event and / or the target public target that have been called (2003: 11).

We understand that this lack of altruism that various theoreticians attribute to him is attributable, among other reasons, to public knowledge of the patron, but in this regard the comments of Palencia-Lefler Ors regarding that "*anonymity does not make patronage 'better*'" (2007: 156) are helpful.

The study of Garcia Nieto (1994) delves into the false forms of patronage that are carried out. The author notes that patronage is due to "*general public and common*" interests that are to be proposed at the time of its implementation, but they should neither respond to persuasive goals nor be conducted in order to obtain publicity in the media:

The action of patronage is never planned with the intention that the possible public communication resulting from its development favorably impinges on the reputation, image, attitude and intention of the public to the natural or artificial person that promotes such action of patronage, but it is planned with the intention of responding to social demands of general interest (102-103).

This does not mean that patronage cannot affect the image of its promoter, "*this effect is possible and probable, but it is not intended before*" (103), since it has not been raised from persuasive goals. He concludes that if as a philanthropic activity is seen as an action of public relations, following a series of strategies and goals, it becomes a "*hybrid with the shape and characteristics of patronage but with goals and approaches of sponsorship*" (107). However, many other studies and pieces of research consider it strategic, as it follows from the work that compiles the main pieces of research in the sector of Walliser (2003). In fact, the author considers that sponsorship and patronage today have been legitimized as versatile and multifunctional communication tools the benefit of which is greater when they are used as an element integrated into the communication strategy (2003: 19).

Garcia Nieto's argument seems coherent and consistent, however, it is difficult to determine whether we are applying and defining the term accurately and appropriately. Patronage, the name of which derives from Caius Maecenas, is as old as mankind, in terms of generating culture and owning wealth. So the three concepts related to patronage, humanity, culture and wealth had the same effect in the year 69 BC as they can have nowadays, since the essence of the purpose and means that are used have not changed. Historically, it was used as an expression of power and influence by nobles, popes and kings; the question we must ask is why was it so unselfish then and why are the actions that Bill Gates, Donald Trump or the Booty family can undertake not so philanthropic? In this line the words of Corredoira are useful, who has referred to patronage as a "resource to use the results in terms of prestige and power that demonstrates the presence of a clearly interested human will" (1991: 15).

The fact that there is no such an obvious interest in the actions of patronage when compared with sponsorship does not exempt the former from philanthropy. Similarly, the fact that it arises around some general and specific goals that have an impact on the image is not an obstacle to despise the kind of patronage that is developed today because we do not consider that, in essence, there is a substantial difference with original patronage. Because if Alexander VI, the Medici and Felipe II, to mention only a few, took care to leave such a lofty and rich artistic and cultural legacy, it was not mere philanthropy. In fact, we need to raise the following question: How did patrons act in ancient times? It is difficult to find an artist who could create and yet be emancipated from his employers, artists could not even leave the city without reprisal. That is, they were not free, either for their work or for their life. "*A number of poets or composers used to live in the properties of their employers, a fact that made their dependence all the more evident*" (Gay, 2004: 56). Mozart wanted to be a freelance interpreter and not only it was not easy for him but he underwent much suffering that prevented him even from traveling. "*Before this breaking-off to independence, his father and he would have to endure humiliation resulting from servitude to unsuspected heights*" (57). The musician Haydn composed upon request from his patron, the Hungarian Esterházy family: "*He was forbidden to accept any other job or post a composition on his own initiative without the consent of his patrons. (...) When the head of the family died, Haydn was allowed both to live in Vienna and to tour "(Ibid).* 

From these examples, it is difficult to consider that the ancient patrons were pure philanthropists sponsoring artists without the intention of exerting their influence or power. So, we do not consider the work done by corporate foundations to be less rewarding and commendable and, therefore, less philanthropic than the ancient ones. Patronage has evolved from a natural and less distorted form than the one that some theorists insist on attributing to it in the modern world and the Information Society, and it has done so by dealing with difficult issues and actions that would hardly gain visibility, social eco and the necessary resources were it not for the private sector. Therefore, what reason can you rightly argue to establish such a marked disparity and inaccuracy between the patronage of centuries ago and the current one?

