

## **FURNITURE DESIGN AND DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS**

SYSTEMIZATION AND EXPERIMENTATION OF GUIDELINES  
FOR THE DESIGN OF FURNITURE AIMED FOR ECOMMERCE

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## Abstract

A few years ago many people said that *furniture would never be sold through online channels* because *everyone always wants and must see/touch the products before buying*. Well, we used to say the same for clothes ...

Last year 1,79 billion people in the world made an online purchase and today the eCommerce of furniture is one of the most growing market. So how is the world of furniture evolving with the advent of digital channels? Innovation, in this field, is exactly working on this topic in order to make both communication and distribution smarter, closer to consumers, faster, more efficient.

This revolution involves, therefore, the whole strategy, bringing significant improvements and considerations even on the design of the products. Designers are part of this system and play a significant role in this innovation, that needs to be analyzed, understood and absorbed, in order to give life to products properly conceived for this market, develop strategies that allows users to respond to their needs and cross their limits, design strategies that strengthen the big synergies the digital world is able to create.

The aim of the script is, therefore, to go deeper in the knowledge of the mentioned issues, empirically analyze them through case studies, trace some guidelines on furniture eCommerce for product designers and experiment a business strategy derived from the reflections made.

# Introduction

The work starts consequently to a series of experiences related to my last year, when, thanks to the Erasmus project, I lived in Sweden, mother of the essential home living, characterized by natural materials and simple lines, and a period of internship in a furniture design studio in Milan, where I tasted and met the colors and the power of Italian design. From there, the desire to develop my thesis on the topic of furniture today, in the world and in Italy.

Together with the professors Alessandro Deserti and Francesco Zurlo the decision was to reflect on the ongoing great revolutions which involve also this field, putting it in front of big changes and innovations.

We are talking about the digital revolution, both in terms of communication and distribution, that enters our lives every day in micro-moments.

From the birth of the Internet and eCommerce till today, the evolution has been quick and, thanks to new technologies and the spread of AI and the IOT, the growth that we will record in next decade will be increasingly rapid and significant.

It is assumed that the share of total retail sales will increase until 2021, reaching 16%, for a value of 4.479 billion dollars.<sup>1</sup>

Today, 68% of European internet users shop online. Italy is among the European countries that are experiencing the greatest growth. Among the most surprising sectors, there is a home and furniture that records +19% in 2018 and keeps growing.

***What does all this mean for us as designers? How does this revolution challenge product designers?***

Knowing how to conquer the digital market means knowing how to propose innovative sales strategies and products that are aware of this great scope.

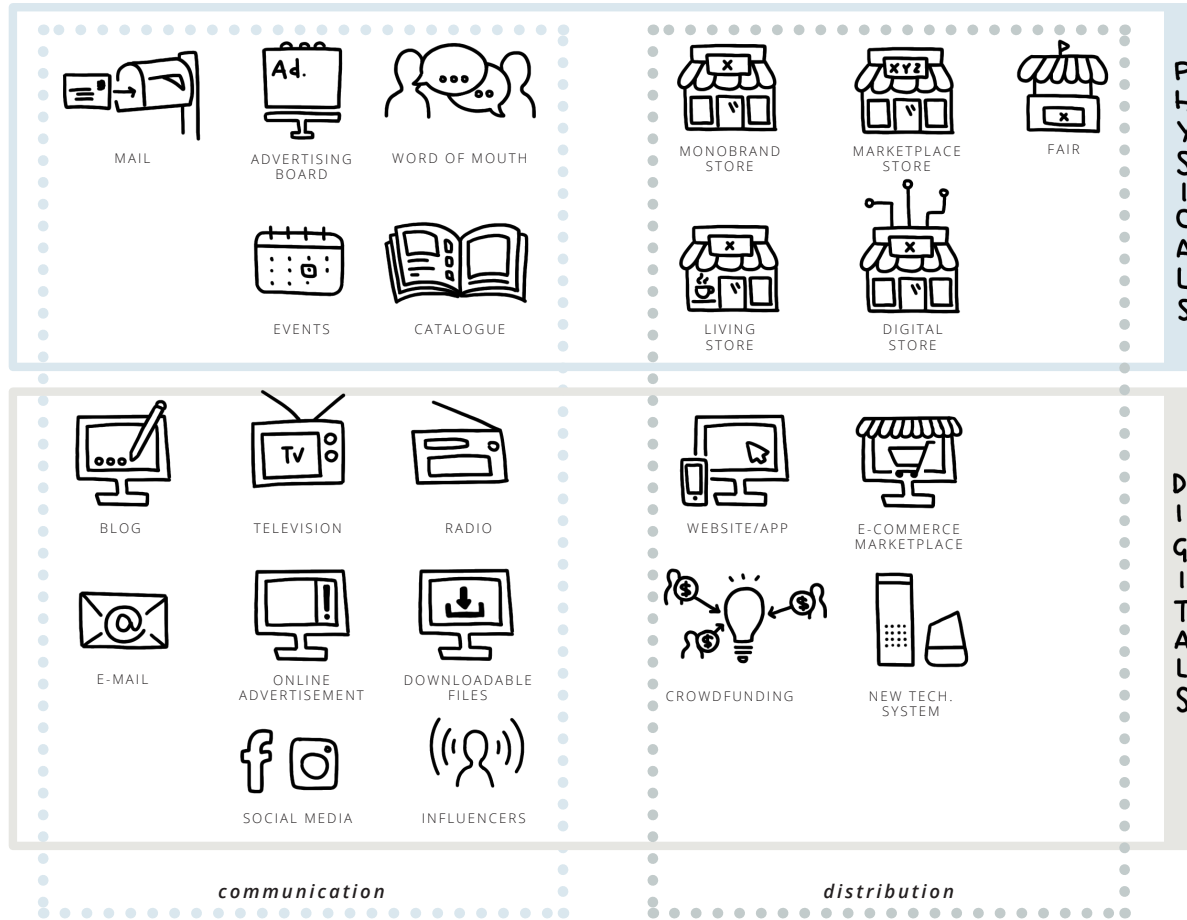
Here then the work of these months is concentrated in four phases: in the first one, a literature review, through bibliographic sources, papers and numerous articles, shows a research on the subjects in question. Later on, it was made an observation of important case studies related to the world of online furniture, with particular attention to the Italian market, with the example of failed and newborn and successful experiences. Hereafter I set myself two project goals. On one hand, the mapping of guidelines for product designers to support the design of a product for the eCommerce market, highlighting the key points to keep in mind, analyze and properly clarify.

And finally, as a fourth and final phase, all this work leads to the definition of a new business strategy for a hypothetical new brand of furniture for eCommerce. Through the reflections that came in the previous phases and the application of the defined guidelines, it is possible to begin developing a business where the key element is precisely the fusion of furniture and digital.

<sup>1</sup> Casaleggio Associati, "E-commerce in Italia 2018", 2018

Literature  
review

# CHANNELS



*producers*

*consumers*

- B2C
- B2B
- C2C
- C2B

## The importance of digital channels

The context we live increasingly requires a strong digitalization. Each of us is involved in this process, both personally and professionally, both consciously and unconsciously. This implies that we need to learn how to develop new skills that are able to coexist with digital evolution. Especially for business and for companies it becomes a fundamental and even basic tool. Therefore professionals in all sectors must learn to expand their skills to take advantage of all the opportunities offered by digital channels.

“

*For companies digital skills are the set of practical skills and knowledge needed to know how to use everything that has to do with information technology, to work and communicate with others.<sup>2</sup>*

We can distinguish three main phases in the digital presence of a business: **develop a website**: whose aim is to let people know and to tell the company's story and all the informations necessary to get in touch; **create a strong user involvement** to strengthen ties with those who are already users and those who could become users (in this phase also the social network can play an important role); **online selling**, that represent the direct connection with the user to sell products or services.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cuneo M., "L'importanza delle competenze digitali per le aziende", 2018, <https://www.mirkocuneo.it/limportanza-delle-competenze-digitali-per-le-aziende/>, [20/01/2019]

<sup>3</sup> Cozzolino F., "L'importanza di una strategia online e di una presenza digitale efficace", [www.spremutedigitali.com/importanza-strategia-presenza-digitale/](http://www.spremutedigitali.com/importanza-strategia-presenza-digitale/), [3/03/2019]



Digital channels allow everyone to have "a front row seat in a huge square", the one on the web, from which almost all consumers pass.

To discuss the importance of the digital channels, used and developed in the correct way, it can be meaningful to use the words, thoughts and even numbers used by Giacomo Antonelli.

Giacomo is an eCommerce consultant specialized in project and optimization, in the fashion field. Born as a marketing manager in physical retail, he decides to embrace e-commerce in 2011. In his digital past, he managed both mono-brand and international multi-brand projects, and grew an agency experience in YNAP. Today he works as a freelance consultant who helps companies grow using datas and technology.

On his personal webpage it is possible to take advantage of very useful advices.

Using numbers and statements he highlights the key points of his thought and essentially the digital values:

" **1 IS THE POSITION EVERY SINGLE CUSTOMER SHOULD HAVE** " <sup>4</sup>

In the first place he talks about the importance of the customers. It means in terms of attraction, customization and conversation.

It is important to develop a business that is designed for a delineated client. Consequently it is important to design a website that attracts and becomes visible and appealing for those clients. Luckily, contemporary technologies allow to collect useful datas about the customers and their needs.

The customization becomes easier, flexible and unavoidable.

<sup>4</sup> Antonelli G., 2019, <https://143.consulting/i-am#my-goals>, [18/11/2018]

Future belongs to real connection with the customers, that also means an open and continue conversation and confrontation with the users.

*" 4 ARE THE CHANNELS WE USE EVERYDAY " 5*

Every company offers an experience (product or service) that is lived by users. For this reason the user needs to be the center of the design.

Today the customer journey is a long, multi-device and fragmented experience.

It moves alternately between online and offline due to the use of multiple channels. This situation leads to build a unified experience adjusted and characterized according to the channel used. The goal is to not lose the overview and the final aim.

*" 3 ARE THE KEY METRICS TO BE IMPROVED "*

The elements on which is important to keep working are: **traffic**, because the number of accesses should always constantly grow; **conversion**, because the improvement is made by the capability of answering to all the customer's needs; **loyalty**, because if you succeed in engaging and retaining customers you will benefit from the power of word of mouth. Positive reviews increase sellings, negative reviews can end companies.



*people at the center*

5 Antonelli G., 2019, <https://143.consulting/i-am#my-goals>, [18/11/2018]



# Omnichannel

Omnichannel is the center of the digital transformation strategy of traditional Italian and international retailers. *The omnichannel marketing is the management of channels, both of communication and sales, so that they do not cannibalize each other, but work together to make each one more effective.* <sup>6</sup>

The focus is to ensure a seamless and continuous customer experience regardless of the channels. It involves the ability to orchestrate in a single direction all the interactions of the customer with the brand. Every available channel (online stores and physical stores, direct marketing via social, email, text messages, apps, etc.) is a part of big and cooperating system.

"All omni-channel experiences will use multiple channels, but not all multi-channel experiences are omni-channel." <sup>7</sup>

It is a growing trend in the recent years: 63% of large and medium-large companies consider omnichannel a fundamental direction of strategic development.

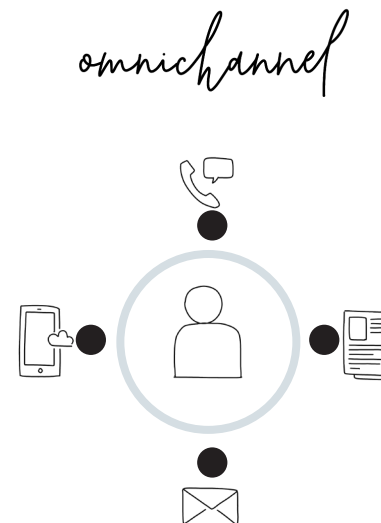
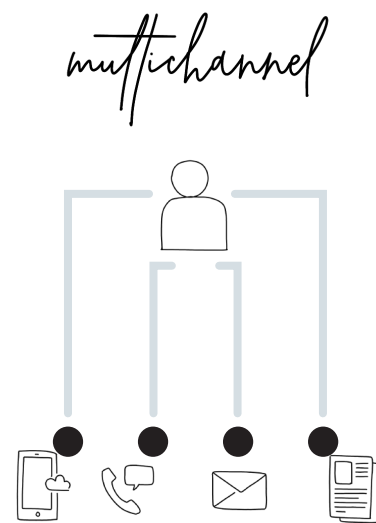
As a matter of fact, we know that most customers today start their research on one device (e.g.: smartphone) and then buy on another (e.g.: computer), or search for products online and then buy them in store.

But right now it is no longer enough to be "simply" present on multiple channels (*multichannel*). The step forward that the *omnichannel strategy* wants to achieve is the efficient integration of the channels.

The knowledge and the datas that each channel collects is then used to make coherent the communication through each channel, to keep the users' surfing going and

<sup>6</sup> Del Moumen S., "The difference between a multi-channel and an omnichannel retail strategy", 2018, <https://digital-me-up.com/2018/03/08/the-difference-between-a-multi-channel-and-an-omnichannel-retail-strategy/>, [6/03/2019]

<sup>7</sup> Agius A., "7 Examples of Brands with Excellent Omni-Channel Experiences", 2017, <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/omni-channel-experience>, [28/11/2018]



establish a continuous *trait d'union*.

Companies using this strategy are able to align their messaging, goals, objectives, and design.

“

*Digital channels win for "efficiency", physical channels for "effectiveness": bet on omnichannel to optimize the business*

(Mario Garaffa)

“

*Considering this phenomenon, companies must redesign their relationship strategies. an omnichannel strategy implies the definition of the touchpoints to be controlled both online and physical, redesign the customer journey in an increasingly personalized way and design brand experiences that are integrated on the different channels*

(Giuliano Noci, Politecnico di Milano)

## THE EXAMPLE OF DISNEY

One of the leading companies that perfectly use the omnichannel strategy is Disney.

It starts with an initial experience on the entertainment giant's beautiful, mobile-responsive website. Once a user booked a trip, he can use the My Disney Experience tool to plan the entire trip, even to secure your Fast Pass. In the park, it is possible to use the mobile app to locate the most interesting attractions, as well as view the estimated wait time for each of them.

Then, the tool Magic Band program acts as a hotel room key, photo storage device for any pictures taken of you with Disney characters, and for food ordering.

That's a truly omni-channel experience,

# Furniture and innovation

Furniture has always been one of the most precious jewels of the Italian creativity.

Right now in Italy, as in the entire world, we are witnessing great changes due, naturally, to the pursuit of innovation and progress.

Furniture is a trade born in the ancient time, it is one of the oldest. And since the dawn, a furniture piece can have an incredible, emotional or monetary, value: it can be self-made, it can be produced by someone famous, an artist, or designed by grandpa, it can be a museum piece or even a gift from someone dear, it can be incredibly useful or maybe just mysteriously beautiful, it can "talk about me" or represent an important phase of your life, it is something that people wish, or even pain, to gain. But at the end it is always something that become our home. The significance of furniture is immense.

And, since through the years men change (at least in his habits and means), furniture needs to change with him.

**Innovation means to bring something new, thanks to a great and strong idea, that adds value.**

Change and innovation walk together. Sometimes they make big steps, upsetting the "how it was before", but sometimes they make super little steps, bringing an improvement with only a small but significant detail. In a field as furniture these big or small improvements can intervene at different levels and make a difference in many ways.

As a matter of fact, the development research can act on the product itself or on the selling and distributing systems.

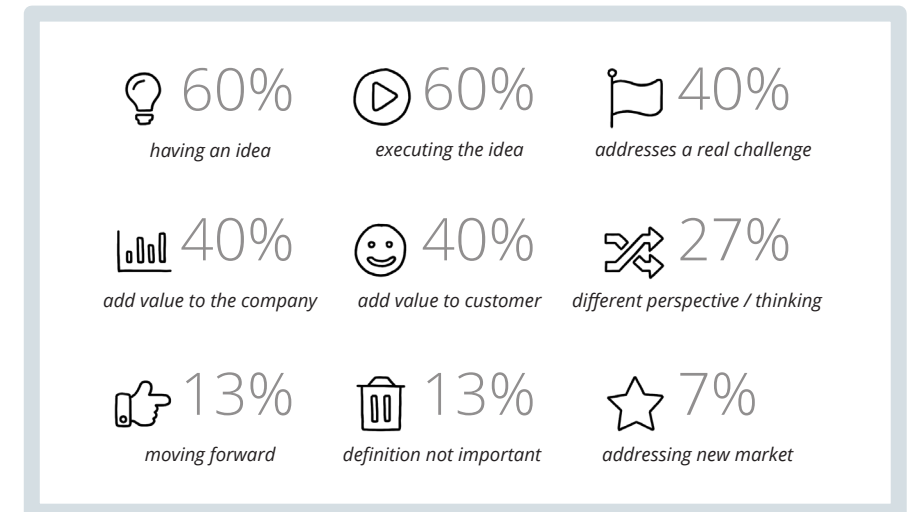
However, in this pursuit, it is important to not forget how unique and deep the relationships around a furniture piece can be.

“

*We always overestimate  
the change that will  
occur in the next two  
years and underestimate  
the change that will  
occur in the next ten.  
Don't let yourself be  
lulled into inaction.*

*(Bill Gates)*

## What is innovation?



image/data source: "What is innovation? 15 experts share their innovation definition", 2016, <https://www.ideatovalue.com/inno/nickskillicorn/2016/03/innovation-15-experts-share-innovation-definition/>, [28/11/2018]

According to an observation made by Innovation Club during the last edition of *Salone del Mobile (2018)*, there are several trends related to innovation in Furniture&Design.<sup>8</sup>

To begin, it is possible to notice the integration of IOT (**Internet of Things**) related to furniture products. It allows a development of smart houses made by interconnected objects.

Another investigated trend is applied on spaces and showrooms: **AR and VR**. These technologies can create virtual spaces, updatable and simulative, where each company could exhibit their best seller products.

To continue, there is a particular interest, in the manufacturing phase, in implementing the **quality control** system for machines and products. Technologies, data collection programs and organizational plans such that it is possible to visualize in real time the possible flaws, and consequently immediately intervene.

Again, developing an **App Building system** it can be possible to support and facilitate the process of create an app for companies. The aim of this trend is to help the digitalization and communicate different aims: from the simple storytelling of a brand, to the catalogue illustration to configurability even.

Then, there's an interest in an **inbound marketing with the community of architects**. Since the beginning, they play a fundamental role as "influencers" that could place products in their projects. The idea is to offer some online filtered and profiled research so that companies can find out the most congenial architects for their products.

“

*The digital age asks for clarity and transparency.*

*About your motives, your processes, your service, and of course your prices.*

As we can notice, nowadays the attention is particularly focused not on the product itself, but much more on "the world around it". It means strategies. It means services. The so-called trends of **gamification** and **servitization** respectively highlight: the use of communication techniques close to the game field, in order to bring the customer in the physical showroom to touch and try the product (gamification), and the strategy of building a strong loyal service around the furniture piece. All these steps, made in these years, show how the digital age is changing the whole system, creating new situations, new relationships, new ways of communication.



*Build relationships*

<sup>8</sup> InnovationClub, 2018, <http://www.innovationclub.it/salonedelmobile2018/>, [3/12/2018]

# Furniture system businesses

To deeply study the systems of furniture and the changes that are in process, it becomes useful the point of view of Gabriella Lojaco. She is a professor at Bocconi University in Milan, a writer and an expert on the international growth of furniture, electrical appliance, cosmetics and eyewear industry in Italy. Particularly her book "Furniture system businesses. Design, product and distribution strategy"<sup>9</sup>, written in 2003, offers several reflections about the furniture field and the contemporary situation.

## DESIGN AND FURNITURE SYSTEM

First of all it is important to discuss about the value and the meaning of design inside this business.

As a matter of fact *design* in this case is conceived by Gabriella Lojaco on different aspects and with differencims:

- *design as a method* to define and operatively communicate company's objectives;
- *design as a process* where creativity and managerial activities are blended together;
- *design as a skill* strictly linked to business differentiation.

*Design Management*<sup>10</sup> plays a very important role in the relationships between design and economical activities. It is a systematic methodology to handle the project process of a product systems and a company's visual identity (logo, packaging, materials, etc.).

Design Management also means to coordinate all the activities, on their different levels, both internally and externally, that end with an important final results considerations.

<sup>9</sup> Lojaco G., "Le imprese del sistema arredamento - Strategie di design, prodotto e distribuzione", 2003, Etas Editore

<sup>10</sup> Gorb P., *design conference*, Aspen, 1988.



Gabriella Lojaco

## NEW COMPETITIVE MODELS IN FURNITURE SYSTEM

There is a distinction between a whole setting and a standing alone furniture that leads to different business considerations and models.

If we consider the selling of a bedroom furniture/ furnishings, or a kitchen setting, or a living room (*complete setting* situation) the most important features that a customer cares about are the surrounding services: for example if he has a wide range of choices, the transport arrangement, the mounting - that in these cases are quite complex and specifics - , the technical and functional facilities, the minimal details analysis. Indeed, in the situation of a single and *stand alone furniture* the importance is focused on the catalogue and the samples: buying a couch the customer will want to know all the possible coverings and casings.

The role of dealers becomes fundamental to understand the marketing situation and the customer satisfaction. As a matter of fact, along the time, dealers can ensure the supply system flexibility and adequacy through the selection of products and brands which are coherent with the overall assortment and which contribute to the store competitiveness and profitability.

For mono-brand stores the situation is quite different. If a product line is unsuccessful it is impossibile to delete it from the portfolio: it could mean, for example, excluding a partner who contributed to the launch of the product. It becomes important a role, qualified and superordinate, that manages client relationship and selection mechanisms.



*What are the main benefits of competitive models based on internet?*

In this sense, IKEA is a great and successful example of a company who was able to carefully identify their market target, considering both purchase and consumption needs. Ikea's clients consider the purchase moment as an enjoyable experience to personalize their space. They like the domestic, practical and democratic style: it feels like a real home, for everyone. Ikea was the first one establishing some strategic activities, as the modular design, the supplying, the marketing.