Current patronage is, in addition to a donation, an act of communication that companies use to reach society. It helps build better relationships with their audiences, who do not perceive conventional advertising but personal satisfaction, whether through culture or solidarity. Of course, it gets benefits in terms of image and reputation, it is not anonymous, nor were the patrons of the past: thinking otherwise is to yield to certain romanticism. If the reputation is forged around our behavior and, to know it, there must be transparency, keeping an anonymous attitude with regard to the corporate philanthropy can only arouse confusion. Neither must there be an exhibition, because then, coinciding with Garcia Nieto, it would be sponsorship to use in which something is financed for advertising purposes. But it does seem coherent that society knows the patron, "it is unfair to rob a data that could serve that very community to find out what local companies are more committed to their welfare" (Antoine, 2003: 126). Similarly, Córdoba Orjuela thinks that communication is a key variable in the success or failure of management in the actions of corporate social responsibility (2011: 155). Elaborating on the same lines, the study by Chuliá and Muñoz confirms that "what is perhaps more frustrating to those who develop philanthropic activities is that approximately four out of five respondents believe that the (rather few) beneficiaries of the philanthropic activities lack an adequate level of knowledge about who made donations "(2008: 111).

Moreover, if patronage was not subject to strategies, ie, if it were practiced on the fly and on unplanned areas or sectors, how could a company contribute to benefitting needy groups or amending the subjects that allow it to obtain profit and which it damage? Hence, in the case of energy-related companies, they deal, for example, with reforestation, since their activity damages the environment. How to communicate the actions of patronage does not seem an easy task if we try not to raise skepticism among the public and mainly among the media who will be the ones delivering our message to society. But what is not difficult is to consider that patronage is due to strategies of public relations and, as such, it is part of the communication of companies and operates within the business policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Company patronage already has its actors, its rules, techniques and ethics. Most companies will not launch, from now on, into an operation of patronage without having first defined a global policy of intervention in terms of external reasons and internal factors. Not to mention the regional and sometimes international dimension of the action of patronage. Admical, 1999. (Clotas, 2003: 14).

#### 4.4. Commitment or skepticism in the actions of patronage

The actions of patronage are related to a social and cultural cause, ie, a cause that is alien to the nature of the company in terms of products or services, and that is why the public may be skeptical or at least confused about whether it is an act as a result of the commitment of the company or whether it is acts hiding merely advertising intentions. We believe that a good campaign of patronage must match the values associated with the chosen cause with the values of the company, only this way there will be a resulting image of a generous, sensitive, caring company committed to the problems of society that keeps it. Elaborating on the above, there may be a circumstance in which a philanthropic action may raise sensitivities between one of its audiences or interest groups as it is linked to specific campaigns<sup>5</sup>, and this can only be avoided if the field of performance or the undertaken donation has previously been chosen carefully.

So as to increase the credibility of their patronage-related activities, the company must explain its commitment to the cause, its impact, why it has been involved in this initiative, as well as the consistency between the cause and the business of the company business, as expressed by Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010: 11. These authors argue that the public feel really skeptical when companies sponsor causes that have no logical association with the activities of the company. If so, that is, if there is no direct relationship between the activity of the company and the sponsored cause, it must be explained to avoid suspicion (12). Any communication of a company has to be strategic and have to build trust. Patronage, therefore, is a communication and must be analyzed by its interest groups. "*Currently, any message, activity or product -from shareholders' meetings and the annual report to philanthropic* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> We are making reference to hypothetical circumstances that could derive if a company of products for children contributed to the elderly, to help against drug use, or to activities with prisoners. It is not that these activities do not require resources and care, we just present how a company has to study donations strategically to avoid conflicts among its public.

activities and corporate advertising- is analyzed by regulators, investors and the general public with an unprecedented level of detail" (Argenti, 2014: 146).

The above must serve to explain what happened to Procter & Gamble as a result of the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the aid it provided for the disaster. The company spent two and a half million dollars besides allocating support in the rescue actions, "but the company did not spread these contributions, a study by Harris Interactive / Reputation Institute accused it of not having done anything to help. P&G had consciously chosen a low-profile approach in communication to avoid being accused of capitalizing the disaster" (Argenti, 2014: 214). This eloquent example accounts for the importance of reporting and the (almost) compulsion of not remaining anonymous, unless you do not want to be "lynched" by the media and the public.

The media also deserve special consideration as influenced social agents that are related to the activities of patronage. The media, much in need of advertising revenues, are known to be reluctant to provide coverage for patronage campaigns, considering that this is a way to include free advertising. However, we must point out that the media should take account of that information that are of general interest, and if the aqueduct of Segovia is being restored, everything suggests that it is information that is of general interest, as in the case of disable people being engaged in the labor world or an exhibition of Velázquez at the Museo del Prado.

In another sense, we do not consider that, when conducting patronage, one should try to influence the media "to project the event and the sponsor in a manner consistent with the goals pursued by the company" (Antoine, 2003: 122) because it would take us equally far from the laudable and necessary end of patronage and bring us to a bad practice in public relations by trying to force the media to give a specific coverage. No media should be imposed any criteria, but we understand that the media should provide coverage on campaigns without omitting the patron: ignoring the agent that makes such an action possible in the face of the community is, from our point of view, to distort information and, finally and eventually, reality. Moreover, if they have to launch publicity campaigns to publicize those actions of patronage that are not intended to support the information published in the media, it not only loses its raison d'etre; it can be accused of absence of philanthropy. Patronage must therefore communicate to all audiences because society, as a citizen, employee, shareholder or union leader, has to know what companies do. Between making a donation to "come out" in the media and hiding the actions that are being carried out through a campaign of patronage, there is an important nuance.

Delving into the same sense, the relationships between media and companies could be damaged, a result that does not favor any of the parties as media and companies must, always with ethics and responsibility, get reciprocal benefits. A proper informative attitude by a media about a patronage campaign can even encourage the advertising inclusion of the patron sponsoring this campaign.

#### 4.5. Fashion and patronage: an alliance that is consolidated

Fashion has in its own right become one of the sectors of weight in the world economy. Amid the crisis, the Fashion Index (stock index created in 1999 by Bloomberg), shows that the fashion industry has been one of "*the best stock shelters during the recession*" (Blázquez, 2014: 19). This is because investors find "*peace and*"

*financial security*" even in the most difficult times (ibid, 20). Improving the world through fashion seems to have become a trend for more than a decade: "*Fashion is a great support to transform the world*" (40)<sup>6</sup>. For the world has changed and the way to communicate in it too, fashion, adjusting to the new parameters, has changed his usual showcase to show more than design, exclusivity, sophistication and luxury accessories. This industry comes near its public not only to sell products but to inform that another world is possible. Some brands and groups are committed to actions that put an end to inequalities and support sustainability; others are being engaged in contemporary art as a gift to society. In either case, the pool is philanthropy.

A recent project of patronage, a home for artists sponsored by the Kering group (Yves Saint Laurent, Balenciaga, Alexander McQueen, among others) and led by François Pinault aims to "provide resourceless creators with the opportunity to develop their work" (Vicente, 2015: 20-21). Bernard Arnault, the owner of LVMH (Celine, Kenzo, Givenchy, Marc Jacobs, among others), who exhibits works through the Louis Vuitton Foundation, has continued the same line. The efforts of these fashion moguls are followed by foundations belonging to Cartier, Hermès, Prada and Galeries Lafayette, which support initiatives concerning contemporary art.

Since 2007, Fendi has been engaged, through its foundation, in restoring the heritage, in holding lyrics festivals, in scholarships for artists and in book publishing. According to Ashok Adicéam, curator of different exhibitions for Pinault, "*patrons have historically been linked to the development of European art from the Renaissance to date*" (ibid, 22). The leitmotiv of these godfathers, according to Adicéam, is to obtain returns in terms of image, more symbolic than economic benefits: to obtain tax advantages "*there are more effective ways*" (ibid, 21).