Another relevant innovation example considers the introduction of INTERNET-BASED technologies. Internet allows not only the online selling, but also an improvement of the informative flows between the different actors. Few years ago people thought that Internet never crossed the furniture field, because of its symbolical and empirical features, difficult to digitally transport. For this reason furniture products were defined High Touch. However history proved the opposite, both in B2B and B2C businesses.

Internet has been used for advertising, selling, to provide information and ease relationships. But it has also been used to reconfigure and upset the whole system of creating value and selling furniture. However there were some elements that are complex for Internet, such as the product launch, tests, formation and rotation, etc. Several examples of B2C demonstrate how different and various could be an Internet-based starting point that catch user's attention.

A specific product category, a cultural movement idea (blogs as *designitalia.it* and *designboom.com*), websites that push on products competitiveness (as *Bizrate.com*, *europbynet.com*), both stores and products research (as *homeportfolio.com* and *webmobili.com*).

“

*How can these models be shaped?*

*What does it change - in comparison with the traditional*

*supply chain -*

*in terms of*

*activities, actors, relationships and*

*costs?*

### IKEA CASE: DIFFERENCES WITH TRADITIONAL VALUE NETWORK

#### VALUE NETWORK WHERE IKEA IS INSERTED

*low price non-assembled products*

*Distributor design driven by cost containment*

*Large size of despecialized warehouses, outside urban areas and with large parking lots*

*high stocks*

*accurate information with catalogs and assembly instructions free service and employees "on request"*

*transport charged to the customer*

*central, peripheral and derivative services:*

- *guarantee of lowest price and fixed prices for one year*
- *purchase guarantee (30 days to decide)*
- *product presentation and setting*
- *prompt delivery*
- *limited customer service, but interior consultancy on request*
- *nursery*
- *luggage carrier rental*
- *quality assurance*
- *many payment solutions*
- *facilities for the disabled*
- *tailoring*
- *transport and assembly not included in the price and paid for with a special commission*
- *payments in installments*
- *Ikea gift vouchers*
- *wide assortment*
- *restaurant, bar*
- *selling Swedish specialties*

#### VALUE NETWORK WHERE TRADITIONAL DEALERS ARE INSERTED

*assembled medium-high price products*

*design by the manufacturer and guided by style and innovation*

*medium size of the specialized or despecialized point of sale, with mainly urban location*

*low inventory level*

*customized information provided by sales staff*

*transportation paid by the shop*

*central and peripheral services*

- *not very wide but deep assortment*
- *design*
- *infrequent payment facilities*
- *post-sales assistance*

## FIRST EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-BASED MODEL EXPERIENCES

Furniture.com: born with the aim of exponentially increasing sales, they underestimated and neglected the logistics and administrative systems.

*Massive advertisement.*

*Rash promise of free delivery.*

*Too many orders.*

*Manufacturing technical problems.*

*Delayed deliveries.*

*Consumers' dissatisfaction.*

Gabriella Lojaco identifies some strategic-competitive archetypes, that she analysed with some experiences.

### a. Producers who sells online all their products (or part of them)

Ethan Allen: in 1999 he started an e-business strategy connecting shops and service centers. Through an extranet and a website, they sold all the products to the public. The first sold products were accessories and padded furniture. In addition, clients could ask to Ethan Allen' designers a consulence. Internet is just a part of this repositioning strategy in order to attract new clients.

### b. Online stores that work as catalog aggregators.

Furniturefind.com: against all experts' expectations and skepticism, after 3 years of study to make the system and the customer service perfect, they achieved the goal. In 2003 their medium online order were around 1.700 dollars.

### c. Distribution chains with both online and physical presence, with the aim of selling products and services and encouraging people to visit their stores.

Eddie Bauer: born as sportswear+home+outlet shop that brings informal and relaxed comfort in homes. The website isn't specialized but it profits by the endless

“

*Is it possible to begin e-commerce initiatives or internet can be used only as a promotional/ advertising vehicle?*

“

*Online or off, you have to earn a customer's trust, offer real value, while providing delivery and service like nobody else.*

possibilities given by internet, allowing the consumer to choose the products, from the most complex to the accessories, comparing prices, shops, materials variations. In the automotive field, for example, some famous brand's websites happened to be useful much more as informative platform, rather than selling channels. In 1999, half of the people who bought a car at the physical sale point declared they found the necessary information through internet.

Therefore, focusing on the Italian scenario, Gabriella Lojaco highlights, referring to 2003 - important to mention - how Internet was used by consumers exclusively as a source of information.

## INTERNET OPPORTUNITIES

Gabriella Lojaco summarize the value of internet on three levels: **for producers**: internet promptly gets important info to fix research, development and advertisement; **for dealers**: internet disposes catalogs and product information updated in real time, allows to receive the automatic confirmation of an online purchase and shows the delivery status; **for the entire supply chain**: internet helps to delete all the waste of time and costs related to the orders management.

The final considerations of the text suggest the general success of online sales, particularly for famous brands, competitive offers, products with easy installation and low sophistication.

Moreover, Gabriella Lojaco claims that the high symbolic value of Italian products needs different models compared to the american ones (click and mortar style). It stimulates more elaborated business models.

Regarding B2B, internet can be a very useful tool to simplify networks between companies, to manage information/orders/sales, to control the communication and to connects production and distribution.

# Production models

Talking about industries, it is important to talk about the production system, that means *the methods used in industry to create goods and services from various resources* ".

All production systems are transformation processes that turn resources into goods or services, thanks to the "factors of production" (labour, capital for materials and machines, equipments, space), called also "five M's": men, machines, methods, materials, money.

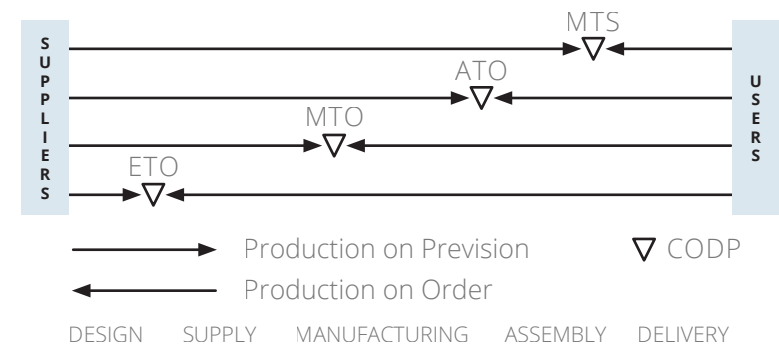
The connection between the production process and market, that is customers' request, brings to consider different models and organization.

There are two different classification maps that describe production systems: *Wortmann classification* and *Abel diagram*, also called three axes classification.

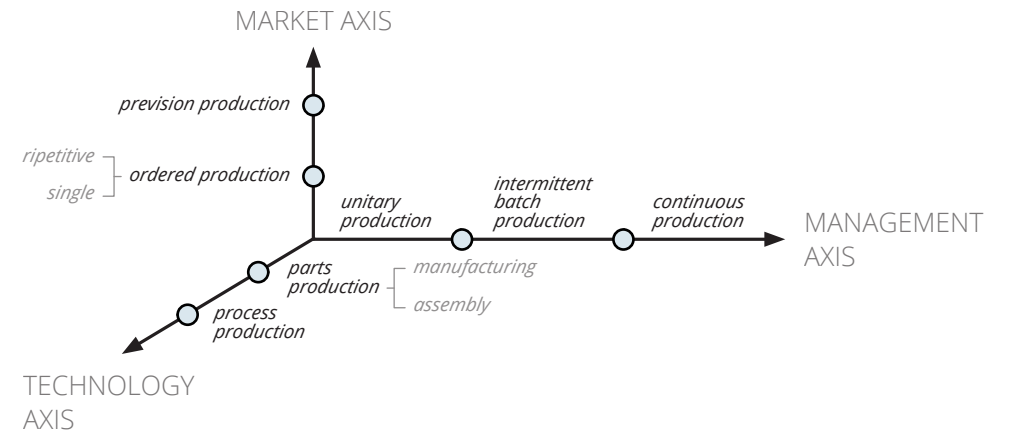
The image in the side page illustrates them.

The first classification, Wortmann's, sorts the industrial production in relation to management categories and the CODP (Customer Order Decoupling Point).

## WORTMANN CLASSIFICATION



## THREE AXIS CLASSIFICATION



## **Made to stock (MTS)**

In this model the client order is made to the finished products of the final stock and consequently the reply is quite immediate. This model is perfect for cases where the demands of customers is continuous and constant.

## **Assemble to order (ATO)**

The client order attends the assembly phase. Two management ways are possible: production based on standard subgroups prevision or subsequent customization of the finished product in the final assembly.

## **Made to order (MTO)**

The client order rises up to in the production chain. Products manufacturing starts only at the moment of the purchase. This model allows to economize in the depot's cost and also in the production (in terms of saved energy).

## **Engineer to order (ETO)**

Similar to MTO model, it rises up in the chain going back, in this case, in the design/engineering steps. The clients become part of the project since the beginning and the product is highly customized.



## Digital transformations

For a long time, digitalization was not an issue for furniture trade - traditional and stationary -. In the recent years, instead, this changed rapidly and massively.<sup>12</sup> Like all the biggest changes, this development is driven by customers and their behaviours: today the Internet is used everyday. Let's think about: how many times do we check something on Google everyday?

The reasons could be many and different: search for information, purchases in online shops, location of a place, etc.

These new attitudes bring to comprehensive digital strategies, new business models, new marketing channels.

People want comfortable choice, wide range of products, no towing. And if we think about the increasing use of smartphone, by consumers, we can immediately imagine how it becomes more and more the dealer's best friend. The study leader Dr. Ernst Gittenberger of KMU Forschung Austria says:

*"The increasing number of buyers is mainly due to young consumer groups. The greatest leap in smartphone shopping in the current analysis period was made by the age cohort 30-39 years - from 24% in the previous year's period to 33%. However, it is only a matter of time before the next consumer cohort will follow suit."*

From one side these considerations let reflect on the importance of young consumer groups. On the other side one of the biggest challenge is therefore the **"MOBILE SHIFT"**.

Applying these elements on furniture, it means that more and more people are looking for suitable furniture and

“

*The internet is like a wave: either you learn to swim on it, or you go down.*

*(Bill Gates)*



online / offline

furnishings in smartphones and tablets.

Mobile, websites designed to be attractive, multichannels and omnichannels strategies, attractive digital marketing concepts are increasingly growing.

Therefore, digital transformation offers many incredible opportunities.

Consumers, consciously or not, show their habits and requests for the optimal digital experience, even in online shopping. **For the customers of tomorrow there isn't any separation between the digital and the real world. They all cooperatively exist!**

It means that also furniture needs to work on and be prepared for the challenge of the future.

But be careful: this digital transition involves sometimes radical changes in the whole structure, not only new sales channels.

It needs a customer-centred mindset.

And it also requires clarity, fluidity and transparency.

Evolution is traceable following human history.

First came artisans, who made ad hoc processes, next came the Industrial Revolution with the standardization of parts and production improving. More recently, adaptable processes allow more variety. Now there is also intelligent processes, that are reinventing the way business are operating.

All this to say that the transformation in progress acts by branching into multiple forms and innovation, that bring also the furniture trade to change and find new ways.

As said before, real world and digital world are no longer separated, they work together. Retailers change and often see the integration of technologies.

The experience become mobile and "everywhere you go".

The consumers have a central role in the strategies, both in a passive and active way.

<sup>12</sup> Hengsberger A., "How the furniture trade is moving into the digital age", 2018, <https://www.lead-innovation.com/english-blog/furniture-trade>, [28/11/2018]

## Consumers role

As previously mentioned, consumers play a central role in the digital transformation we are assisting.

They are at the center of the design, both "passively" and "actively".

The traditional market sees the consumers as the ones who buy the product as it is.

The new strategies, instead, make them part of the process. And, consequently to when they intervene, they can have different roles and the business model can change.

Let's imagine the whole story of a product as a chronological line summarily divided in three big steps: design of the product, making of the product/ company, sale. The biggest role a consumer can have are synthesizable in the following categories.

34



### CONFIGURATION AND CUSTOMIZATION

One of the first moment where a consumer can take part of the process, is the case of companies that allow the customization of the products.

The customer is no longer the one who buys something "finished and packed".

He can choose the product but he can also decide some features. Sometimes the decision change just a detail, sometimes it upsets the product.

There are different levels of modifications.

It can be just a color, a material, a step in the assembling phase, etc.



*CONFIGURATION is the creation of a feature with multiple options available.*

*CUSTOMIZATION is when you build out a feature for just the customer who requested it, and for no one else. You build it to their specifications, and no one else is expected to use it.<sup>13</sup>*

It means that sometimes the personalization is guided by different existing choices of a feature, and sometimes the customers can build the product from the beginning (tailored dimensions' furniture vs modular assembling furniture).

Different furniture big companies are moving in this directions. There are lot of examples, some are better described in the next chapter (the empirical research), some made of configurators, vr, ar and these technologies application their new strategy.

The side image shows Roomle

35

<sup>13</sup> Kao C., "Configuration vs. Customization", 2016, <https://www.productmanagerhq.com/2018/10/configuration-vs-customization/>, [28/11/2018]

**CROWDFUNDING**

Another relevant consumers involvement is given by crowdfunding models. Crowdfunding is a practice in which a project or venture is funded by the monetary contributions most commonly deposited via the Internet.<sup>14</sup>

It gathers small financial contributions from a large number of people. It uses the shared resources of digital communities to support projects what may find it difficult to attract funding through conventional business models. It can work in different ways. People sometimes pledge money in return for something - for instance, a copy of the finished product or an opportunity to feel part of the process - while others simply back projects because they believe in them.<sup>15</sup>

It allows customers to be part of the making of the project: they are engaged in the development and design stage.

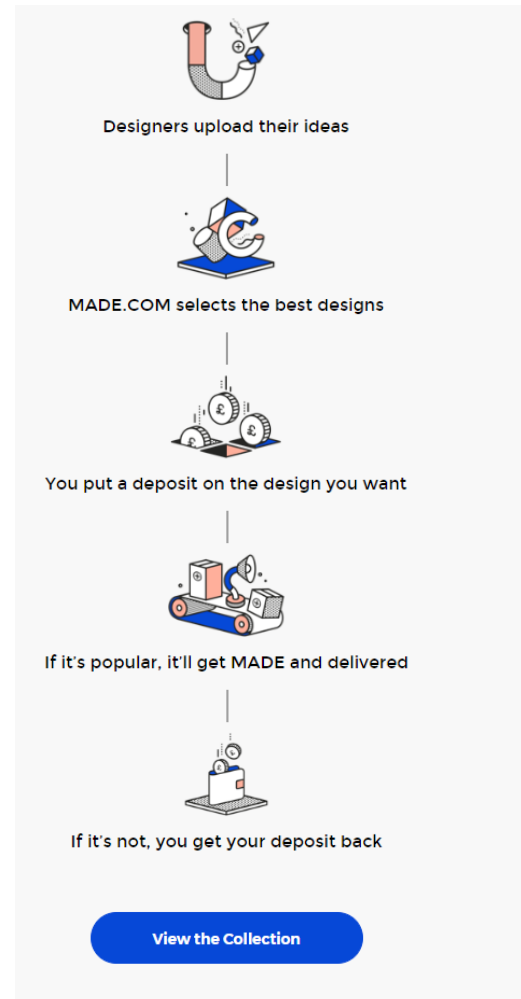
As a matter of fact, this connection can "make or break" an entire business: the "public" can become the ones who make possible an idea.

The most successful example are Kickstarter and Indiegogo.

Sometimes also companies or marketplaces use this practice in a dedicated website section, to better understand users tastes, to finance the production and to create involvement. (e.g.: made.com)

(side page)  
data source:  
London Design Museum,  
24/10/2016 Kickstarter  
Projects

(image down)  
source:  
Made.com



14 Pereira A., "Customer Engagement 'is' Kickstarter", 2015, <https://smbp.uwaterloo.ca/2015/02/customer-engagement-is-kickstarter/>, [10/02/2019]

15 London Design Museum, [19/01/2019]

**INFLUENCERS**

We are living "the age of bloggers, DIY decorators, HGTV". This is way the influencer marketing can be an incredible powerful tools also in the furniture industry.

Influencers can create contents, focus on a specific topic, drive a conversation and install an equal discussion about a product or an opinion on something.

Influencers are more real than the famous actress/ players/singers who are engaged as testimonials by the companies.

*In 2017, an overwhelming 92% of marketers who engaged in influencer marketing reported it as effective or successful.*

*(Linqia research on "The State of Influencer Marketing 2018")<sup>16</sup>*

Furniture industry can gain a lot from this type of market. Let's think about Pinterest: an incredible source of inspirations and trends where the "cool people" but also the common ones share their ideas and concepts. As a matter of fact some companies are starting leading advertisement campaing together with bloggers.

*The result is a 10% click-through rate from blog post to company website.*

*(Sidebuyblog.com)<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Linqia, "The state of influencer marketing 2018", 2018, <http://www.linqia.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Linqia-The-State-of-Influencer-Marketing-2018.pdf>, [23/02/2019] and [www.stratagon.com](http://www.stratagon.com)  
<sup>17</sup> Sidebuyblog, "Influencer marketing by industry: home decor", 2016, <https://sidebuyblog.com/2016/01/22/influencer-marketing-by-industry-home-decor/>, [25/02/2019]



*side image source: [www.makeyourhome.net](http://www.makeyourhome.net), Roberta Borrelli, architect and interior/product design blogger*

*image source: [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)*



*Conversations*

# Micromoments

## "CUSTOMERS IN THE AGE OF ASSISTANCE"<sup>18</sup>

As said before, the mobile innovation is opening new roads in our everyday life. New consumers have arrived. Everyone's behaviours are more and more fragmented, regulated, helped, assisted by little moments on the smartphone.

This gradual change leads to customers who can get exactly what they want, instantly and effortlessly. And the results is that they become more curious, demanding and impatient.

On the other side, for companies it means to be able to give these "answers" to their users, and be able to be fast and effective. Consequently brands need to know anticipately the needs of its consumers.

This ability can define the grow and the success.

*"Micro-moments occur when people reflexively turn to a device - increasingly a smartphone - to act on a need to learn something, do something, discover something, watch something, or buy something.*

*They are intent-rich moments when decisions are made and preferences shaped. In these moments, consumers' expectations are higher than ever."*<sup>19</sup>

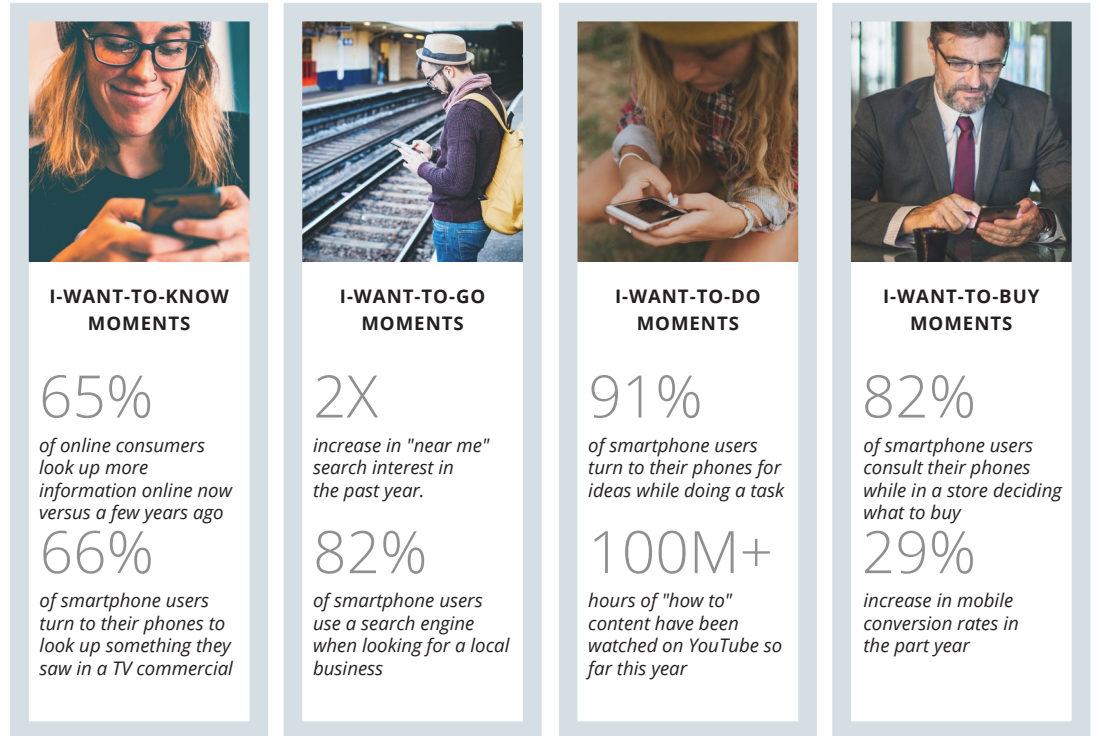
*(Sridhar Ramaswamy)*

“

*Customer expectations and the customer evolutionary cycle are definitely going through a step change.*

*Our customers, in a good way, continue to be more demanding day by day*

*(Amit Shah)*



*data source: Brancale F., "Micromoments: cosa sono e come utilizzarli nel marketing", 2016, <http://www.themarketingfreaks.com/2016/12/micromoments-cosa-sono-e-come-utilizzarli-nel-marketing/>, [19/12/2018]*

<sup>18</sup> Google, "Consumers in the age of assistance", 2018, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/ageofassistance/>, [18/12/2018]

<sup>19</sup> Ramaswamy S., "How Micro-Moments Are Changing the Rules", 2015, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/micromoments/how-micromoments-are-changing-rules/>, [16/12/2018]

Micro-moments are fundamental to learn more about customers and about the key points every company should keep in mind.<sup>20</sup>

**1) be fast**

60% of users say that purchases are faster thanks to the content they find online, 40% of users do not wait if a site don't load in 4 seconds, 67% of users leave if a form to complete is too long. Fast and immediate.