Other brands that have chosen the artistic patronage have been Gucci, Gap, Swarovski and Calvin Klein, pursuing a strategy that seems to combat the banality that hangs over the fashion industry. Howard Adams<sup>7</sup> warns that sponsoring entrepreneurs do not seek power and glory as in the Renaissance: "*Art is part of the market, it is another commodity*". These sponsors "*do not pursue aesthetic pleasure but an interesting long-term investment more durable than other luxury products*" (Vicente, 2015: 23).

As regards that kind of patronage that deals with heritage restoration, an author expressed what follows in the opinion pages of newspapers: "*An aware society that understands that this civic effort entwines us, which generates cultural industry and employment, drawing part of the common future in the care of the common past, is a vision of great beauty* "(Garcia Calero, 2014: 69).

# 4.6. "Fendi for fountains": a case study

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This article analyzes the work of a number of women who, through their textile-industry-related companies and organizations, try to fight inequalities and support sustainability in the fashion world. "Emprendedoras", *S. Moda, El País*, 165, November 15, 2014, 37-45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Author of *On Luxury*. A Cautionary Tale.

"*Fendi for fountains*" is a patronage campaign launched in January 2013 by the Italian fashion company Fendi, which allocated more than two million euros to Rome for the restoration of the "Fontana di Trevi" and artistic complex "*Quattro Fontane*". Upon completion of the works, which will last approximately twenty months, a plaque of that brand will be put next to the restored fountains and will remain for four years. As one of the leaders of the Italian fashion house puts it, "*it is all the advertising that includes the agreement*"<sup>8</sup>. The project also includes the exhibition "*The Glory of water*" on the occasion of the opening of a new store in Paris, with pictures of the fountains of Rome taken by Karl Lagerfeld. Also, a book including these pictures as daguerreotypes and the restoration of the film "*Histoire d'Eau*" produced by Fendi in 1977 will be published. On the website created for this purpose, the Italian brand describes the project this way:

The story of eternal love between Fendi and Rome, the birthplace of the brand, is a source of extraordinary inspiration whose mark transcends time. A strong bond that has forged the soul of the company and motivated creativity and craftsmanship embodied in highly successful flagship products. For this reason, in 2013 Fendi pays homage to the Eternal City ... where water and creativity flow freely<sup>9</sup>.

The Italian artistic heritage is being restored by the great fashion houses that have become the most generous patrons involved in the conservation of the masterpieces of Italy<sup>10</sup>. Fendi has not opened this current, concern for the artistic and architectural conservation has led Italian luxury firms in recent years to sponsor some of the most emblematic works of the country: Tod's at the Coliseum, Bulgari with the steps Trinita dei Monti Piazza di Spagna, Ferragamo and the Galleria degli Uffizi. The last to join have been Prada and Versace when they engaged in the restoration of one of the emblems of the city of Milan, the Galleria Vittorio Emmanuel II. Anticipating this trend, the Spanish fashion, through Inditex, donated a million an a half euros in 2007 for the restoration of the Palazzo Spagna in the square of the same name in Rome. Italian fashion firms, which are the majority, are participating in history by engaging in the conservation of artistic and cultural heritage of their country of origin; thus they succeed in associating their image very effectively with values of exclusivity and distinction.

Fendi has been good when engaging in a project of this nature and we can see that it has left nothing to chance. It has not been original in the art-fashion binomial, because it is limited to follow a path already started by other brands, but it does prevent its image from being harmed as in the case of Tod's and the restoration of the Coliseum where it was agreed to maintain the exclusive brand image for fifteen years, hence Fendi spokesmen insist on talking about donation without compensation: "*This is a donation of Fendi, not a sponsorship to use. No advertising in* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> "More Than Coins for Rome's Fountains", New York Times, 06/03/2013

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> http://www.fendi.com/es/the-magic-of-fendi/fendi-for-fountains.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> "Las grandes firmas de moda como mecenas de arte", *Garrigues. Moda y Derecho,* 6, 2014: 8

*addition to a metal plaque when work is completed and for four years*<sup>"11</sup>, Silvia Venturini Fendi, designer and one of the descendants of the creators of the brand.