**2) be present**

90% of users don't anticipately decide what brand they will buy, but the 82% do an internet research before buying in the store. 2/3 of people go to internet after seeing a tv advertisement and 1/3 buys products they didn't think about. Therefore companies need to be present and active through the right channels. Thanks to the *content marketing* it is possible to do deep researches on consumers to better understand their needs and habits on sales.

**3) be useful**

Function, effectiveness, utility. As soon consumers needs are understood, these aspects will be prior and successful.

Starting from 2000's the process of digitalization is turning the world of Engineering, Architecture and Design. The marketing strategies focus the attention on the creation of IT tools that companies could offer to their clients, as library of 2D files and 3D files. And today CAD files are replaced by BIM objects.

**PEOPLE HAVE BECOME RESEARCH-OBSSESSED, EVEN ABOUT THE SMALL STUFF. (... ) EACH DECISION IS AN INFORMED ONE.**

>80%

*growth in "best" mobile searches in the past two years*

**TODAY PEOPLE EXPECT EVERY DIGITAL EXPERIENCE TO BE PERSONALIZED JUST FOR THEM.**

*"Customer expectations and the customer evolutionary cycle are definitely going through a step change. Our customers, in a good way, continue to be more demanding day by day."*

*Amit Shah, 1-800-Flowers.com*

**PEOPLE ARE MAKING DECISIONS FASTER THAN EVER.**

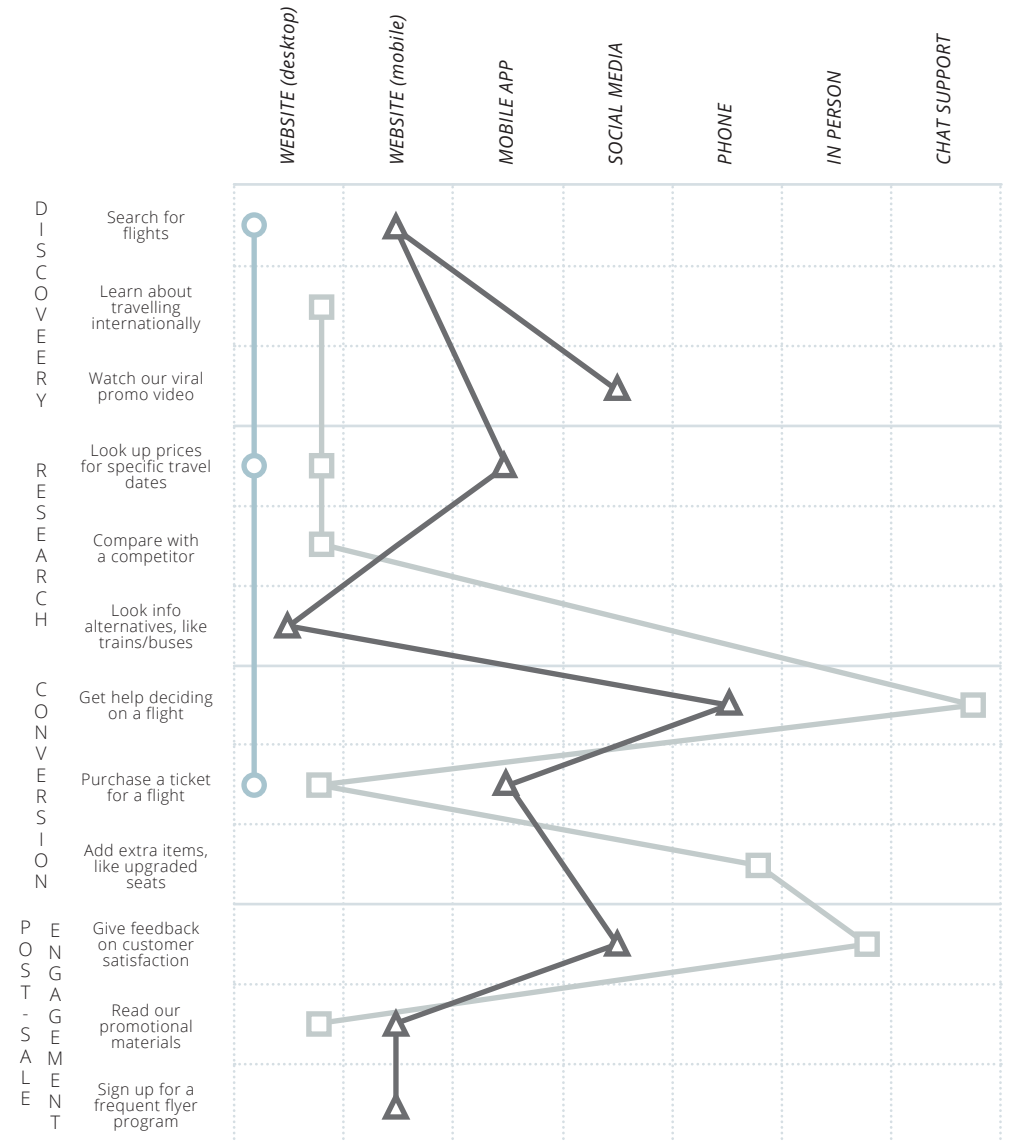
>150%

*growth in mobile searches for "....near me now"*

<sup>20</sup> Brancale F., "Micromoments: cosa sono e come utilizzarli nel marketing", 2016, <http://www.themarketingfreaks.com/2016/12/micromoments-cosa-sono-e-come-utilizzarli-nel-marketing/>, [19/12/2018]

- Theresa, 35  
Business traveler
- Jim, 63  
Recent retiree
- △ Kaylie, 19  
College student

**Customer journey associated to micromoments [e.g. airplanes company]<sup>19</sup>**



# BIM innovation

## WHAT IS BIM?

*Building Information Modeling*: the National Institutes of Building Science defines it as the “digital representation of physical and functional characteristics of an object”.<sup>21</sup> BIM can not therefore be considered a product, a technology, nor a software application. It is a process that organize all the information concerning an object, a platform where it is possible to insert both graphic data (such as drawings) and technical informations (expected life cycle, materials, etc).

BIM is born to meet the need of greater collaboration between different roles, effective software interoperability, easier integration between processes and effective sustainability

**BIM = collaborative design method.**

This system allows integrate in a single model the useful information in every phase of the design, from the architectural to the structural, from the plant one to the energetic one.

All of the actors operating in the building world benefit from its functionalities: engineers, architects, installers, technicians, testers and naturally construction companies.

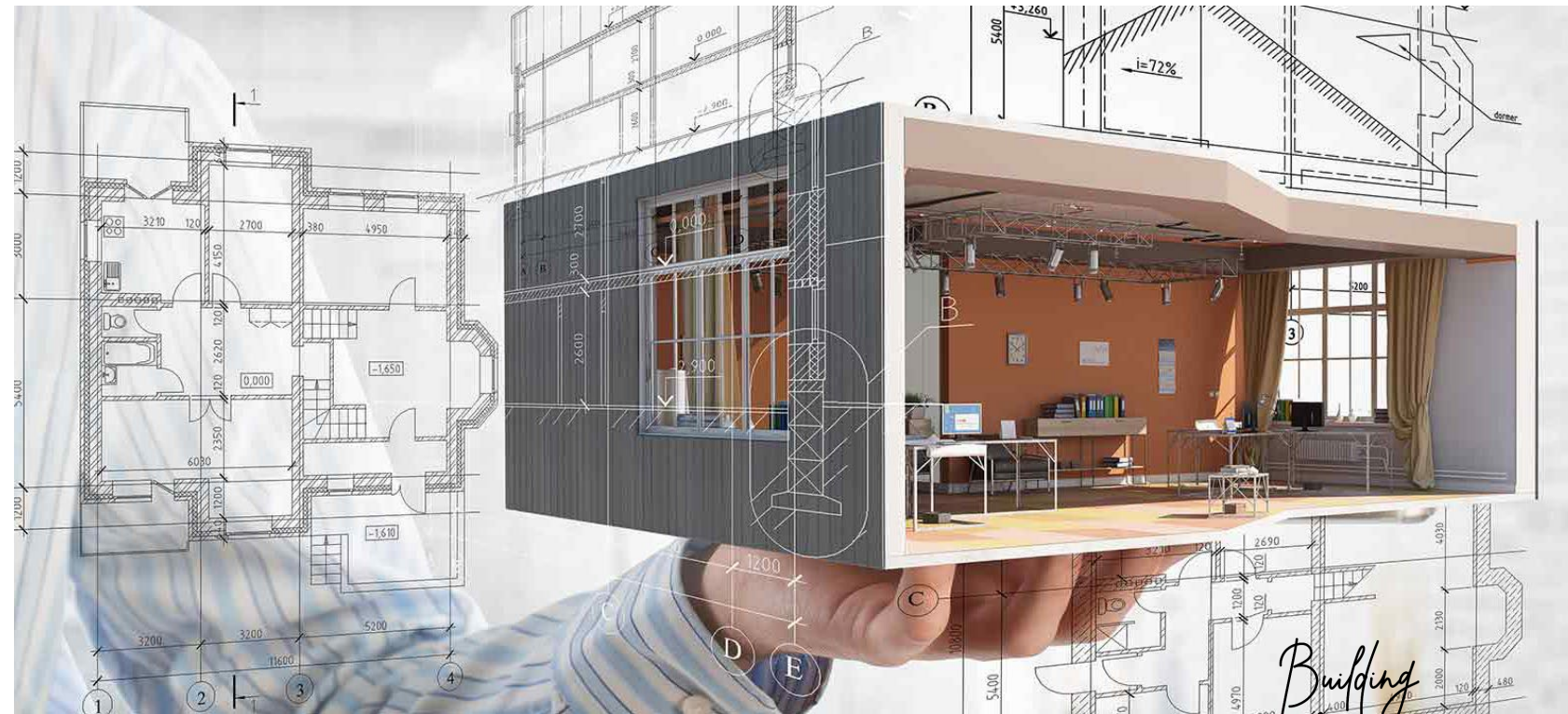
Therefore 3D digital modeling is enriched with information regarding a data package of technical characteristics, offered by the companies through BIM objects.

## BIM OBJECTS

A BIM object is a “container of detailed information”, from the geometrical to the technical characteristics.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> NKE Blog, “Cos'è il BIM e a cosa serve: definizione, funzionalità, applicazioni”, 2017, <http://blog.nke360.com/bim-definizione-funzionalita%C3%A0-applicazioni>, [3/12/2018]

<sup>22</sup> Mastrodonato S., “Le 5 caratteristiche per riconoscere un oggetto BIM ben fatto”, 2018, [https://bim.archiproducts.com/it/notizie/le-5-caratteristiche-per-riconoscere-un-oggetto-bim-ben-fatto\\_64704](https://bim.archiproducts.com/it/notizie/le-5-caratteristiche-per-riconoscere-un-oggetto-bim-ben-fatto_64704), [14/12/2018]



It is something much more complex than the previous 2D and 3D CAD blocks, the BIM object is a parametric model. BIM objects can be divided in 3 typologies: **system objects**: all the elements usually assembled on site - such as walls, floors, roofs, pillars, beams and foundations - composed of stratigraphies of different materials; **loadable objects**: usually delivered to the site ready for installation - such as doors, windows, furniture and various systems; **objects modeled in the project**: personalized objects, modeled "ad hoc" for the project. A BIM object can be created by specific BIM softwares. The main one is Revit, then there are SketchUp, ArchiCAD, Edificius, Allplan. Each software has its own relative output file. But there is also an open format, the IFC file. It is a format compatible with all BIM oriented software, developed to facilitate the collaboration among the actors involved. However, an IFC file can not contain all type variants, but each object corresponds to only one variant and its associated attributes. The professional role of the designer evolves and becomes more and more digital and managerial: a professional 4.0 who own knowledge of data management, general informatics and writing languages of CAD-BIM software.<sup>23</sup>

The use of BIM technology is strengthening the network of the different specialized technicians, today even interior and product designers, facilitating collaborative relationships between colleagues and the establishment of new associated studies.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Carucci M., "Cna. Più opportunità con il BIM", 2018, <https://www.avvenire.it/economia/pagine/cna-piu-opportunita-con-il-bim>, [10/03/2019]

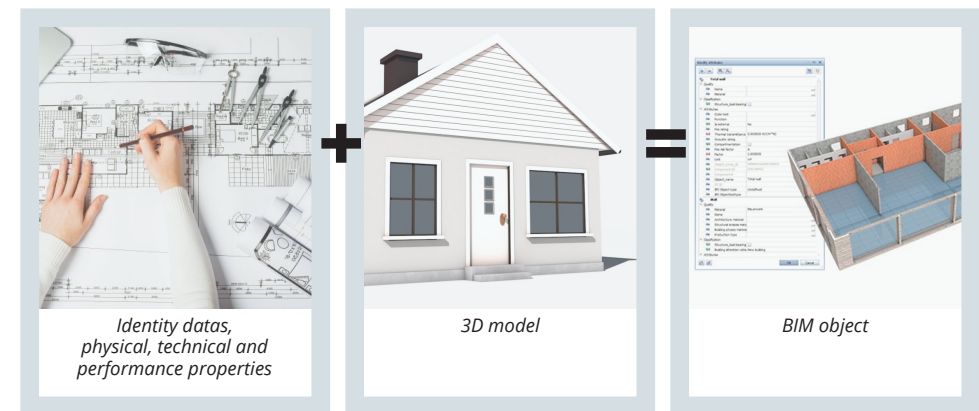
<sup>24</sup> LeadingArchitecture, "When interior designers harness the power of BIM and virtual reality software", 2016, <https://www.leadingarchitecture.co.za/when-interior-designers-harness-the-power-of-bim-and-virtual-reality-software/>, [10/03/2019]

“

*In short, BIM software allows us to easily create an interior design model that enables us to visualise the design using real world parameters. (...) And then of course the accurate and detailed information that we get from the schedules allows us to take control of costings, timelines, deadlines, etc,"*

*(Jon Case)*

### What is a BIM object?



Mastrolonardo S., "Le 5 caratteristiche per riconoscere un oggetto BIM ben fatto", 2018, [https://bim.archiproducts.com/it/notizie/le-5-caratteristiche-per-riconoscere-un-oggetto-bim-ben-fatto\\_64704](https://bim.archiproducts.com/it/notizie/le-5-caratteristiche-per-riconoscere-un-oggetto-bim-ben-fatto_64704), [14/12/2018]



## EXAMPLES OF OPEN-SHARED BIM

One of the most interesting examples is the platform created inside Archiproducts, entirely dedicated to BIM in terms of news and online library where professionals can download (or upload) BIM files for their projects.

**BIM.archiproducts** is one of the biggest certified digital library.

It offers a wide selection of products of different categories of the most famous and high quality companies: lamps, floors, mechanical components and accessories, etc. Everything that can be useful in the business of building.

Another big and famous example is **BIMobject**, the most international and bigger portal. The solutions offered to manufacturers of architectural components, from construction to interior design, include development, publication, maintenance and dissemination of digital copies of products, BIM objects.

Lot of very important brand are present on these platform, offering their products ready to be downloaded in BIM files. (E.g.: Alessi, Moroso, Riva1920, Poliform, Ikea, Axor, Internoitaliano, etc...).

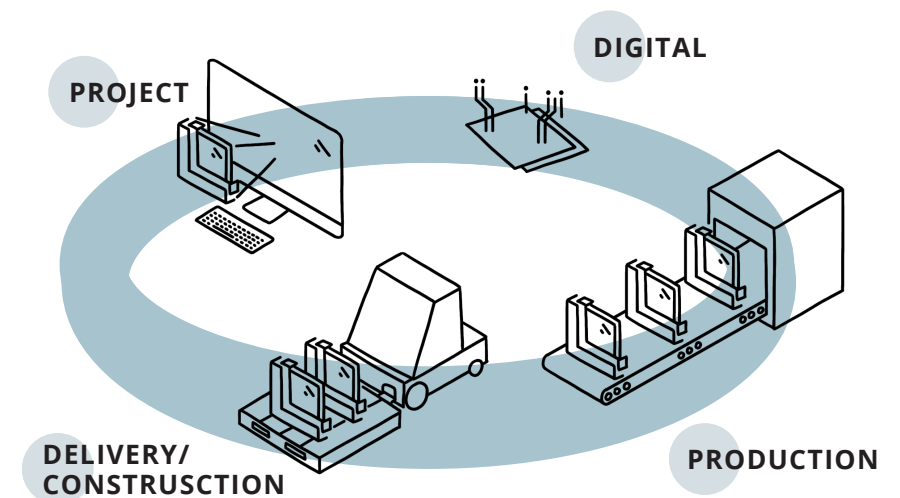


image source: [bim.archiproducts.com](http://bim.archiproducts.com), article "Le 5 caratteristiche per riconoscere un oggetto bim ben fatto" by Stefania Mastrodonardo, 21/06/2018

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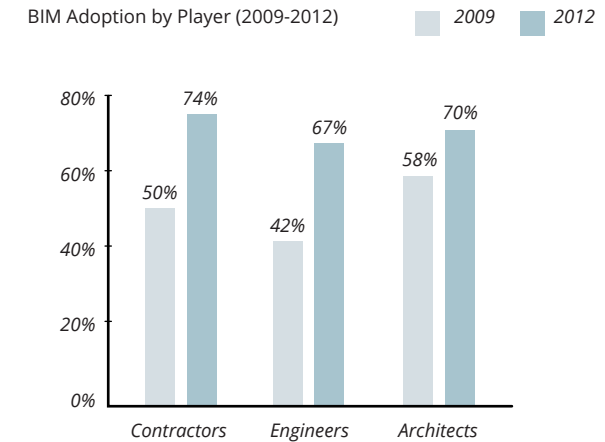
*It is clear that these roles are addressed in the first instance to architects/ engineers but that to complete the Bim supply chain, one must look beyond so that all operators on construction sites have the capacity to collaborate in Bim projects. Only in this way can one think of being able to achieve the goals set by the introduction of Bim: cost reduction, safer delivery times, lower environmental impact, higher productivity.*

*(Fabio Massimo)*

## THE ITALIAN SITUATION

While in the rest of Europe and in America the BIM revolution started several years ago (around 2007), Italy is accepting and working on this massive change only from 2017. As a matter of fact, according to *Del Rio decree*, **from 2019 it will become mandatory, for projects over 100 million euro, to realize the process everything in Bim**. Consequently all the workers as engineer and installers will have to know how to read the BIM projects, and also small companies will have to update and form in this sense. Therefore all the businesses today are asked to re-imagine themselves and adapt to change in order to become competitive even in the digital world and turn to the new generations of consumers. Adopting BIM, for a company also means becoming eco-sustainable from different points of view, as a matter of fact some statistics showed that 75% of BIM companies have positive returns on their investments, with shorter project life cycles and savings on the costs of office work and materials.<sup>25</sup> In Italy, already 31k architects/designers work in BIM and over two billion works have been made in BIM; moreover many organizations are moving to offer certificates for the roles of BIM specialist/coordinator/manager.

*connecting businesses*



“  
The percentage of companies using BIM jumped from 28% in 2007, to 49% in 2009, and to 71% in 2012. For the first time ever, more contractors are using BIM than architects.

“  
From 2019 it will be mandatory to realize project - over 100 million euros - in Building Information Modeling and therefore also installers and installers will have to adapt.

<sup>25</sup> Carucci M., "Cna. Più opportunità con il BIM", 2018, <https://www.avvenire.it/economia/pagine/cna-piu-opportunita-con-il-bim>, [10/03/2019]

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## Case Study

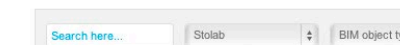
### THE EXPERIENCE OF STOLAB

Stolab is one of the first furniture companies in the world that generated and shared online the BIM files of their products.

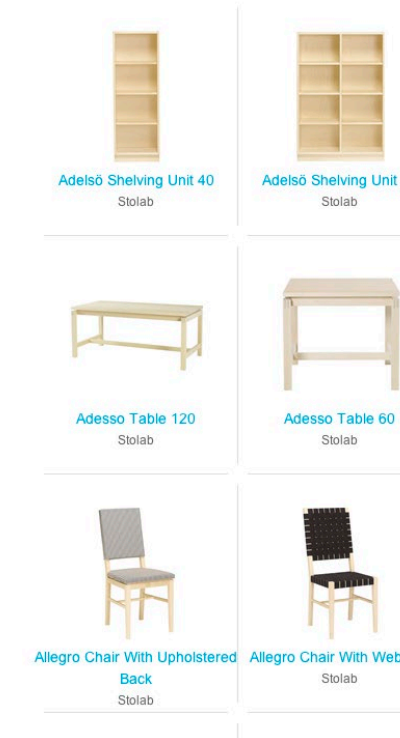
Thanks to the portal BIMobjects, one of the biggest in the world, they made possible - already in the "far" 2012 - to download their single products.

This led to great opportunities for Stolab: such as to expand and create new business opportunities, as well as serving the Scandinavian designers that use Autodesk Revit and other BIM software.

They don't sell online, they sell through retail store.



180 Products with 1158 BIM object downloads from 1 real manufa



“

*Serving the customers and engaging with them is a key to our success, this is why we choose BIMobject AB for this job, they have a complete range of services around the BIM/CAD technology, as well as deep know-how in the marketing/sales processes.*

*[Martin Johansson, CEO Stolab]*

## Digital enters the physical

Digital marketing is an incredible source and transformation that every company is facing nowadays. The channels have increased exponentially. And we understood that each of them is important, because it has a *specific function* and reach *specific people* in a *specific way*.

It means that there aren't channels that don't work and it also means that the relationship between consumers and company is deep and acts in all its levels (whatever it is: just an information, a general sale or a custom action on a loyal customer).

Therefore the central point is the relationship with the customer, whose maximum level is the physical one, where two people meet face-to-face or where the customer physically interact with the product. These are the moment where the final choice is made.

Buy or don't buy.

A new step that marketing is taking in the last year is integrating digital and physical, together, in the same place.

To better analyze and explain this phenomenon it is possible to observe how some big brands are acting in order to optimize the selling, but mostly meet the consumer and his requests.

*Amazon* made a partnership with a supermarket chain to start the AmazonGo food sales experimentation.<sup>26</sup>

*Facile.it* introduced a network of franchised stores where the consultant can meet directly - face to face - his client and establish a relationship of trust.

Then we have the introduction of "*guideshop*: stores where you can't buy anything", close to the world of fashion, where the goal is to overcome the biggest

<sup>26</sup> "I 15 negozi più innovativi del mondo", 2019, <https://www.economyup.it/retail/i-10-negozi-piu-innovativi-del-mondo/>, [8/02/2018]



*new forms  
of retail*

obstacle of the online cloth sale: sizes. As a matter of fact these stores offer the possibility to find "your best size" for every brand, so that you can go on with an online order. The advantage of this new form of sales provides a personalized and "light" customer experience, tailored for millennials, the ones who constantly use internet for everything. And for retailers become an opportunity to know the customers in person.<sup>27</sup>

### RELEVANT EXAMPLES

A very interesting article, published in august 2018, shows some examples where innovation has been brought by digital+physical experience, applied in different fields and products sectors.<sup>28</sup>

Direct experience, through our senses, with a product is the winning factor that determines the purchase.

On the other side, the digital world offers opportunities and strategies that can expand and power the physical and real experience inside stores.

So here is the reason why the two models are combined.

The examples in the following pages can be very inspiring, showing the successful tentatives of some very famous brands.

<sup>27</sup> Vargiu A., "Shopping 2.0, ecco i Guideshop: i negozi diventano il luogo di prova, gli acquisti si fanno online", 2018, <https://www.la-notizia.net/2018/04/13/shopping-2-0-ecco-i-guideshop-i-negozi-diventano-il-luogo-di-prova-gli-acquisti-si-fanno-online/>, [3/12/2018]

<sup>28</sup> "I 15 negozi più innovativi del mondo", 2019, <https://www.economyup.it/retail/i-10-negozi-piu-innovativi-del-mondo/>, [8/02/2018]



## *Roses Bikes* **BOCHOLT (GERMANY)**

A family company in the business of bikes and accessories renews its flagship to enrich the customer experience with more possibilities to try and customize the products. The use of physical and digital channels are used in their maximum flexibility in the purchase journey. Consumers and bike fans can enter in an entire bike-world where everything can be tailor-made.



For example, you can start customizing your bike online and then go to the physical store and continue the customization with the help of an assistant (or viceversa). Then, inside the physical store, it is also possible for the consumers to test the different products thanks to the installation of simulation stations, like GPS, the wind tunnel or the dark room.

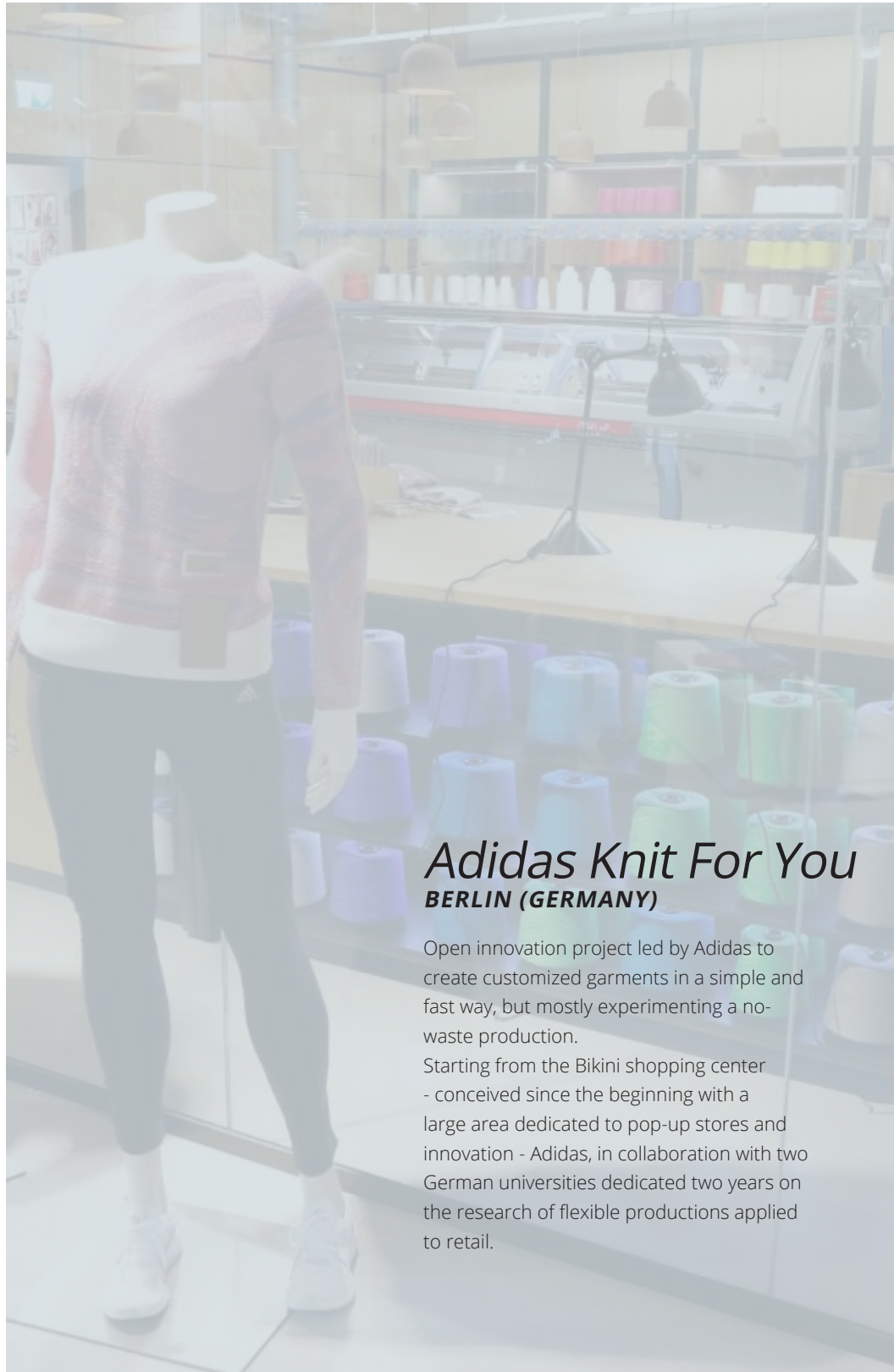
The sale experience can become a slow process where also entertainment and learning take part.

*#crossing-channels*

*#customization*

*#360°service*

*#try-before-buy*



## *Adidas Knit For You* **BERLIN (GERMANY)**

Open innovation project led by Adidas to create customized garments in a simple and fast way, but mostly experimenting a no-waste production.

Starting from the Bikini shopping center - conceived since the beginning with a large area dedicated to pop-up stores and innovation - Adidas, in collaboration with two German universities dedicated two years on the research of flexible productions applied to retail.



The innovative digital architecture allows customer to design instore their own sweaters. To ensure the perfect size fitting Adidas provided a body scanner, and to inspire clients there are dynamic projections that reacts to users movements.

Customers are guided through every single stage of the design and the production of the garment, making the process simple, engaging and fast.

*#DesignedByYou*

*#NoWaste*

*#NewPopUpStore*

*flowing experience*



## **Nike Soho Flagship NEW YORK (USA)**

Concept store launched for the first time in New York and then opened in other parts of the world. It offers the possibility to try the sneakers while playing basketball, doing running or exercises, and customize them in an immersive and digital environment. As a matter of fact consumers can also access contents and information on the most followed teams. Lots of interactive screens allow to browse the Nike product catalog indicating the ones available in the store.

For the first time Nike introduced the Nike NBA Connected Jersey: downloading the NikeConnect app customers can frame the uniform's label to immediately access NBA contents: match videos, interviews, athletes' spotify playlists, etc.

The other important feature impossible to forget is customization, particularly wide and free. In fact Nike was the first brand introducing it for shoes.

*#VisualIdentity*

*#cross-channels*

*#try-before-buy*

*#highcustomization*

## Lago (ITALIA)

Lago is an Italian interior and furniture company whose branding and retail strategy integrates digital community, sales, private homes and public spaces, to bring the Lago experience to life at 360°. The use of digital channels also allowed them to orient market and products thanks to the collected information. Lago listens to its consumers and needs. Particularly, the Lago distribution includes different types of sales point: 30 brand stores (Rome, Milan, Paris); multi-brand stores; Lago Specialist stores:



shops entirely dedicated to a single house area; new retail formulas, such as Lago The Other Store, whose example is "Open-More Than Books" in Milan (a fully furnished space that integrates bookstore, café and co-working); then Apartment Lago, a real apartment, opened to the public in case of events and visits. Lago also started the "Talking Furniture" project: furnitures have an NFC technology that, framed with the smartphone app, gives info, images, texts, sounds.

To respect the environment they design with Lyfe Cycle Assessment methodology.

*#liquid retail*  
*#greentailing*



## Retail 4.0

The sales situation shows that there is still lot of possibilities to grow for digital stores. It is true that ecommerce is exponentially conquering the market, but facts demonstrate how much people still need, care and look for physical connection.

According to *Retail Touch Point*<sup>29</sup>, in 2017 94% of all retail sales still take place in store.

And the real challenge is what happens when, as said before, the digital and physical sales get together.

The omnichannel seamless solution that is generated become an extremely rewarding experience, especially for Millennials, whose purchase journey is very thoughtful and alternate between all the channels.

The occurring strategy combines the ability to visualize and represent products in a different way. Images and information are designed to be conveyed on multiple channels and communication actions like cross selling and up selling, and all digital marketing initiatives.

**UPSELLING IS THE PRACTICE OF ENCOURAGING CUSTOMERS TO PURCHASE A COMPARABLE HIGHER-END PRODUCT THAN THE ONE IN QUESTION.**

**CROSS-SELLING IS THE SELLING STRATEGY TO INVITE CUSTOMERS, WHO ALREADY BOUGHT AN ITEM, TO BUY RELATED OR COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS OR SERVICES.**<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> D'Acquisto D., "Un negozio fisico può essere la base del successo di un eCommerce", 2017, <https://www.ninjamarketing.it/2017/05/10/negozio-fisico-successo-ecommerce/>, [19/12/2018]

<sup>30</sup> "What is the difference between upselling and cross-selling?", <https://www.bigcommerce.com/ecommerce-answers/what-difference-between-upselling-and-cross-selling/>, [5/01/2018]; [www.glossariomarketing.it](http://www.glossariomarketing.it) and [webmarketingaziendale.it](http://webmarketingaziendale.it)

“

*Physical stores  
aren't dead at all.  
Selling has changed!*

*(Jackelin Coloma,  
article on [www.cdweb.blog](http://www.cdweb.blog),  
27/02/2018).*



Retail 4.0 develops on four guide lines:

The first one is **BROWSING 4.0**, that refers to the engaging and exhaustive shopping experience; the second one is about **TRANSACTIONS 4.0**, that are possible with multi-payment systems; then **PURCHASES 4.0**, since the variety of methods for purchases and deliveries is wide and extended; and finally **INTERACTIONS 4.0**, because information are offered with advanced methodologies and a high customizability.

Bob Hetu, Research Director at Gartner Retail Industry Services Team, puts the focal point of the *customer-centered experience* in the intersection of these four processes.

“

*Unified commerce requires a huge understanding on how customers use technology in their everyday lives. As a result, retailers must implement technologies that simplify customers lives, making the experience easier and safer. (...) That's why it's essential to involve social media, increase customer engagement, develop one-to-one customized marketing skills and use advanced analytical tools.*<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Zanotti L., "Il futuro della distribuzione secondo Gartner", 2018, <http://web.guttadauro.it/blog/retail-e-ristorazione/il-futuro-della-distribuzione-secondo-gartner/>, [11/12/2018]

## Fjord says...

The famous design&innovation consultancy Fjord gave lot of interesting data, information, thoughts, advices on trends about the years 2018 and 2019. We already spoke about these phenomenon, but in this chapter we will go deeper thanks to Fjord Anlysis.

### "PHYSICAL FIGHTS BACK" (2018 Fjord Trends Analysis)

The report of the year 2018 starts with a big topic: the revenge of the physical dimension on digital.

Technology is everywhere, the digital is invisible and the boudaries between physical and digital are blurred. If we think about the IOT devices, as we can see in the side page, we are assisting to an exponential growth, that will rise to 75.4bn by 2025. On the same time, people are starting to move away from intrusive digital technologies, accepting a more personal approach where technology becomes more ambient. People like the combination of physical, human and sensory experience: it creates lasting memories.

It means, for designers, to think about thrilling and exciting experience that can be inspired by technologies and coordinated by a strong digital strategy

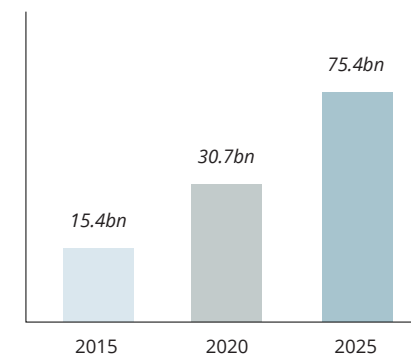
### "SPACE ODISSEY" (2019 Fjord Trends Analysis)

This section of the 2019 analysis wants to continue the one in 2018's.

The physical+digital experience is moving also to public spaces, with a great care on flexibility and personalization. Spaces, now, demand to be design in order to elevate the users, both in minds and experiences.

Users behaviour on digital channels can also give interesting insights to what people want and value, and new tech partnerships should be explored to answer these needs.

Global IOT Devices



Data source: IHS, Fjord, 2018

“

*As technology becomes increasingly affordable, it is disèersed into the physical world and blurs into the background.*

*(Fjord Trend Analysis 2018).*

“

*Software will not replace all offline retail, but will be used instead to transform certain offline retail experiences.*

*(Fjord Trend Analysis 2019).*

# The digital innovation in furniture business

The previous chapters help us understand the innovations and values that digital can provide. Applying these reflections particularly in the furniture field, it is interesting to list the positivities, but mostly the possibilities that digital opens up.



## **\_COMPLETE CATALOG OFFER**

The digital can immediately offer the entire catalog, always updated and complete in all its divisions. If inside a physical store you can see the exhibited products only, on a digital channel you can explore everything a company does. You can even base the research on the whole products map, gradually filtering the type of product you are looking for.



## **\_24/24 H**

Linked to micro-moments topic, the digital allows the companies to reach the user at any daily time. There isn't a schedule, as it is for shops, because the user decide when is the best time: he surfs the channel when he can, both intentionally or randomly (e.g.: after seeing an advertisement).



## **\_COMPLETE INFORMATION**

Digital can give very detailed information and answer to what customer asks. If he is looking for technical information he can usually and easily find data sheets. Then, for example, in relation to the technological features a website have there are different possible interaction with the product, which amplify the collection of information.



## **\_CONSUMERS FEEDBACKS**

In a physical store you don't know how many people bought that product, if they liked it, if the performances are respect, etc. On digital channels you can read other people feedbacks, you can interact with people that are "on your side",



## **\_FREE INTERACTION**

Through digital channels the levels of consumer-company interaction increase. Among the many benefits, there is the possibility of contacting quickly and, above all, "without any obligation" to ask for a quote or an information. The presence of a screen between the two actors (consumer-company) become a positive factor and a reason of act in freedom for the user.



## **\_PRICES AND PRODUCTS CONFRONTATION**

A digital channel allows to immediately understand the price, in all its variations and services, compared both within the website itself (products of the same company) and with other website (different companies).



## **\_CONFIGURATION**

In a physical store you can see a finished product, that has a specific color, and its samples of the other colors. Through a digital channel, instead, it is possible to interactively configurate and immediately have an overview of the same product with different colors applied.

# eCommerce business classifications

Focusing the attention on e-commerce, different business classifications are possible and can change the whole market system.

Moreover, the digital channels are expanding the possible businesses thanks to the incredible interaction that they can offer. There is no more only the classical model of a business that sells to a common consumer: today even the opposite is possible.

## B2B ECOMMERCE - business to business

A B2B model focuses on providing products from one business to another.

In this model we can find service providers, software companies, office furniture and supply companies, document hosting companies, and other similar businesses.

In other words we can say that the customers of the business is another business, who uses the purchased item (product or service) for its own needs.

**e.g.:** Skype (Microsoft)

Kickstarter

Herman Miller

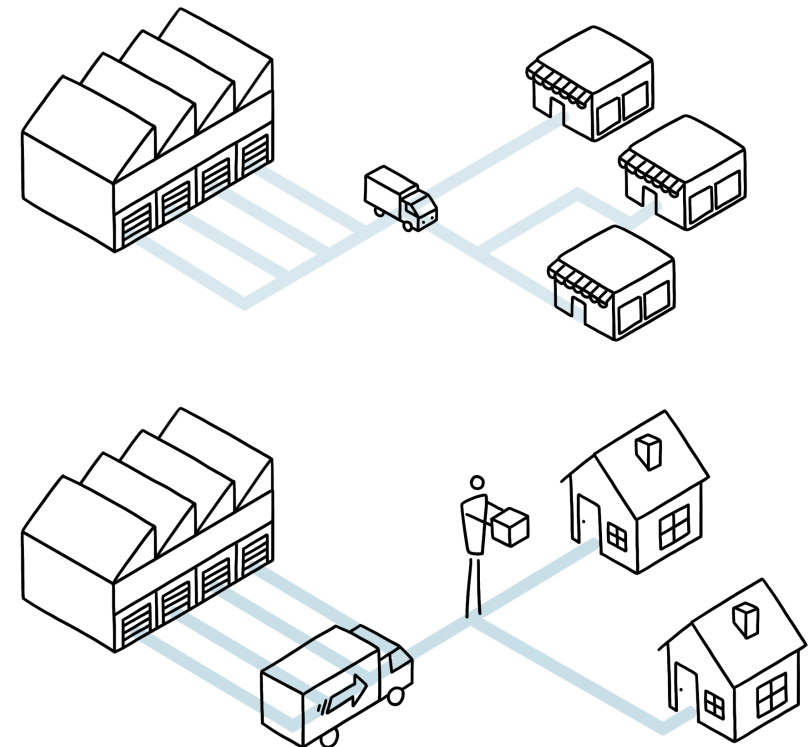
## B2C ECOMMERCE - business to consumer

The B2C sector is the common market, a traditional retail model, where a business sells to individuals. But the business is conducted online.

This is the deepest ecommerce market and usually the major known retailers offers the sale offline too. But there are also many examples that have only the online store.

**e.g.:** online+offline: Mediaworld, Ikea

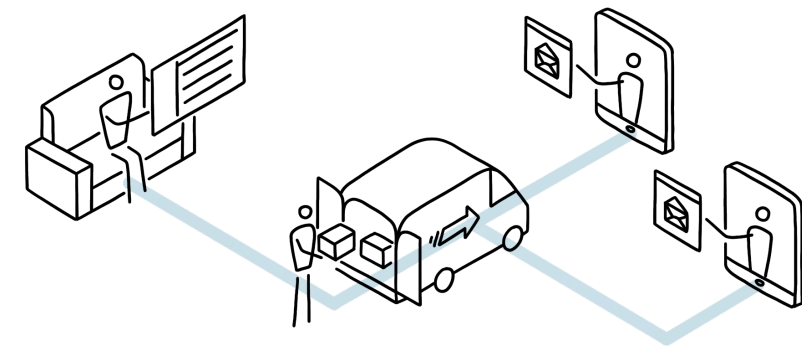
online only: overstock.com, amazon.com



**C2C ECOMMERCE - consumer to consumer**

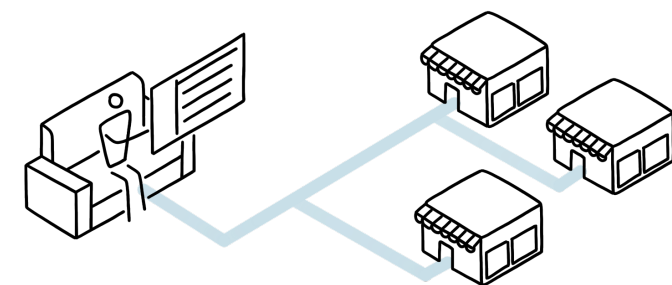
The idea of C2C is different from the classifications before. Created by the rise of ecommerce and consumer's confidence in online sales, this model allows consumers to sell, buy, exchange items with other consumers. This trade is permitted in exchange for a small commission paid to the website used. However this classification requires a very careful and studied planning: lot of examples who tried this ecommerce quickly closed after the opening.

**e.g.:** eBay

**C2B ECOMMERCE - consumer to business**

Recently growing business where the consumer sells good or services to businesses. Some examples of this classification are reverse auctions, service provision sites and blogs with monetization strategies.

**e.g.:** Google AdSense



**others:**

**B2G (OR B2A) - business to government/administration**

The consumers of this classification are governments or type of public administration. The business usually provides, for example, contractors and services for government agencies.

**C2G (OR C2A) - consumer to government/administration**

This business is usually made by individuals who pay the government for taxes or tuition to universities.

## Furniture and eCommerce

At the beginning eCommerce was used by people to buy small products, easily packable. If we think about the example of Amazon, they started selling books, then they added CDs and DVDs. Now they sell almost everything. E-commerce is exponentially growing and, even if years ago no one would have believed of buying furniture online, nowadays is a fairly common thing in all the world. Significant advancements in logistic, costs of shipping, delivery services, transport of small or big items, allow to make this market easy and wide.<sup>32</sup>

Also technological advancements are helping the whole system, by providing the consumers more and more specialities and becoming more and more closer during the purchase of a furniture. People can easily digitally have a quick interior designer consultation, use augmented or virtual reality to imagine its product inside the house, and so on.<sup>33</sup>

Tiziano Pazzini, founder of the big platform Furnichannel, sees in this digital transformation an incredible opportunity for the furniture market, both in terms of communication and distribution. It can become the vehicle to convey values, quality, style and to brings the consumer to know, trust and act.