We consider this topic to be very relevant, this way the brand succeeds in being linked to the values that can be associated with Rome: exclusivity, history, eternity, with appearance and aesthetics, what we expect from a luxury brand like this one. It has been very successful in choosing the project, not only due to the harmony and cacophony that its slogan conveys, "*Fendi for fountains*" but because of the element around which everything revolves: water. "*In no other city is water so visible*"<sup>12</sup>, said Karl Lagerfeld, creative director of the firm. In the chain of successes, it is necessary to mention the chosen object, fountains, and within these, the Fontana di Trevi, something that results in visibility and media coverage. We can say without exaggeration that if the Fontana is not the most important monument from the historical or artistic point of viewpoint, it is the most emblematic and iconic in the city and probably the one that is more visited, even more than the Roman Forum or the Coliseum. La Fontana di Trevi, raised to the status of symbol, thanks, among other reasons, to the cinema and the sensual bath of Anita Ekberg in "*La Dolce Vita*", guaranteed wide media coverage in a market in need of information.



*Picture 1:* Image of the campaign *Source: http://www.fendi.com/es/the-magic-of-fendi/fendi-for-fountains.html* 

We have analyzed the news gathered by the digital versions of reference newspapers, both national and international, in the period from January 2013 to March 2015. The news on the object of study are shown in the following table:

Titular / Title	Medio/Press	Fecha/Date
"La Fontana di Trevi, al taller" Subt. "La firma de moda Fendi pondrá 2,5 millones de euros para la	El Mundo	25/01/2013

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> "More Than Coins for Rome's Fountains", New York Times, 06/03/2013

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid.

restauración"		
"Fendi throws coins in Rome's crumbling Trevi fountain" Subt. "Fashion house gives over €2m to fund restoration of baroque masterpiece as austerity bites into Italian cultural patrimony"	The Guardian	28/01/2013
"Fendi to fund restoration of the Trevi Fountain" Subt. "Italian fashion house Fendi has pledged millions to restore five of Rome's most-loved fountains, beginning with the Trevi"	Telegraph	28/01/2013
"Fendi dona 2,18 millones de euros para restaurar la Fontana di Trevi de Roma" Subt. "Una vez que sea adjudicado el concurso público las obras llevarán 20 meses y se espera que estén terminadas en 2015"	ABC	28/01/2013
"More Than Coins for Rome's Fountains"	New York Times	3/06/2013
Ant. "Grandes firmas de la moda salen al rescate de su belleza": "Los nuevos "mecenas" de Roma" Subt. "Con las arcas vacías, varios alcaldes de la Ciudad Eterna se han visto obligados a recurrir a las donaciones privadas para restaurar el enorme patrimonio cultural de esta urbe"	El Mercurio	23/03/2014
"Arrancan las obras de restauración de la Fontana de Trevi" Subt. "La fuente, ya vaciada, cuenta con un puente suspendido para acercarse a sus estatuas"	El País	1/07/2014
"La Fontana di Trevi exhibe a los turistas los secretos de su restauración" Subt. "El monumento más conocido de Roma ha instalado pasarelas provisionales que permiten seguir con las obras"	La Vanguardia	04/07/2014
"Fendi to restore de Trevi Fountain"	The Italian Tribune	14/07/2014
"Fendi a Roma finanzia i restauri delle fontane"	Reppublica	16/03/2015

# *Table 1:* Corpus analysis *Source:* Prepared

We next describe the content of the information.

In five of them "*Fendi*" is mentioned in the headline and in two in the subtitle. Seven mention the "*Fontana di Trevi*" and only one includes the word "*patron*" in a headline. Also, four parts include the word "*fashion*". We believe that the four most informative headlines are in *Italian Tribune, El Pais, Telegraph* and *Repubblica*. They are respectively: "*Fendi to restore the Trevi Fountain*"; "*Work begins to restore the Trevi Fountain*"; "*Fendi to fund restoration of the Trevi Fountain*" and "*Fendi in Rome Finanzia i restauri delle Fontane*". From our viewpoint, maybe the most forced headline is that in *La Vanguardia*: "*The Fontana di Trevi shows tourists the secrets of its restoration.*"

We next describe the content of the information.