During the *Dalani @Home 2.0* convention, on July 6th 2016, in Milan, it was possible to discuss the results of a research on consumers and the furniture market, specifically focused on the purchasing process between online and offline.

<sup>32</sup> Richter F., "Online furniture sales are booming", 2018, <https://www.statista.com/chart/14771/e-commerce-sales-of-furniture/>, [17/12/2018]  
<sup>33</sup> Richter F., "The Future of Furniture Shopping? It's All Online!", 2018, <https://www.statista.com/chart/14739/the-future-of-furniture-shopping/>, [17/12/2018]



*products, services, values*

As we all can imagine, and probably as we all do, consumers search for info and choose its purchases online mostly.

**88%** of people pointed Internet as **biggest information source**, more that mouth of words or magazines.<sup>34</sup>

**43%** of consumers affirmed to weekly **consult furniture e-commerce** websites, more leading then the traditional store.

The purchase moment, as we can understand in the next page's data, reveals the multi-channel nature of every consumers.

“

*Low prices, quick shipping and hard-to-pass-up offers have motivated consumers into purchasing top-shelf items from eCommerce sites instead of showrooms.*

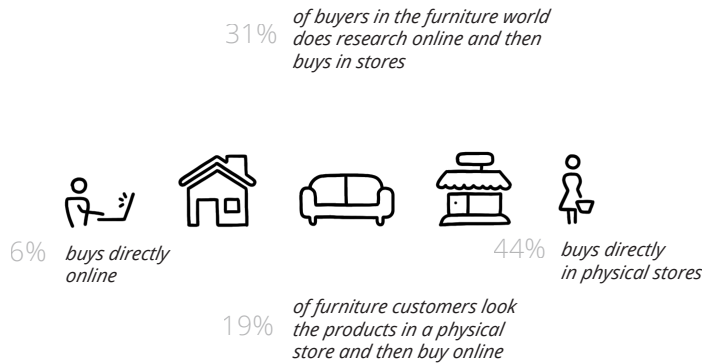
(Springbot.com. 2018)

<sup>34</sup> Doxa, "L'88% dei consumatori digitali si informa e trae ispirazione dal web, spendendo online circa metà del suo budget dedicato alla casa", 2016, <https://www.doxa.it/acquisti-online-nel-mercato-dellarredamento-dalanti-doxa-2016/>, [24/11/2018]

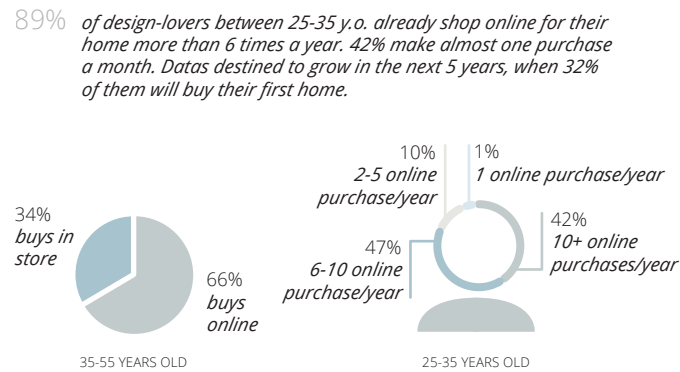
Today  
56%  
of purchases  
directly happens or  
is influenced  
by online



### Customer journey



### Frequency of purchases online/offline



### How are home decor websites divided?



GENERIC E-COMMERCE WEBSITES (marketplaces) are the most quoted, they stand out for:  
*wide offer, great convenience*



BIG FURNITURE E-COMMERCE DEALERS show a dual functionality:  
*used after having already identified the product in the store, they represent a showcase to get inspired*

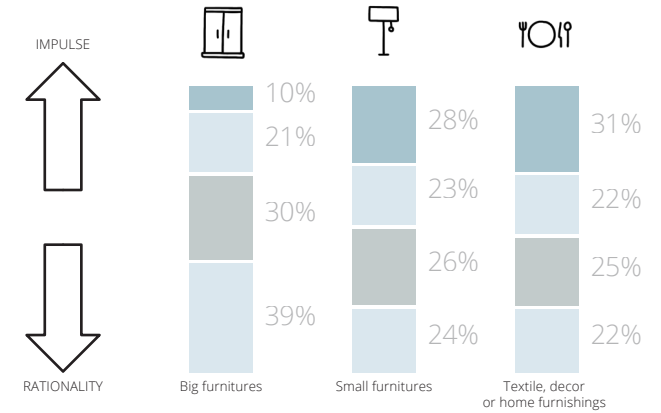


FURNITURE BRANDS WEBSITES are mostly used as an aspirational/inspirational showcase:  
*inspirational showcase linked to inspirational social as Instagram and Pinterest*

graphic data source: LoveTheSign, "Lovethesign Loves Design Lovers - survey 2017", 2017, [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/pdf/2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/ILSOLE24ORE/Online/Oggetti\\_Embedded/Documenti/2017/06/27/ecommerce-design.pdf](https://www.ilsole24ore.com/pdf/2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/ILSOLE24ORE/Online/Oggetti_Embedded/Documenti/2017/06/27/ecommerce-design.pdf), [24/11/2018]

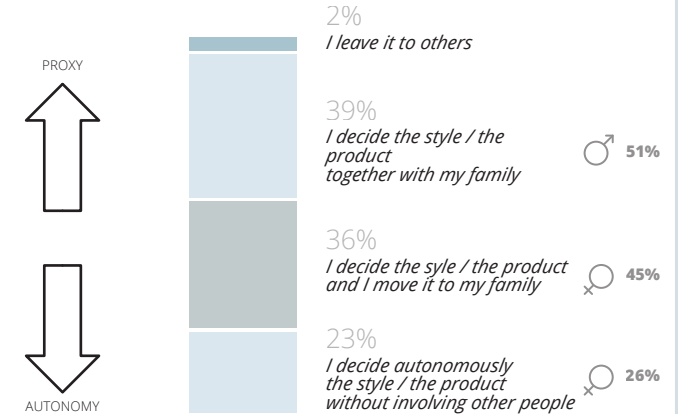
The more the product value grows the more the attention is on practical and rational aspects

### Purchase behaviour?

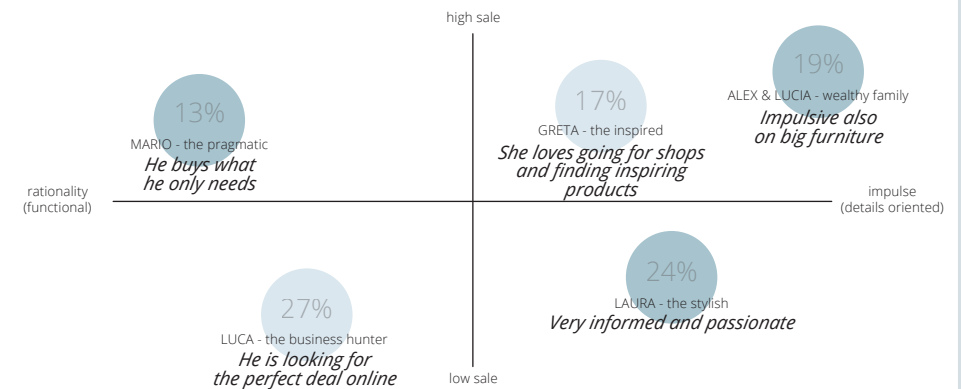


Purchase decision: mostly shared with the family, but women have more voice

### How do you decide your purchases?



### Identified personas



graphic data source: Doxa, "L'88% dei cons...casa", 2016, <https://www.doxa.it/acquisti-online-nel-mercato-dellarredamento-dalani-doxa-2016/>, [24/11/2018]

It is very important to correctly study and choose the products to be sold online. As a matter of fact there are items or services more suitable than others for online sales, and other ones more indicated just for online communication or even traditional market.

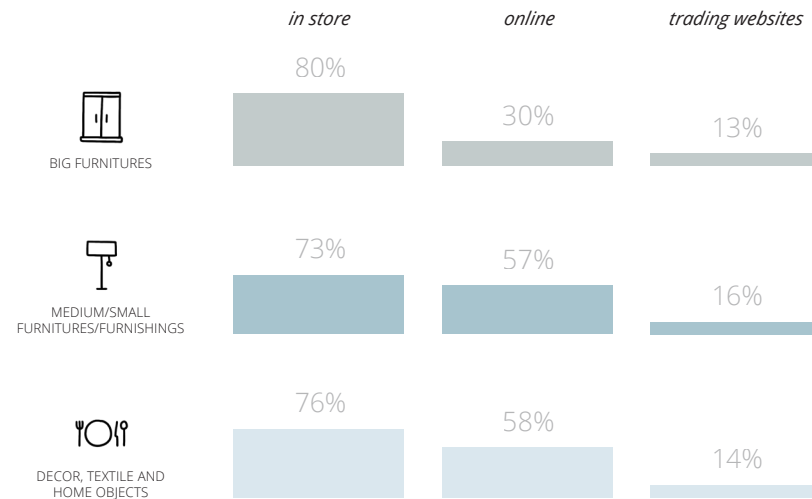
The Italian market, as the rest of the world, shows an increase - year by year - in the online selling for almost every type of products. But it is interesting to notice consumers' purchases: some products or products' categories show a higher online sales rate than others. Why? What are their features and reasons?

In the furniture market, according to data, we can notice a distinction between

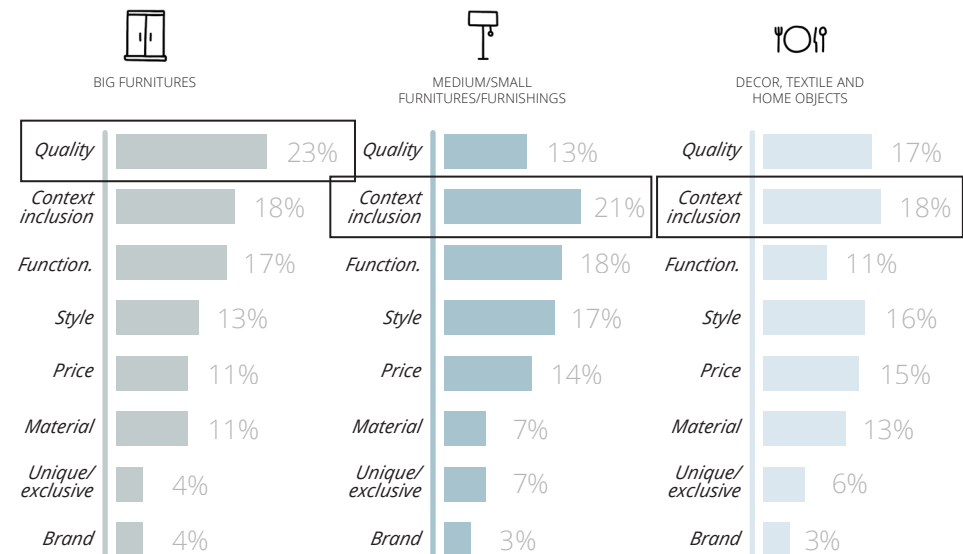
- big furniture (sofas, armchairs, beds, etc.)
- medium/small furniture (lightning, chairs, bedside table, etc.)
- accessories/textile/home decor (towels, "art de la table" products, etc.)

Medium and small furniture, together with accessories and home decoration products, are the most suitable for online sale. They are influenced by impulse, low price, trends, easy delivery. Big furniture requires more efforts and customers usually want to try before buy.

**Purchase: shop at the centre, online purchases relevant for medium/small furnitures and furnishings**



**Significant aspects in the purchase: quality is the first requirement for large furniture, fundamental is the inclusion in the context of small furniture and decoration.**



graphic data source: Doxa, "L'88% dei consumatori digitali si informa e trae ispirazione dal web, spendendo online circa metà del suo budget dedicato alla casa", 2016, <https://www.doxa.it/acquisti-online-nel-mercato-dellarredamento-dalano-doxa-2016/>, [24/11/2018]



## The italian situation

The European situation regarding online sales is a great success for countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom. And, even if a little behind, also Italy shows a continuous growth in this market, reaching a total of 27.4 billion euros (+16% compared to 2017).<sup>35</sup>

Among the most involved sectors, especially furniture reached the remarkable amount of 1.4 billion euro of sales, with a growth of 53% over the past year. These important data confirm the good trend and progress of this field.

However we need to underline how the increase of Italian eCommerce, unlike other countries, is the result of different dynamics. On one side, products keep growing (+25%) driven by the excellent results of various sectors. On the other side there are services mature enough to slow down the growth (+6%).

Products, whose online purchases are worth € 15 billion, generated around 260 million shipments in 2018.

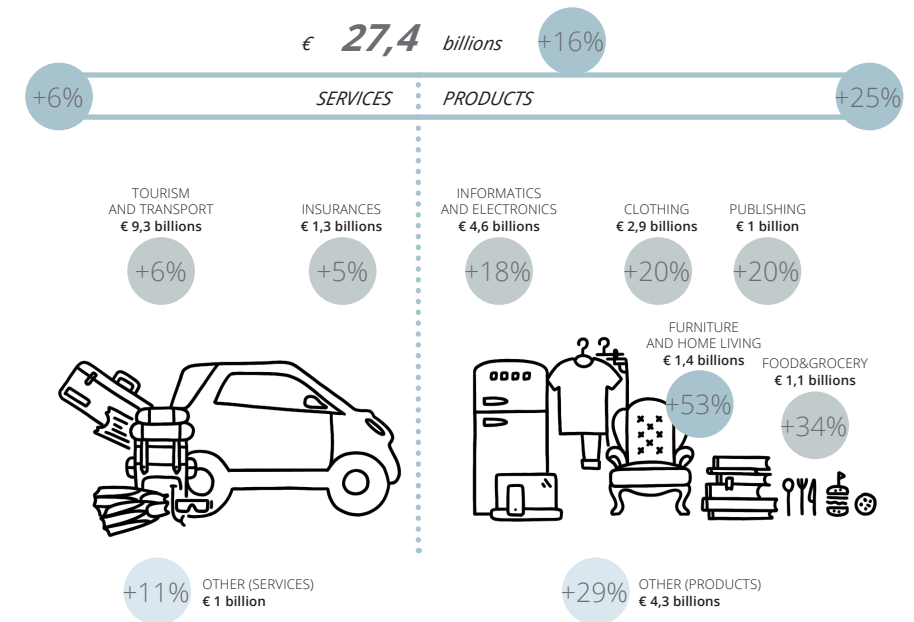
It is also possible to notice a geographical distinction on logistic distribution with a greater concentration of eCommerce in the North rather than the Center and the South, respectively with 56%, 23% and 21% of volumes.

*"In the world there are almost 2 billion of people who buy online. In the past few years Italy arrived late in serving the globalized market. This slowness brought the export of our products through the digital channels to lose points and limitate growth. 2018 is a turning point for italian companies that decided to change their digital approach, investing both in online technologies and in digital-physical stores. (...) The Made in Italy value offers lot of possibilites. Consequently, even physical distribution, which is a pride for Italy, can be further enhanced by those experiential and customized technologies built in relationship with the territory and culture centers."*

*(Roberto Liscia, Netcomm president)*

<sup>35</sup> Coccia S., "Tira l'arredo nell'e-commerce in Italia", 2018, <https://www.reportex.it/2018/10/17/tira-larredo-nellecommerce-in-italia/>, [3/02/2019]

### Italians online purchases on national and international websites



graphic data source: Coccia S., "Tira l'arredo nell'e-commerce in Italia", 2018, <https://www.reportex.it/2018/10/17/tira-larredo-nellecommerce-in-italia/>, [3/02/2019]

## Product certification

The online furniture sale situation brings to life a significant problem related to quality and veracity of products, mostly when we talk about "design".

In 2014 counterfeit goods reached almost 45 millions of dollars in the sale through Alibaba portal.<sup>36</sup> From that moment it was important to move to avoid this fact.

Obviously we are referring to signed product, whose qualitative and economic value is high.

The possibility of checking the authenticity of the product, therefore, has gradually transformed into a real need: on one hand for brands, which see the market seriously damaged, and on the other hand for consumers, who need guarantees, protection, trust.

In this context the project named **Certilogo** shaped, in 2006.

Four italians professionists (Michele Casucci, Luca Losa, Daniele Sommovilla and Paolo Pegurri) decided to take care of products authenticity, in lot of different fields but mostly on fashion and luxury.

They offer a service that brands and companies can use to guarantee validity.

How does it work?

1) The company gives to each product a digital identity - the Certilogo code - connected to suppliers data and the chosen dealers.

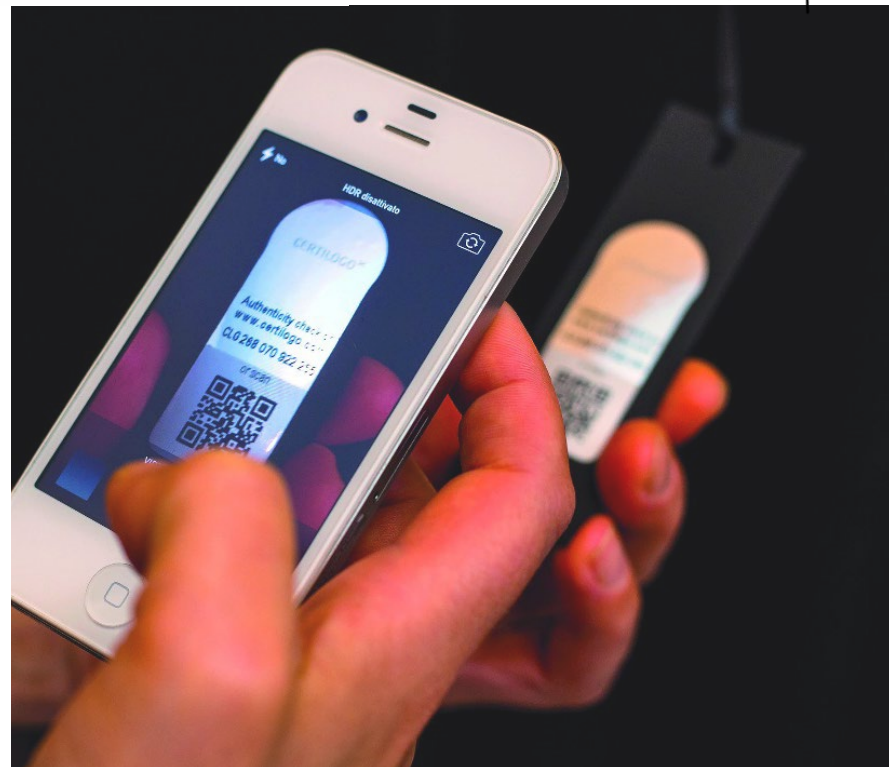
2) Consumers can use the smartphone or pc to check the authenticity using the Certilogo code, before or after the purchase.

3) Certilogo combines the company data together with authentication ones by consumers, inspectors and customs agents, for a complete analysis.

<sup>36</sup> Piva F., "Certilogo, la lotta alla contraffazione passa da un QR code", 2015, <https://www.wired.it/lifestyle/design/2015/12/10/certilogo-qr-code-contraffazione/>, [4/12/2018]

**CERTILOGO** 

*build on trust*



4) Brands collect additional data on their best clients, that are the ones who really care about buying authentic products only.

As we can understand, the interest of Certilogo in brands and companies, is to offer them the chance to make their products credible but also to acquire information and data about their customers.

Then, the fresh acquisition of Viveat<sup>37</sup> by Certilogo creates a new way of interacting by connecting any object to the network and transforming it into a channel of communication and new business generation.

<sup>37</sup> LiberoQuotidiano, "Tecnologia e intelligenza artificiale: Certilogo acquisisce Viveat", 2018, <https://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/scienze---tech/13410285/tecnologia-e-intelligenza-artificiale--certilogo-acquisisce-viveat.html>, [18/12/2018]

## In store

The innovation brought by technology is enormous. It can be applied in different ways and can bring different results.

However, its aims always remain the desire to gather information, to stay on top of what's current, to surprise the consumer and, finally, sell.

“

*Currently the most precious good is the attention of our consumer, as we find ourselves in an infobesity moment”.*

*(Simonetta Pozzi, storyteller)<sup>38</sup>*

However, we can distinguish the applications of technology in two senses, in particular in the furniture field. On one hand, the application **on sales methods** and on the other hand the application on the product itself. In the first case, it is clear how technology becomes a tool **to improve sales, gathering information and improving company and products's communication and presentation, with great effectiveness also on entertainment**. Customers are always, at least, curious and captivated by new technologies.

Two clear examples are the use of eye-tracking technology, as a way of collecting data in order to improve the website's user experience - especially if we talk about e-commerce - and the use of augmented and virtual reality, which in the stores, both physical and digital, becomes a great tool for user entertainment and storytelling.

<sup>38</sup> Baptista R., "Realtà virtuale e aumentata nell'eCommerce: esempi di aziende che ne fanno uso", 2018, <https://www.insidemarketing.it/realta-virtuale-e-aumentata-ecommerce/>, [13/12/2018]



## Eye Tracking

In 2006, the Nielsen Norman Group team came across an observation that changed forever web design. Nielsen discovered a model, now known as F-Pattern.<sup>39</sup> Basically it is demonstrated that the attention of the user who surfs on websites is concentrated in the upper left part of the screen, to proceed horizontally, and then bring the attention again to the left and then go down.




This discover becomes the basics on which the digital world is studied. Let's think about the importance of a website, the impact it has on our opinion and the level of information it is capable to give in the very first few seconds. Moreover it has relevance if the situation involves market and selling, so eCommerce.