"La Fontana di Trevi, the workshop" Subtitle. "Fendi fashion house will allocate 2.5 million euros for the restoration," El Mundo, 01/25/2013.

It includes Fendi in the subtitle, but it also considers an act of patronage developed by the Italian brand. It explains the situation of deterioration of the Italian heritage since 2012 and how fashion brands are coming to rescue it. Valentino with the Temple of Venus and Tod's with the Coliseum, "*in exchange for the exclusive rights to the commercial use of the image of the monument for 15 years*." "Fendi throws coins in Rome's crumbling Trevi fountain" Subtitle. "Fashion house gives over  $\in 2m$  to fund restoration of baroque masterpiece as austerity bites into Italian Cultural patrimony", The Guardian, 01/28/2013.

Information begins by noting that if the image of Anita Ekberg has been linked to the Trevi Fountain for years, now it will be the face of Karl Lagerfeld, creative director of Fendi, which will accompany the iconic monument. Through the subtitle, the news echoed the sad situation experienced by the Italian artistic heritage in the midst of the crisis *Fendi to fund restoration of the Trevi Fountain*. It is a comprehensive piece of news including the situation in Italy and the help being provided by luxury brands for the restoration of the heritage. It speaks about Diesel and the Rialto bridge in Venice and Tod's and the Roman Coliseum. It is the only piece of news that includes that Fendi will show its logo on scaffolding during the restoration work. It explains the project and includes the statements by the Roman mayor and the need for cooperation between the public and the private sectors to safeguard the heritage.

"Subtitle." Italian fashion house Fendi has pledged millions to restore five of Rome's mostloved fountains, beginning with the Trevi", Telegraph, 28/01/2013.

It addresses the donation agreement undertaken by the fashion house for the restoration of five fountains of Rome beginning with the Fontana di Trevi. It includes the sponsoring title: Fendi for fountains. It mentions the cost of the donation and statements both of Fendi and the mayor. The piece of news also includes other aspects of interest about the project. For example, it will the publication of a book with photographs of Roman fountains of Karl Lagerfeld, creative director of the firm, and also a parade in front of the restored monument, which has been scheduled to coincide with the 90th anniversary of Fendi.

"Fendi donates 2.18 million euros to restore the Fontana di Trevi in Rome", Subtitle. "Once the tender is awarded, works will take 20 months and they are expected to be completed in 2015," ABC, 01.28.2013.

The core argument is the donation by Fendi and the complete project of "*Fendi for fountains*" including the restoration of the complex "*Quattro Fontane*". It includes statements by the mayor stating that there will be no advertising counterparts. It explains the deterioration in the famous fountain and the need to find sponsors who funded the works and, in this case, it has been Fendi, which placed a plaque for four years. It also addresses the dispute between the city of Rome and the firm Tod's in charge of the restoration of the Coliseum and the need for reforms as regards patronage to prevent acts of similar characteristics that, given the delay, have negative repercussions on the work in question.

"More Than Coins for Rome's Fountains", New York Times, 06/03/2013

This is the most complete and also the widest piece of information. It includes statements by the mayor, Karl Lagerfeld, Pietro Beccari, president and CEO of the brand, and one of the designers and heirs to the firm, Silvia Venturini Fendi. It explains why Fendi is linked to the history of Italy, with water, with the artistic heritage. It also addresses the eighteen-minute film made by Fendi in Rome in 1977, restored as part of the project. The news deals with the need for collaboration between the public and private sectors, in order, as the mayor puts it, "*to give Rome back its original luster*"

The testimonies that provide more data about the object of our study relate to statements by Beccari. On the one hand, linking the firm with Italy, "Fendi has always been associated with Italy; water is very symbolic in continuity, it is something that lasts forever." He adds, "Of course it entails advertising for the brand, but it also shows our desire to link us to the Roman culture and associate Fendi with Rome, a city that represents a lifestyle." Finally, Beccari contributes something that connects with what patronage means at present and as a tool for public relations: "It is more than a gesture of generosity, it is a definition of the role of luxury companies. A fashion brand cannot simply show products and make parades, it has to make a difference with the rest."