There are some elements that need some observation and reflections.

### GRAPHIC

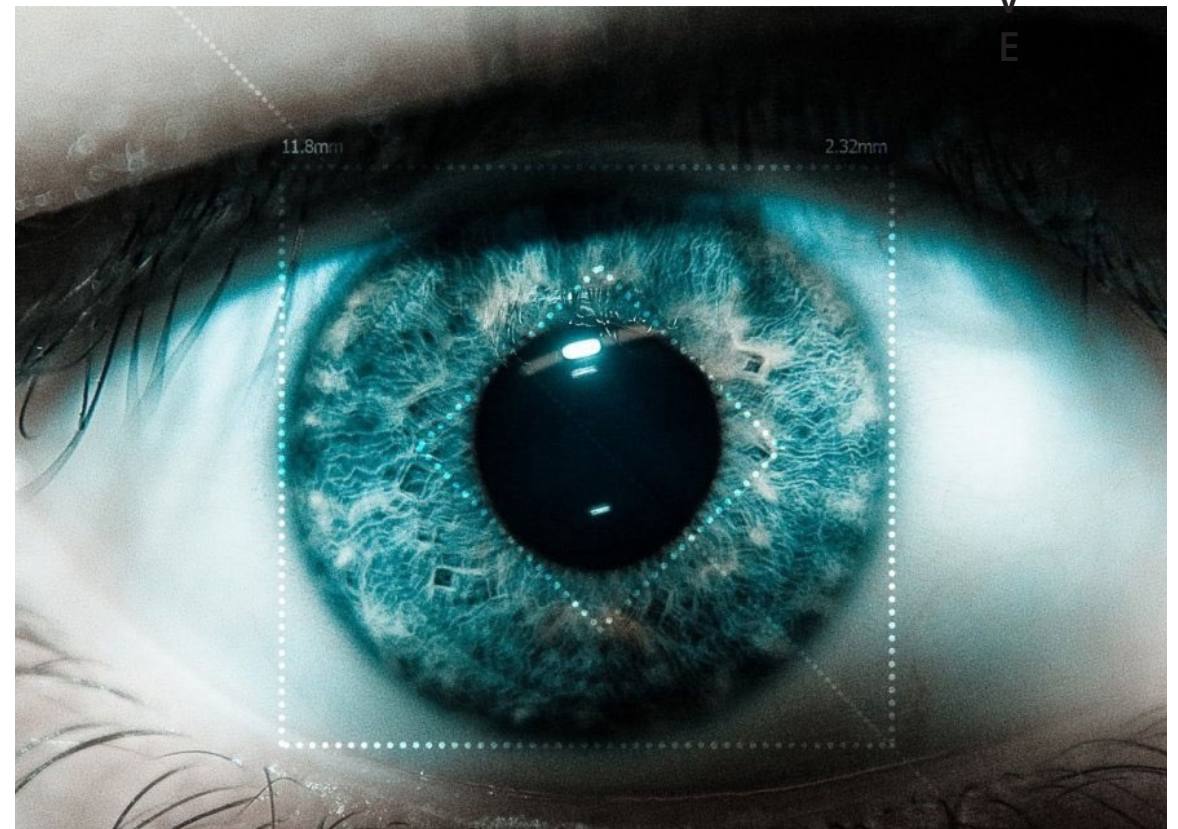
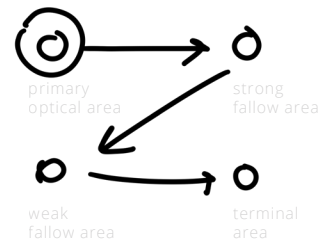
The graphic of an e-commerce website must not disturb. It should guide the gaze in the focal points of the site, where the essential informations are located. Each element is part of a system that lead the user towards the purchase in a simple way.

Colours are one of the main and unconscious element to communicate the emotions and values of the company/platform<sup>40</sup>:

- 
COLD COLORS, like gray and white, to convey seriousness and professionalism;
- 
WARM AND BRIGHT TONES are less serious, inspire and suggest positivity;
- 
PASTELS are comforting, relaxing and reliable, perfect for natural or wellness.

<sup>39</sup> Orendorff A., "The Science of Ecommerce Eye Tracking: Your 2017 'Vision' Shouldn't Be Your Own", 2017, <https://www.shopify.com/enterprise/e-commerce-eye-tracking>, [13/12/2018]

<sup>40</sup> [www.strogoff.it](http://www.strogoff.it), "Grafica e e-commerce: quando l'abito fa il monaco sul web", 2017, <https://www.strogoff.it/grafica-e-e-commerce-quando-labito-fa-il-monaco-sul-web/>, [13/12/2018]



Mott N., "Tobii e Microsoft vogliono standardizzare l'Eye Tracking", 2018, <https://www.tomshw.it/altro/tobii-e-microsoft-vogliono-standardizzare-leye-tracking/>, [17/03/2019]

**IMAGES**

Consequently, another fundamental feature to discuss is images. They must be high quality. Particularly important are the images of the products inside data sheets: they must give the sensation of touching the product with the hand. Different perspectives and the possibility to zoom in, help the user to better understand the product.

**CAPTIONS**

Simple and few passages, intuitive words, buttons that "the forward is on the right and the back is on the left", etc. These tricks need to be studied in order to facilitate the process for the user. Eye-tracking is the perfect tool to understand how fast or how slow a purchase process is. The more is long and slow the less you will sell, because people get nervous and feel frustrated for not being able to understand what they are doing. The more is fast, understandable, easy, the more you will sell, creating satisfaction and maybe fidelity of a customer, that just learnt how to buy your products.

**RESPONSIVE VIEW**

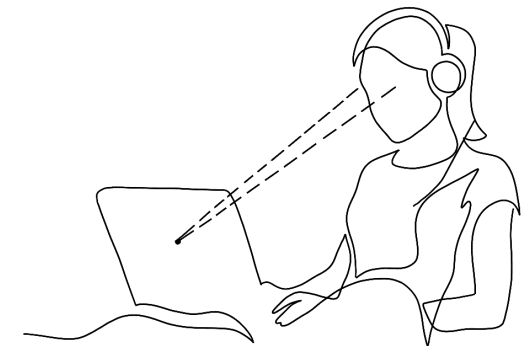
Another relevant feature for e-commerce websites is that pages should adapt to all the devices, included smartphones and tablets. A customer should access the selling everywhere and anytime. It often happens that people consults or decides to buy something in different situations: on the train, during the lunch break, before sleeping, etc.<sup>41</sup>



Tobii, "Tobii e Microsoft vogliono standardizzare l'Eye Tracking", <https://www.tobii.com/group/about/this-is-eye-tracking/>, [17/03/2019]



Gojanovic D., "8 Ingredienti che ogni Sito E-commerce deve avere", <https://mktfactory.com/blog/ingredienti-sito-e-commerce-deve-avere/>, [17/03/2019]



- 1 An eye tracker consists of cameras, projectors and algorithms.
- 2 The projectors create a pattern of near infrared light on the eyes.
- 3 The cameras take high-resolution images of the user's eyes and the pattern.
- 4 Machine learning, image processing and mathematical algorithms are used to determine the eyes' position and gaze point.

41 Bartels Mike, "Tips for Optimizing Ecommerce Through Eye Tracking", <https://multichannelmerchant.com/blog/tips-for-optimizing-ecommerce-through-eye-tracking/>, [17/03/2019]

## Virtual and Augmented Reality

Today consumers are surrounded by lot of informations through lot of different channels. Consequently the buying experience is very fragmented.

The solution of virtual and augmented reality thus becomes a kind of additional and even playful experience.

The aim is to involve the user using technology and curiosity, but mostly making him an active part of the process of purchasing or acquiring information.

Therefore both large companies and medium-sized ones are getting closer to virtual reality. Aumented reality (AR) is the most widespread as it does not require excessive costs or tools, but it is simple and applicable everywhere thanks to the use of the smartphone.

An interesting application is associated with color options, easily observable and wideable in AR.

This success is guaranteed since generation Z and millennials are the users both of these type of technology and the general market. **At the moment millennials are the 83% of the market.** This is why these new feature in the buying process are accepted and used.

AR is appreciated by 44% of Italian consumers and 65% of Millennials - one in three - would increase their online fashion purchases by 50% if they could use this technology, as revealed by the research conducted by Piepoli Institute for the Italian e-commerce Lanieri.

Also virtual reality, VR, even if it requires specific tools (such as viewers, headphones, gloves or keyboards) is spreading.

### VR/ARE APPLICATIONS EXAMPLES

In the following pages there are famous companies that applied this technology in their businesses.<sup>42</sup>



“  
*nowadays the most important good  
 is our customer's attention  
 since we are in a moment of  
 info basity.*

*[Simonetta Pozzi, storyteller]*

<sup>42</sup> Baptista R., "Realtà virtuale e aumentata nell'eCommerce: esempi di aziende che ne fanno uso", 2018, <https://www.insidemarketing.it/realta-virtuale-e-aumentata-ecommerce/>, [17/12/2018]

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92

## Case Study

In the fashion field, the famous company Burberry added to its app a function that, thanks to augmented reality, allows to virtually expand and set up the space where users are located.

The interaction with users' camera digitally redecorates the surroundings with Burberry-inspired drawings by the artist and director Danny Sangra.

"AR allows customers to experience your brand in a different way." said Edoardo Manitto, a former executive of French retailer Galeries Lafayette, now working as independent retail technology consultant.

The feature also lets users post on social medias the drawing-enhanced pictures,



*image source: Bloomberg*

**BURBERRY**

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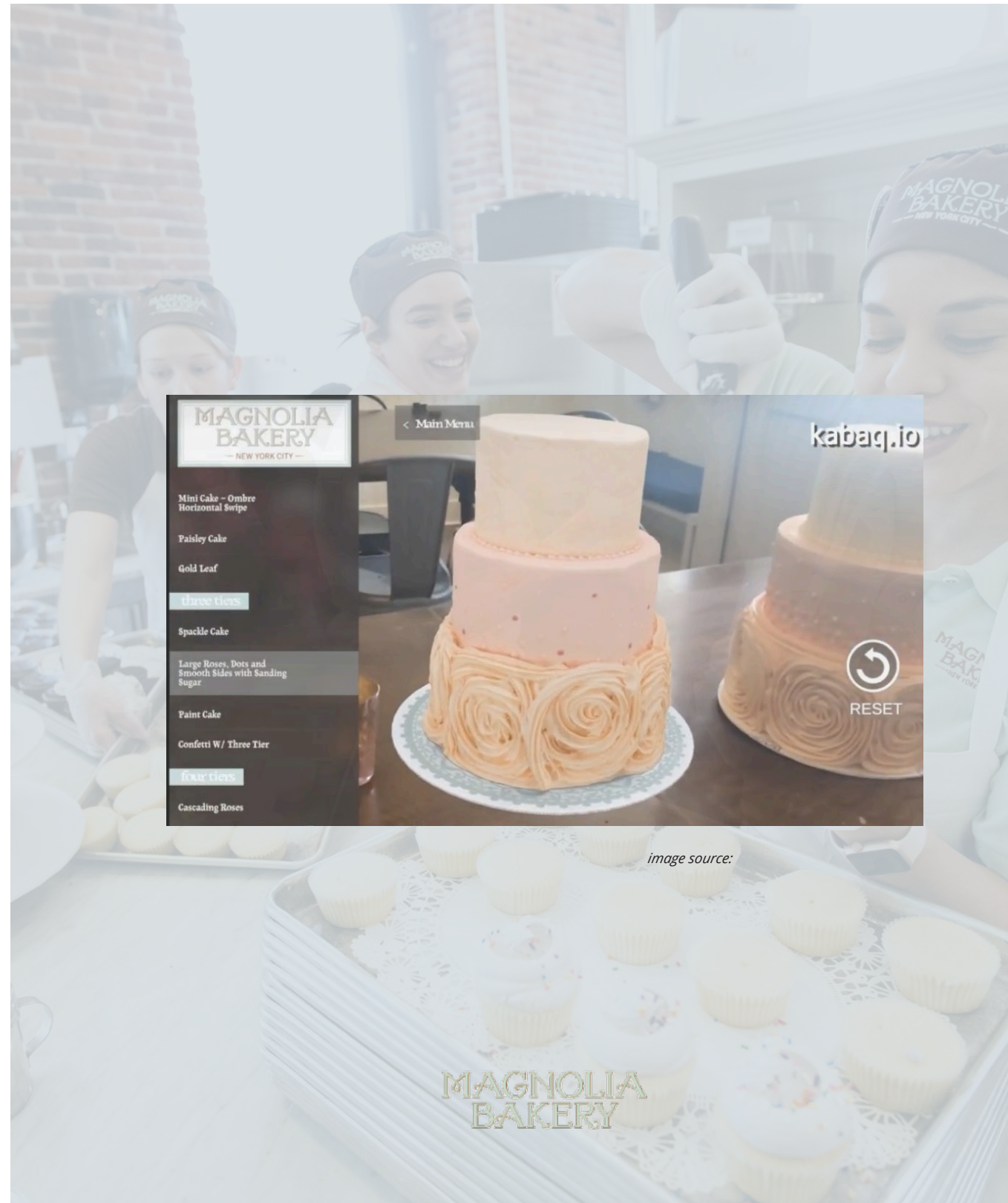
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## Case Study

In the food&event organization field the famous pastry shop offers customers an augmented reality catalog, to see the 3D cakes on a table.

Through the app clients can customize the cakes, can zoom in on the details and see a very realistic representation of what will be the real cake.

This is a very useful solution, for example, for customers who want to check the combination of cake and setted space. This type of AR use can be very interesting for e-commerce in the food sector and particularly in the catering service.



*image source:*

MAGNOLIA  
BAKERY



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## Case Study

In the wine industry, an Australian company has developed an eccentric, endearing and living graphic. The idea is that bottles labels can interact with the customers. As a matter of fact, through the Living Wine Label app, pointing the camera on the bottle, the characters on the labels start talking.

"19 crimes" refers to the British prisoners sent to Australia (instead of the gallows) in the 18th century. Thanks to the magic of augmented reality, they give a richer experience to the beverage; engaging both mind and taste. Stories include the tale of John O'Reilly (on the Red Blend bottle) who found love in his exile, and the story of Jane Castings, who discussed her thieving ways on the white wine bottle. This strategy made the company grow: 60% in volume and 70% in value, according to Better Retailing.



image source:

  
**19 Crimes.**

## Case Study

*“When it comes to augmented and virtual reality, it can only be successful if it’s truly useful,”* said Dolan, Sephora’s head of innovation. *“We weren’t interested in just buzzy. A lot of things like technical accuracy and timing had to come together, and there was a time last year when, during testing, we hit a tipping point.”*

Also the cosmetics world can profit by new technologies, particularly augmented reality.

Sephora’s team developed the platform ModiFace, that pushed facial recognition technology to a new point of sophistication. After months of experimentations, they created a virtual makeup application with a step-by-step layering process.

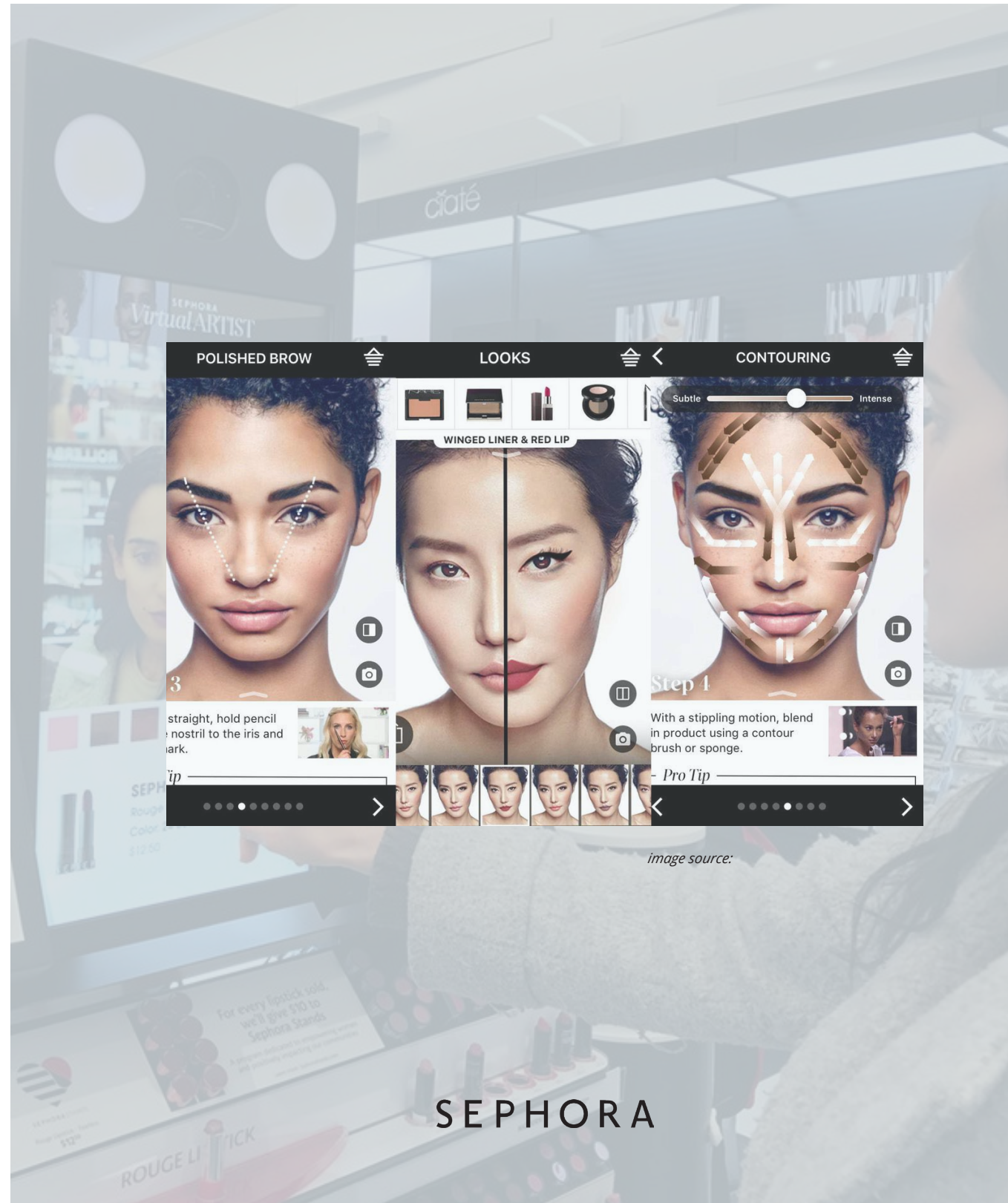


image source:

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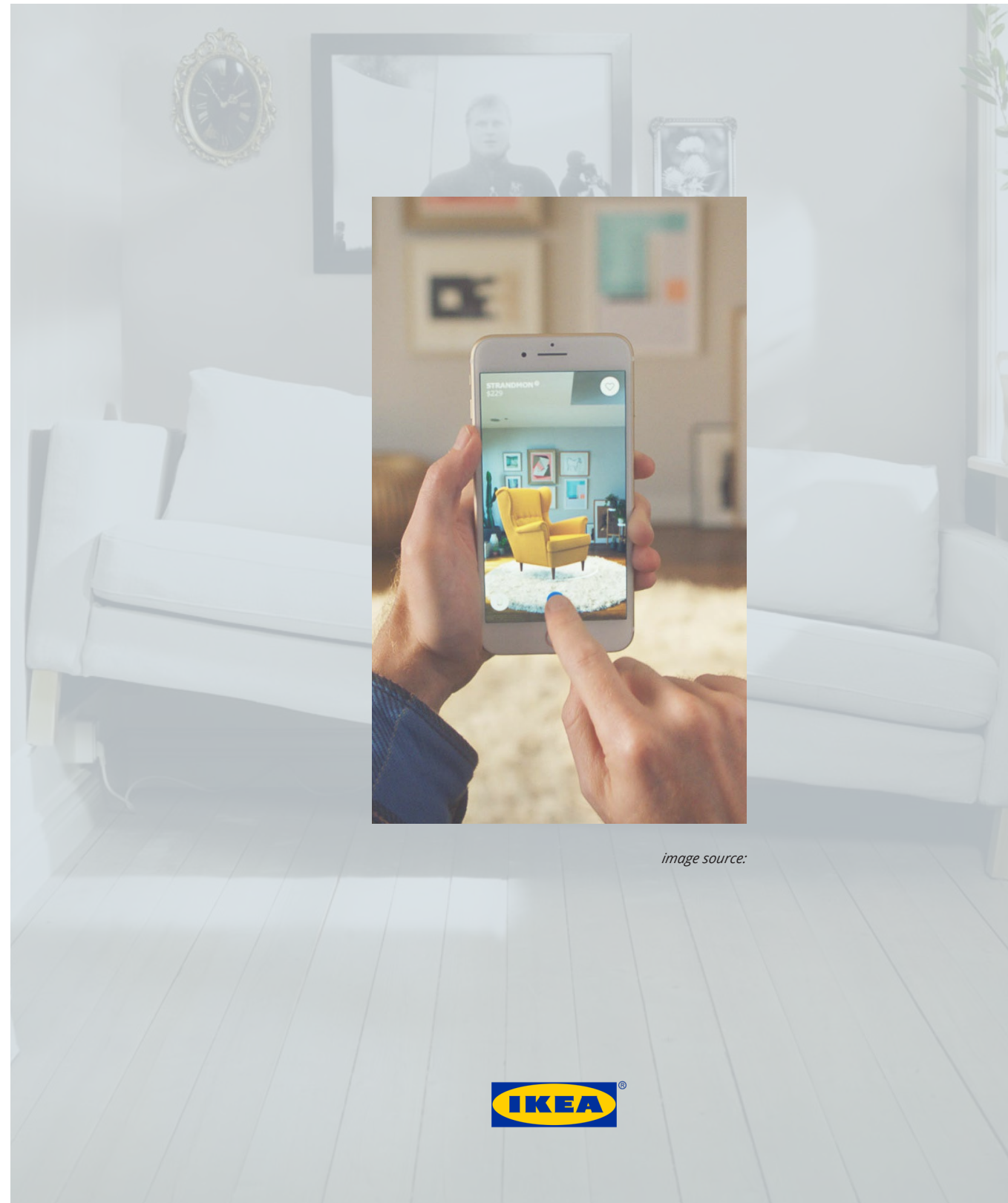
## Case Study

Also furniture comes to AR technology. How? Why? Probably someone experienced embarrassing episodes when, after choosing a nice sofa or a dining table and enthusiastically taking it home, you realize that it does not correspond to the rest of the room. Or maybe you even badly measured the space and it does not fit the space you had in mind.