"Great fashion firms come to rescue its beauty": "The new "patrons" of Rome", Subtitle "With empty coffers, several mayors of the Eternal City have been compelled to resort to private donations to restore the huge cultural heritage of this city" El Mercurio, 03/23/2014.

This is a tour of all the works that are being restored thanks to donations from fashion brands.

"Work begins to restore the Fontana de Trevi" Subtitle. "The fountain, already emptied, has a suspension bridge to come closer to its statues," El País, 07/01/2014.

The news is about the beginning of the restoration of the fountain, it also says the fountain no longer has water and tourists can see the monument closer than ever before. The news for the day is also the deterioration of the fountain and that it looks like a virus in the heritage of the Italy, "from Pompeii to the Coliseum" and thus, an Italian company, Fendi, is in charge of for the cost. It about speaks about the need, which has been highlighted by the mayor, of the importance of patronage to protect art, and the broader project "*Fendi for fountains*" *that includes the restoration of the complex* "*Quattro Fontane*".

"The Fontana di Trevi shows tourists the secrets of its restoration" Subtitle. "The best known monument in Rome has installed temporary walkways making it possible to continue the works," La Vanguardia, 04/07/2014.

*La Vanguardia* does not mention Fendi in the headline or in the subtitle because the news is about two topics: the restoration process and the installation of walkways to see the works in the fountain and how emblematic the monument is: its history, legend and impact in movies. No talks about the importance of patronage, it does not include statements by the mayor or Fendi and does include , without any expressive fanfare, that the Italian brand has funded the restoration of the fountain.

"Fendi to restore the Trevi Fountain", The Italian Tribune, 07/14/2014.

It includes Fendi in the headline and body of the information and it provides enough data: cost, duration of work, statements by visitors, the mayor and a representative of Fendi. It also includes information on patronage and its importance in art restoration, as well as information about other donations made by Italian fashion houses such as

Tod's and Bulgari. It also includes corporate information on Fendi and the history of the Fontana.

"Fendi a Roma finanzia i restauri delle fontane, Repubblica, 03.16.2015.

The news reports on the continuation of the restoration work sponsored by Fendi in the Fontana di Trevi, which has lasted eight months and already starts to bear fruit. We could point out that this is best information for the brand, as it mentions patronage several times and regards the work as "*a philanthropic project that is a tribute paid by the luxury house to its Roman roots*."

#### **5. RESULTS**

The fashion world has become a major factor in Western economies, which has led it to become one of the most active patrons as regards heritage conservation. That is happening in Italy in the light of the results in this study that confirm it. Luxury brands appear to have chosen a way of positioning by choosing to contribute to the social good in the form of History.

The coverage analysis confirms that all the information is positive or neutral. We have not found any data arousing skepticism regarding information, and that can be interpreted as commercial information. We just found a piece of information that takes a more austere stance regarding the firm: in *La Vanguardia*. This piece of news focuses its text on the situation of tourists to visit the famous fountain and the works themselves: installation of scaffolding and walkways; and it briefly speaks about the deterioration of the Italian heritage and lack of resources. While it includes that the full cost of the restoration will be financed by Fendi, is a different piece of information from the rest in the analysis. It delves into more anecdotal, maybe less relevant aspects; We do not know – as we have no data available- whether it has not actually wanted to focus on the brand or whether it has preferred to focus the issue on tourists.

The only two newspapers that do not include the Italian brand name in headlines or subtitles are *La Vanguardia* and *El País*. However, the latter is more generous with information; in other words, the information has more structure of the storyline than the one that has been observed in the Catalan head. That said, these two newspapers are consistent with their information because they have focused its core on the restoration and not on the patronage by Fendi. Equally, the Italian brand is dealt with neutrally. We believe that the coverage dedicated by the media to " *Fendi for fountains*", in addition to the "*informatively colored*" notes that a story about the Fontana di Trevi may have, has served to echo a problem: firstly, the annual cost of heritage conservation in countries like Italy and Spain; and secondly, if governments are able to guarantee it without private initiative.