Launched in autumn 2017, the IKEA Place app lets customers see exactly how more than 2,000 furniture items would look in their houses.

In this way people can visualize the products before buying them, allowing you to check features such as size or color matching.

With a precision of 98%, the AR technology allows to place the furniture, to take pictures of the virtual furniture at home, to share it via social networks and finally to buy directly from the app with just one click.



*image source:*

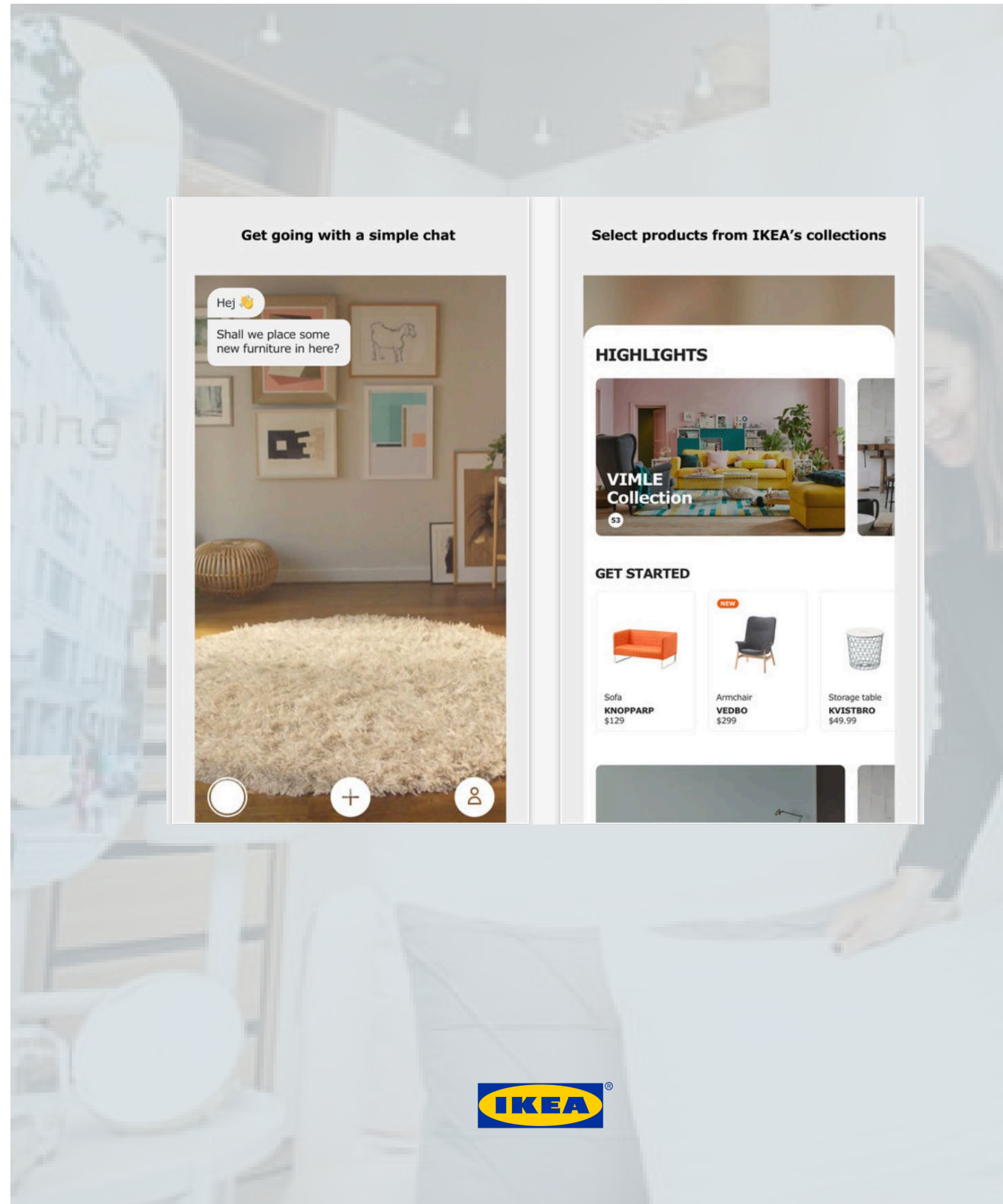


"IKEA Place lets you place true-to-scale 3D furniture in your home using the lens of your iPhone camera. (...) You see the scene as if these objects were real and you can walk around them and interact with them", explains Michael Valdsgaard, the Leader of Digital Transformation at Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

In addition, Ikea will open an "advice centre shop" in the centre of London, with the aim of offering a customized service for clients who need to renovate their house. To do that, the shop will use AR to combine the physical and the virtual experience. In this case the shop's assistants will be prepared to offer a consultancy service.

At the first presentation there were two different road of possible experiences: the first one allowed the user to be inside a kitchen during a pancakes preparation; the other one used a virtual reality space where the user can see a basic version of the chosen kitchen.

At the same time Ikea experimented a locker system in some italian stores. The customers can retire there 24/24h their online purchased products. Once you select a product to buy on the website, it is necessary to choose the closest shop provided with this service.



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## Case Study

Magnolia is a home and lifestyle brand founded by Chip and Joanna Gaines.

In 2017 they added augmented reality (AR) functionality to their new shopping app: Magnolia Market.

The app allows customers to preview these home accessories in their space, in order to give a better idea of the object and the setting. Each product is available on AR, modeled with emphasis on details to make sure it was as accurate and realistic as possible.



*image source: Bloomberg*

MAGNOLIA

## Case Study

An interesting VR example is the American multinational Walmart, which patented an entirely virtual store, where, thanks to 3D viewers, the consumer can walk in this virtual space and shop, passing through the shelves, grabbing the products, watching them closely and then buying.

The app is also available to buy furniture: the 3D virtual tour in an apartment full of items - available on Walmart.com - allows customers to move and purchase with a simple click all visible objects. It is also possible to buy the entire pack of objects, thanks to the "Buy the room" option.

This can look very ambitious and apparently far, but patented, that makes us think that maybe is not that impossible, but probably real in the next future.

"AR is set to reconnect physical and digital retail," said Greg Jones, director of VR and AR at Google.



*image source: bensbargains.com, article "Walmart eyes virtual reality online shopping in two new patents", by Mike Flacy, Aug 21 2018*



## In products

If on one side we have a huge application of technologies inside stores and services, on the other side we have the application of technologies on the product itself.

In the furniture business this change is happening slowly and from different perspectives.

This technologies application in the furniture products led to the creation of a new niche within the sector: the niche of high-tech furniture. However, these furnishings are mostly transformed into interactive works that are interesting but aimed at a high-end market, where the goal is multifunctional, but above all "surprise" effect and entertainment.<sup>43</sup>

Here then we talk about the very celebrated IOT, Internet of Things, which also enters the world of furniture. An example is the Daniele Lago **Air Wildwood T table**, composed of two transparent glass supports and a wooden covered top; inside the latter a device is connected to a wi-fi to transmit streaming music tracks and to amplify the audio of phone calls. The user can interrupt or resume the conversation with a simple touch of the sensors integrated on the surface. The goal of Lago is to create a system of furnishings that can communicate with each other and with the user, gradually implementing the functions.<sup>44</sup>

Another example is represented by **Usm Haller E**: it is a furniture that integrates electricity thanks to specially conceived tubes, spheres and metal connectors that carry energy through the entire structure starting from a power supply located under the base and connected to the network through a hidden cable.

43 Barlozzini Interiors, "6 motivi per acquistare arredamento hi-tech", 2018, <https://barlozzini.com/6-motivi-per-acquistare-arredamento-hi-tech/>, [31/03/2019]

44 Galli A., "Arredi polifunzionali e ad alta tecnologia", 2017, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/casa/2017-04-06/arredi-polifunzionali-e-ad-alta-tecnologia-124731.shtml?uuid=AEde3Fz>, [16/01/2018]

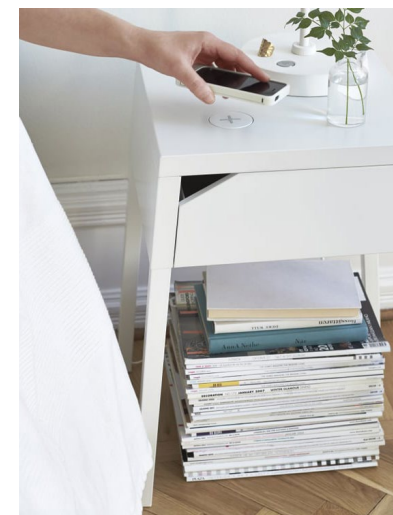
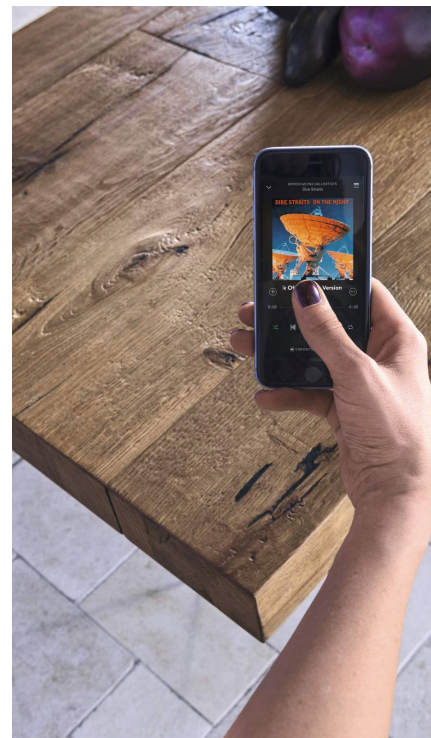


In this way it is possible to illuminate the inside of the containers or to bring the light to the support wall, or to create a luminous nocturnal path. In the hollows of the tubes can also be placed the usb sockets for charging the devices.

This technology innovation is more than a product line extension; it is opening a new market – with significant implications to using old, furniture-centric paradigms for product messaging.

However this new connected furniture market is still an expensive category of products adopted by few people. But for the companies it is a way of talking to people about the future and their research.

The Ikea cabinet with integrated induction charging technology, shown in the image below, was launched in 2015.



product in the images  
side page:  
upper photo:  
other photo:

*Empirical research*



## Companies

In the first section there will be examples of companies, brands, whose digital presence, particularly in terms of eCommerce, is interesting and effective from different points of view.

As a matter of fact we'll discover cases of companies that brought innovation into the eCommerce furniture world in different ways: for consumers involvement in the post-purchase phase (as *Made.com* did with *unboxing*) or DIY systems, for the original service they offer (*Fyrn*, with two possible pricing and assembly services), for the application of new technologies aimed or to offer a wide customization through online 3D configurators (*Normann Copenhagen*) or to bring the consumer closer to the shopping experience thanks to vr app (*Ikea Place*) for example. The analysis then involves examples of both "successful" and "failed" companies, as well as experiences more consolidated over time and those just started (like *Hiro.Design*).

Some companies, then, apply these digital innovations to their entire business strategy; others, instead, select only part of their catalog, differentiating it from the rest. Some companies, furthermore, fund their entire business on other businesses offering alternative components to someone's furnitures (*Prettypegs*).

All these examples show **how wide the furniture digital business is nowadays, growing more and more and opening new roads for the future**. Companies are learning to apply the opportunities offered by eCommerce and technologic tools.



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# Case Study

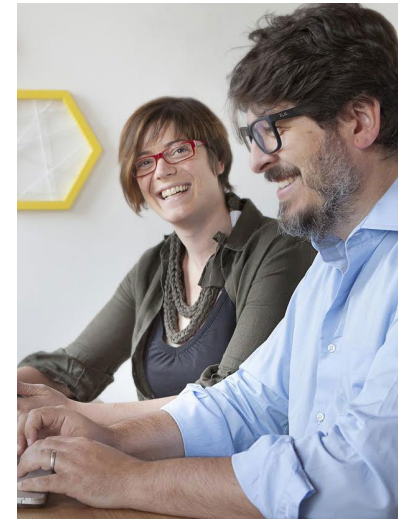
## INTERVIEW WITH MARIA GRAZIA ANDALI

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December I had the chance to meet Maria Grazia Andali, actually working at Axélero company and past co-founder of *Formabilio*, a super interesting online furniture platform founded in xxxx but failed in 2015. Since this start up was very appreciated by the public, thanks to its values, the well-studied service and the beautiful products, the opportunity of meeting one of the co-founders was absolutely useful and teaching.

### THE EXPERIENCE OF FORMABILIO

Maria Grazia told me about her professional experience through the years, in order to describe the process she led her to the idea of Formabilio. As she said: "All the things you experience during your life, all the roads you take and change, all the things you do, the different fields and different topics...everything becomes a stratified knowledge and becomes the fundamental on which you build new things. This is how Formabilio was born."

Maria Grazia and Andrea, her husband, one day decided to submit to a contest for start up, named Premio Marzotto. Their idea was to create an online platform that was actually a real company, a brand, whose products were: decided by common people and designers passionate in furniture design, manufactured by excellent Italian companies from Veneto, and sold through e-commerce only.



*learning  
from experience*

“  
*it was a true,  
felt, shared,  
transparent  
idea*

*(Maria Grazia Andali)*

“  
*it was a collective  
brand, a little bit  
of everyone...and  
this can only be  
done with digital*

*(Maria Grazia Andali)*

The idea was really visceral: they wanted to move everything online, because for them it was a synonymous of democraticity. The process started with the launch of ideas' competition for designers from all over the world, but also for enthusiasts beginners. You could participate even if you were not a designer: you could enter a community to vote and suggest changes, destinations and different visions. The designers who received more votes, with the most appreciated ideas, accessed a shortlist (10 ideas). These ideas were discussed on a table with the manufacturing companies. From each competition they produced one or two products.

**KEY POINTS**

**1. Participation:** democratic design, where everyone can access the production and the buying, without physical limitation. The selected products came out from public contests that the Formabilio team decided, indicating a topic and some limitations in terms of materials and dimensions.

**2. Trasparenze:** first of all, designers and companies were quoted, described and rewarded on the website. Everyone in the chain deserves recognition. Then, the public is particularly involved thank to the contest system: they could choose the winning products, and could also comment and give suggestions to make the idea better. Furthermore all the people involved in the project knew from the beginning all the costs and the prices. They knew what they earned and what the others of the chain earned.

**3. Designer treatment:** the designer received royalties up to 7%. Ideas were an important value to respect and adequately reward in the Formabilio phylosophy. Designers were also an important resource



“  
e-commerce  
is a beautiful  
challenge. It brings  
you closer to the  
costumer  
(Maria Grazia Andali)

“  
you need to  
describe all the  
things that the  
users can't touch  
(Maria Grazia Andali)

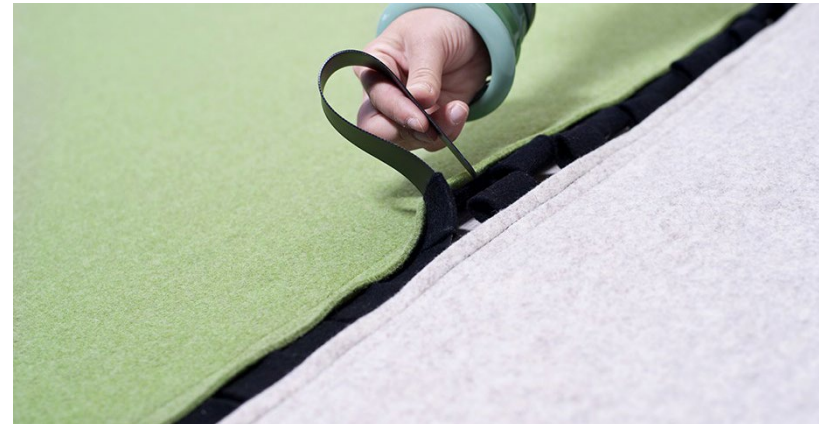
to increase their communication. As a matter of fact, Formabilio invented what they named “designer-kit”: they asked the designers a bio that they translated in english, and they give to the designers the photos they produced during the shooting. In this way the designer, individually, could publish and sponsor his own project on design blogs, posting this pack of images and text given by Formabilio. With this system they reached more than 3000 publications, without paying anything. And the visual identity was coherent and effective.

**4. Sustainability:** all the materials were ecologically discussed. Textiles were recycled, water paints and oils were reused, no plastic materials. This is the reason why they were inspired by the nordic products. As a matter of fact when they started to sell outside of Italy, they mostly sold in Scandinavia, because they enjoyed the style and the sustainable feature.

**5. Amount of products:** another important thing they cared about was the quantity of offered products. They wanted to have different categories, and for each one they meant to offer at least two different products, so that the customer could choose. For this reason they started producing 8/9 new products a month.

**6. Images and photos:** They produced their own photographic material. In the first period they occasionally hired photographs and stylists, but then they realized they needed an appropriate space and some internal photographers and stylist. They found an old huge workshop, that they renovated, riadapted and staged as 3 different shooting sets: two white ones and one furnished. With a rotating system, they realized lot of shots and pictures for their products.

Thanks to this intense program, they succeed in having 150 products on their catalogue. They also made



*products in the images:  
Tapperello carpet  
by GinaDesignStudio;  
Dedalo table  
by Chiara Pellicano;  
Bloemi lamp  
by Mario Alessiani*

arrangements with some marketplaces, to sell their products and gain visibility.

**7. Showroom:** They didn't have one. But she believes that if they were still alive, they would have opened one. Not for online selling problems, but to increase the customer fidelity. If a customer knows that there's the existence of a place where to go and meet them and the products, he feels much more safe and confident. A space where they probably will never go, but where - if they want - they can go." In the same years another platform had lot of success: made.com. But they were totally different. Made.com had its production in China, they didn't care about sustainability and they had problems in the delivery timing, that was super long. Formabilio didn't worry about the supply chain, but they care about the participation in every step. As a matter of fact, they decide to produce in a "made to order" system, that also allowed fast delivery. Formabilio care about people, about quality, about the environment.

**8. Failure:** The problems that led Formabilio to close were about money. System, service, products worked good, people were happy and satisfied. But the investments they had at the beginning were too low compared to the ones they planned by business plan. The money they were starting earning in the last period were quite good, but not enough to make everything autonomous.

**PRODUCTS RULES FOR E-COMMERCE**

In the experience of Formabilio, contest were quite open and free. They suggest a topic that was subject to designers' interpretation. On the other side there were lot of limitations and features to respect in terms of function and production: dimensions, materials, assembly.

“

*Who bought a Formabilio product, didn't buy just a product but an entire philosophy. Because maybe he saw it before, or maybe he even commented it on the website, or maybe he gave an advise to the designer. It was something really important. Formabilio was a family, and as it there was respect for everyone who participated*

*(Maria Grazia Andali)*



*products in the images:  
Décube armchair  
by Luca Binaglia;  
Handle lamp by Alessandro  
Squatrito;  
Lambro no screw table by  
Design-Miss*

disassembly and transport rules were clear and defined from the beginning.

Transport was a very important consideration that Maria Grazia Andali described during the interview.

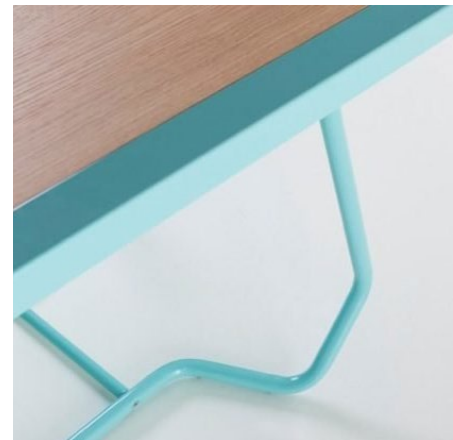
As a matter of fact, if you design something for e-commerce you need to consider the delivery aspects. In this sense, dimensions and weight are fundamental: if you succeed in having a pack that can be considered as standard delivery you don't have additional costs and your market is much more sustainable.

Therefore they decided to not work with some materials, for reasons of sustainability, weight and also brittleness (a glass product, for example, is quite risky to sell online: it can easily happen that it breaks during the delivery; if that happens you will have lot of damages, not only in terms of the product - returns and replacements - but also in terms of customer not-satisfaction - complains and bad reviews).

Considering these thoughts, another important element is packaging, both for its protective function and its graphic communication.

At the beginning they studied a super minimal packaging, that said "design" even before to be opened. But, to avoid returns or damages, it is important to have good instructions on it. For example: "if this corner of the pack is broken don't accept the delivery" or similar.

Hence the customer care need to be perfectly studied, always. "If you decide to have your own website where you sell your products or someone's, your job doesn't end when you sold. You have to think about your customer, his expectations, his feedback, the relationship with him. In this way you will be able to sell him other products in the future! From designer you become an entrepreneur, that considers all the relationship's aspects".



### 1. WHITE SET descriptive image

The first picture the user could see was a general view of the product on a white background. The product is the only character of the scene: the framing needs to be studied so that dimensions and proportions are correct. Light is an important element to correctly describe colours and materials.

### 2. WHITE SET detail image

The following pictures are details of the products. Usually more than one shot to show different aspects or feature of the product. They allow to understand the joinings points, the surfaces' quality and the materials. It is important to show everything a user in a physical shop would observe closer.