In the iconic plane, all the pieces of information include a photograph except *Repubblica* newspaper. There are four newspapers including photographs of works with scaffolding at the Fontana, which denotes a greater today. They are the newspapers: *El Pais, La Vanguardia, Italian Tribune* and *Mercury*. Two newspapers choose "*La dolce vita*"; they are *El Mundo*, which includes a video with the scene of the movie at the Fontana, *Telegraph* that includes Anita Ekberg bathing. *New York Times* and *ABC* choose a photograph of the Fontana as we usually know it, ie surrounded

by tourists. And finally, *The Guardian*, which chooses a photograph of Karl Lagerfeld during one of the events of the campaign. We believe that there is coherence of form and substance in the coverage dedicated by the newspapers that were analyzed in terms of making headlines match the body of the news and the photograph illustrating them. It is striking that several pieces of news negatively mention the exploitation carried out by Tod's with the alleged patronage of the Coliseum, which shows the first conclusion of our study that we address below.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

From the theoretical point of view, we find a number of ambiguities that mix patronage and corporate social responsibility. From our point of view, it is clearer to take on patronage as an altruistic donation. This act will always have an impact on the brand image of the sponsoring company. The impact may be positive or not, depending on how it fits the concept.

The analysis of "*Fendi for fountains*" allowed us to check the negative treatment of Tod's, in information that did not even have this brand as the goal of the news. This translates into the fact that carrying out a donation exceeding the guidelines of what must be addressed regarding patronage can adversely affect the sponsoring brand. Similarly, in order to prevent a campaign from failing and hence the subsequent damage to the image of the patron, the campaign should be developed strategically.

The big fashion houses are often criticized for prioritizing business to the detriment of fashion itself, as regards what it has of art and creativity. By becoming an art patron, they have an image of sensitivity, improve their relationships with their audiences and engage in the general welfare. It would appear that there is a double strategy between the fashion-patronage binomial. One, raised by an author mentioned in this study, Howard Adams, that fashion houses pursue long-term investment. And another, the image of the fashion world, especially of luxury brands, which offer the less friendly version of capitalism. We list the main conclusions of our study:

1. Patronage must be developed as strategic planning and in good conditions. A donation and the subsequent sponsoring campaign may suffer the risk of being considered a mere exhibition, as seems to be the case of Tod's, or even a distraction from unethical behavior. The company or brand that chooses this tool should be well positioned and recognized.

2. Patronage can make a difference, get impact on the media, become a reference, and finally socially echo something. The philanthropic activities should be linked to the values of the company; therefore, they should be undertaken in response to strategic management of corporate communications of the company.

3. We believe that patronage is a way and a means of communication at the disposal of the business project and it is unlikely that we believe it has been selfless at some point. What seems to bring about confusion and skepticism is the fact that it was not generally in the seventies, and more specifically in the nineties, when the need to develop it around specific strategies that had not previously been taken into account because it had not been necessary from the social or business point of view is detected. The nature of reaching an influence that for centuries was of a personal nature and now is of a business- or brand-related nature is so present. The goal, therefore, of attempting to obtain benefits in terms of image has not changed, it has just evolved.

4. We cannot consider that a company does not obtain any benefits in favor of a patronage campaign and, based on the same reasoning, conclude that patronage is not altruistic. A company, by the mere fact of its existence, is a wealth generator; what it should do is share some of that wealth with the society in which it operates. We believe that current patronage is a philanthropic activity, and we understand that our keeping on saying that it is barely altruistic does not contribute to define the issues. Therefore, it is not misunderstood charity. It is a duly studied donation that adds value and allows the company to assume a vocation, to communicate values and to improve its relations with the community.

5. Some of the authors we have consulted have noted that for patronage to be as such, it could not respond to persuasive objectives, and the impact obtained on the image of the patron had not been previously supposed. The problem is to check how hard it can be that a donation has been carried out with or without any persuasive goals. And therefore, how we can determine that the impact on the image had been intended or not. In an over-informed society, any entrepreneurial gesture follows a strategy, including an act of generosity. And if not, suffice it to recall the example given on the 11S and Procter & Gamble. The only existing altruism is that of millions of volunteers who, *motu proprio*, give their time, and sometimes even their health, to take care of others. That is not patronage and, therefore, it obeys no strategy.

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