### 3. FURNISHED SET function/use/emotion

Last but not least: the product needs to be compared to other products whose dimensions are commonly known, to better describe its proportion. Formabilio's set was inspired by scandinavian style: minimalistic and clean.

*product in the images:  
Duale table  
by Luca Binaglia*



### MARIA GRAZIA ANDALI

Born in Calabria, after a course in promotion of touristic activities she starts her business career founding her first little company: Jure Novo, a network of different artisans and activities organized in “visit-packs” for tourists. / She moves to Rome to attend a stage during her master program. / She moves to Milan working for Fondazione Ambiente Milano and Recapito Milanese, where she meets Luca Fois and Francesco Zurlo. / In 2007 she starts working in Bovisa at BASEB project: riqualification, design, collaborations, coworking, culture were the core elements. / She moves in the event-planning field, where she approaches the digital world and the first artificial intelligence experiments. / She starts working for Fondazione Accenture, where she collects the experience of social innovation, participation and community. / She found Formabilio with her husband. / She moves to Certilogo, working for fashion certification. / She actually works as chief communications officer at Axélero.

“

An evening, me and Andrea decided to try, apply and participate to a contest we found online. <<What can we do you and i together?>> The thing we professionally shared was product design. From there, the brainstorming gave shape to something that actually lent all the experiences i had and he had: the contests, the idea of participation, the idea of having an osmotic process with the collectivity, that give them an active value. While we were writing, the project slowly shaped. <<And where do we do that?>>. We didn't imagine to do just a platform (there were already Desall and other websites that connected creatives' ideas, but they just stayed as occasional relationships between them and the companies). We wanted to be the company, we wanted to be the brand. So we needed the manufacturing part, we needed companies. We thought about the three main italian districts. After deciding that we wanted to stay in the north, we rejected Lombardy because it was already forefront and full. <<Let's try with Veneto>>. Moreover Veneto had a district that was not vertical, but that offered lot of possibilities: you can have all the providers you need. Therefore we decided to go have a look in Veneto. It was July, i think, because we were supposed to go celebrating our first wedding anniversary – since, in the meantime, me and Andrea got married! - and we were supposed to go to Paris. But instead of Paris, we drove the car to Veneto, in Sacile area, close to Friuli (it was the most modern furniture area). We went there for four days. On the fourth we already had pinpointed the house and the workshop, and we were in touch with the real estate agent.

So we came back in Milan and we said <<Ok, and now what do we do?>>.

We had no money aside. We bought our house a few years before...

So we put the house on sell.

We fired from our jobs and, with the house's money, we went to Veneto and we financed the company.

“

One time we went to this company that produced legs for sofas, just the legs. The owner showed us all around and then introduced us to the production manager, that showed all the things, included the legs. Then he took one legs and said <<you now, this is our best seller: we sold so many of this!>> and then he looked thoughtfully and said <<can you believe that i have no idea of what sofa this is for? I never saw one assembled!>>. For me it was incredibly sad! He was producing a lot of that little pieces, but he never saw the output, he never saw the final of the story!

H I R O . D E S I G N



UPLOAD  
your project



PRODUCE  
small series



SELL  
straight away

## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF HIRO

Founded in 2018, Hiro is the first on-demand company for designers.<sup>1</sup> The concept is a system *designed* for designers who want to develop their ideas without the difficult selection of the big brands.

The inspiration comes from the self-publication of the editorial field, from the open source models of informatics and from the public platforms to develop personal applications and projects. But this is the first time that these concepts are applied to product design.

Hiro works as:

- Manufacturing consultation
- Prototype production
- Micro-series production
- Selling

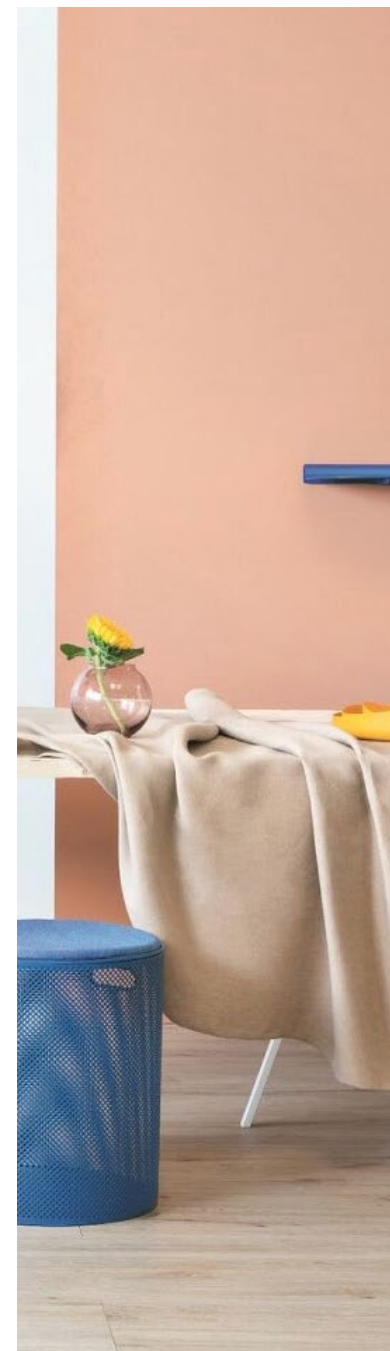
Speaking with the Damiano Menegolo, co-founder of Hiro design, it was possible to understand more their intention and their approach on furniture and e-commerce.

### KEY POINTS

**Designers:** If a designer have a project he want to realize, he can upload it on the website and the Hiro team starts the analysis. A technical office get in touch with the

<sup>1</sup> Borrelli R., "HIRO: la prima industria "on-demand" per i designer", 2018, <http://www.makeyourhome.net/2018/12/hiro-la-prima-industria-on-demand-per-i.html>, [10/12/2018]

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“

*What would happen if each designer had an industry for him? Which projects would come out without brands or market's influence?*

*[Roberta Borrelli]*

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makers to understand costs and the minimal production line batch. It is a perfect occasion for independent designers that want to sell their products. Inside the website they have a dedicated page with their story and the collection of products they are selling on Hiro.

**Products:** at the moment Hiro offers furniture accessories, such as the famous candleholder (their most sold product, with a strong identity and design), trays, mirrors, shelf systems, desk accessories, lamps, cloth hanger, chairs and stools, etc.

As Damiano said during the interview (documented in the following pages), to start an approach with a consumer it is winning to sale "liquid objects", small furnishing items, the ones that catch the attention and bring to an impulsive or emotional purchase, thanks to their accessible price.

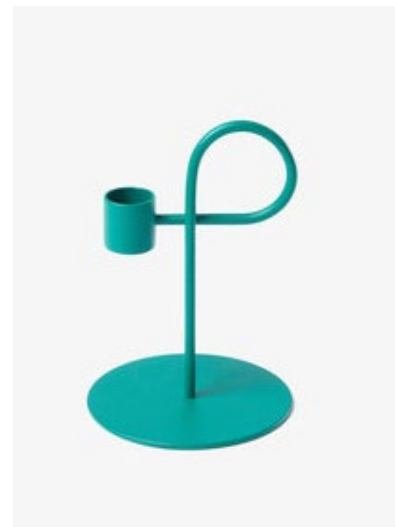
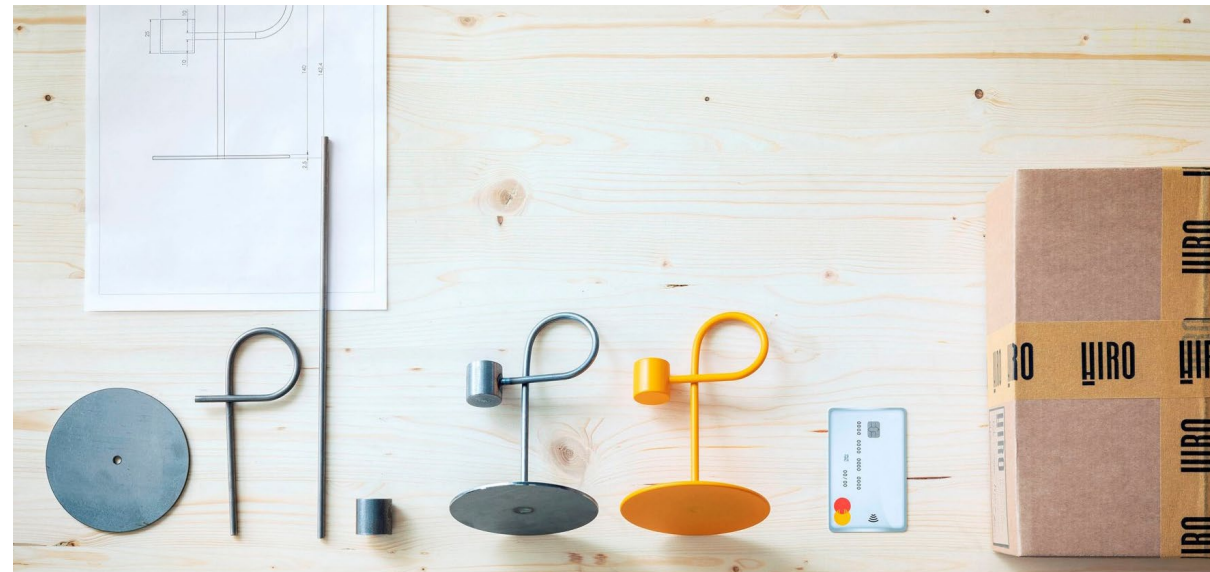
**Service and manufacturing:**

After the designer uploads the project, some draftsmen create drawings for industrial production and the production managers follow the work of specialized technicians and craftsmen. In very few days the designer can have this free consultation, knowing the prices of a prototype and a micro-serie.

**Images:** Hiro products' images are coherent and eye-catching, thanks to the colours and the strong style. Every items is customizable in the color: it makes every object suitable for every style and every house.

Since the beginning, the Hiro team really cares about their presentation on the world: they believe that images can decide the success or the failure of the company. And it is incredibly true!

After seeing their logo and their identity even just one time, I could have them fixed in my mind.



“

*If you can dream it, make it.*

*[Hiro.design website]*

“

*We were aware that the first images we presented to the world (...) would have decided our success or failure*

*[Damiano Menegolo]*

*product in the images: Loop candleholder by Kenyon Yeh*



## DAMIANO MENEGOLO

Damiano is the co-founder and marketing manager of Hiro. Included in the project since the first draft, he is in charge of expanding the digital company of Hiro. His objectives are simplifying the access to the platform and let designers from all over the world know this project.

Despite the geographical distance, he kindly lent himself to answering some questions about their reality, their products and online sales.

Where does Hiro's project come from?

“

*Hiro's first idea dates back to 2015. Manuele Perlati has worked for years in the family business, which deals with furniture for stores, with a specialization on metal. Over the years, the company has been managing increasingly complex projects for shops and boutiques. At one point, Manuele realized that everyday they were creating tables, stools and other accessories that had nothing to envy to those of noble design brands. And they often remained single objects. From there, he understood that they owned all the skills to really make those objects, but they lacked on creativity.*

*One day Manuele met Paolo Cappello, a designer in the best of his professional development, with he started sharing a great friendship and a collaboration. That was a turning point. Manuele understood that he didn't just want to mass-produce objects, like any other brand. Caressing the idea of a manufacturing "2.0" with digital access, he wanted also to produce unique objects, in small series, tailor-made objects that talked about what they were used to do. He wanted objects to have a story. Therefore, he discovered independent and self-producing designers. And he discovered that these designers often hard to find a way to produce their prototypes and difficulties increase if they have to produce a series and sell it. Here Hiro was born.*

131

In your opinion what are the winning features for a product to be sold online?

“

*I don't think that today we can talk in terms of "object". I believe there are more "shop" characteristics, rather than the object itself. Let me explain: there is a first approach with passionate people that needs to pass from "liquid" objects - that means low price items - easily adaptable, not too demanding and usually small and simply shippable. On the web, sometimes, a purchase is made by an impulse, but this can't be applied for all types of products.*

*On the other hand, now, on the web you can find almost everything, even for furniture. There are also "challenging" pieces both in terms of price and size. However, it is difficult to start a first approach with a sofa, for example; while it is easier to start with "liquid" objects, suitable for impulsive or emotional purchase, not too rational, and later on propose other types of products.*

What category of products do you choose to sell? At the moment they are furnishing accessories: is it a targeted choice or aim you at selling other categories as well?

“

*We strongly believe in focusing and specializing. We want to be the shop of furniture accessories, asked and commissioned by designers. The independent design shop. In general, even for the reasons explained in the previous answer, our products will never be extremely demanding (sofas, large furniture, etc.) exactly because at the moment we are selling online only. On the other hand, we don't even want to become a bazaar of objects: they already exist, they are well positioned and interesting for a certain type of public. And we are not Etsy. When we talk about "self-produced" design we never mean "hand-made": we mean the process whereby a designer asks for the production of his object, assuming a part of the commercial risk. But our objects always go through artisans hands and semi-industrial or industrial processes, always in small or even micro-series.*

I guess that your best-selling object is Loop: what are the reasons in your opinion?

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*Exactly because we are still in the first phase of life of our project, and Loop is perfect for an impulse purchase: it is a small object, adjustable in any environment, economically accessible by everyone. It is a liquid and adaptable object, so pop in the colorful versions and even so "classic" in the black and white versions. It is a simple product that autonomously tells a story. Someone would even say that it is "instagrammable", perfect for the social value of telling about oneself, one's style, one's taste.*

Have you ever thought about opening a physical store? Or you don't feel it necessary?

“

*Our company is still in the startup phase, for us being on the web means not having intermediaries and selling directly online, limiting costs. But, it is more and more clear that physical stores are still very important, they are only changing their function. They are becoming experiential places and not "storage" places. People still need to touch objects, especially if the price is medium-high. So, foreseeing a positive future for our company, we will surely plan the opening of some physical points, probably testing before the field with "corners" or exhibitions in selected showrooms.*

For images production: who is in charge for the products photo shoot? What kind of pictures are indispensable according to you?

“

*In our experience, images' investment was one of the most substantial in the early phases of our company. We looked for a collaboration with an affirmed stylist, who deals with photoshooting for historical brands. Our art director suggested some general guidelines, trying to express a new concept, colorful, fresh and pop, but elegant, and then we left the field to the creativity of the stylist. We were aware that the first images we presented to the world, the first photos we provided to the press or put anywhere on the web, would have decided our success or failure. "Not bad" or just "banal" images wouldn't get the same attention and enthusiasm that, even if gradually, we are now seeing in customers and insiders.*

## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF MADE.COM

Online platform and company, born in 2010, in the market of furniture and home accessories. From the idea of Ning Li, passionate of design and manufacturing quality, it aims to simplify the supply chain, connecting directly the customer and the designer.<sup>2</sup> The buying process is quick, without any intermediaries and consequently reduced in the costs.

MADE is a stylish company whose products are created for everyday life, with particular attention on trends, iconic value and details.

The company reached a very good success in all Europe. As a matter of fact, last year they cashed in a capital's rise of 60 millions of dollars. Active on the platform in english, french, german and dutch, in 2012 the italian website opened, but then met lot of problems and closed forever in 2016.<sup>3</sup>

Actually MADE is not just a company, the website offers lot of advices and information, as a blog, where customers can become readers and publishers, they

<sup>2</sup> De Iulii A., "Arredamento per la casa online: Made.com", 2016, <https://www.digital-coach.it/blog/e-commerce-blog/arredamenti-casa-online/>, [10/11/2018]

<sup>3</sup> PambiancoDesign, "Made.com a rischio chiusura in Italia", 2016, <https://design.pambianconews.com/made-com-a-rischio-chiusura-definitiva-in-italia/> [10/11/2018]



“

*the concept was obvious: simplify things, work directly with the makers and bring high-end lifestyle design to everyone, everywhere at a fair place.*

*(Made.com)*

can interact, share, develop their home furniture design passion.

**KEY POINTS**

**Community:** The most interesting innovation MADE created and offered to its customers is Made Unboxed. This service, equipped with its own page, **MADExUNBOXED**, is a community that every MADE customers can join, both for looking for inspiration (“how someone furnished and styled the product-I-want-to-buy”) and for sharing a picture of their house with the product they bought. In this way the customer care becomes a network of people who can really and physically interact. As a matter of fact, people can also get in touch and meet face-to-face.<sup>4</sup>

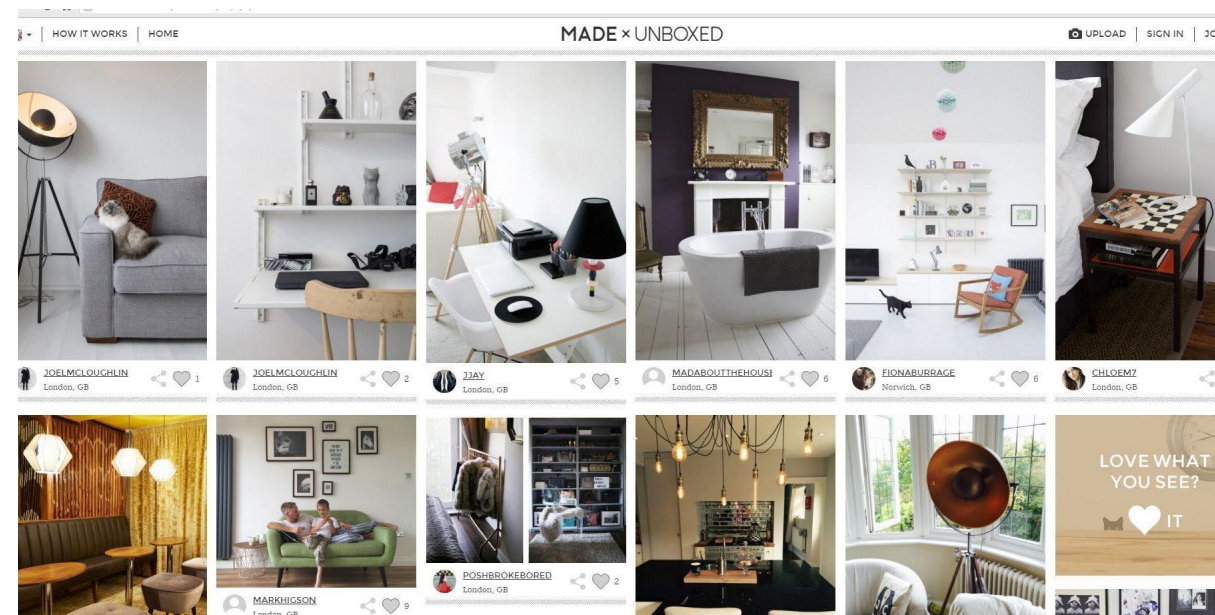
For example: X bought an armchair and published on Unboxed his picture with the armchair in his living room; Y is very interested in the same armchair, but he is not sure about the colour and the styling inside his house. So Y contacts X and go to his house to meet him and the armchair.

Therefore houses become showrooms of everyday life: subscribers can look for themselves thanks to geolocation, take *a virtual peek*, and then choose the neighbor in the area to meet and see how he furnished that product and with which accessories.

**Images and photos:** since MADE cares a lot about the truthfulness of the products, it takes care of the online images, particularly on post production and colours natural performance. For this reason there is a specialized team devoted to photos retouching.

<sup>4</sup> Chiozzotto R., " Goodbye Showroom! Il design lo sbircio dal vicino. Unboxed di MADE.com, tendenza social", 2014, <http://www.momastyle.com/design/funk-design/goodbye-showroom-il-design-lo-sbircio-dal-vicino-unboxed-di-made-com-tendenza-social/>, [14/11/2018]

# MADE.COM



“  
MADE Unboxed shows how furniture looks like in the most common houses.

(Riccardo Chiozzotto)

Furthermore they offer the possibility to ask for material samples.

**Talent Lab:** another very interesting feature MADE offers is the section inside the website where designers can submit their designs, their ideas. Then, through a crowdfunding system, people can “vote” by buying these “Crowdfund Furniture” products.

The Talent lab is an interesting opportunity for several reasons: designers are involved for their ideas and can be sponsored for their products; customers are involved in helping young designers, deciding what they like; the data analysis coming from this crowdfunded furniture can help MADE in understanding what customers like, want, ask.

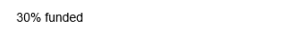
**Designers:** every designer that collaborate with MADE, has his own page, with picture, bio and list of products designed for MADE. We can say they care about transparency and merit, related to idea’s value.

**Producers:** on the other side, there is no track of the manufacturing companies that produce all the products.

**Showroom:** at the moment there are three showrooms in the world: Soho in London, Redbrick in West Yorkshire and The Mailbox in Birmingham. The existence of showrooms psychologically increase the fidelity of the customers.



Candela Pendant Light, Concrete and Brass



Early bird £55  
Initial deposit £5

by Nick Scard  
Sheffield, GB



Illuminous Paperclip Floor Lamp, Brushed Chrome



Early bird £139  
Initial deposit £5

by Jay Deacon  
Cheltenham, GB



Riviera Metallic Wall Sculpture, Brass



Early bird £41  
Initial deposit £5

by Stéphanie Linca  
Paris, FR

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## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF FYRN

Fyrn is a furniture company that develops chairs with an innovative assembly system. They patented a joint, the Stemn bracket, that enables to build strong and high-end furniture. Durable, replaceable and uncomplicated to inspire a move away from a disposable culture by creating a sense of connection between people, places and materials.

All the products are sold through e-commerce on their website. But the main interesting innovation they offer is that, in relation to the kind of delivery the customer decides, there are different prices option!

If the customer want to "home-assembly" he will pay a lower price and receive the product earlier. If he want to receive the product "fully assembled" he will pay more and the delivery will take additional weeks.

#### KEY POINTS

**DESIGN:** it is important to notice the innovative design they created thanks to the joint system. They based their entire company on this single, simple, little components, that overturns the business and the company itself.

**SERVICE:** the delivery system's choice involves the user on different levels. First of all, as the master Ikea taught, being part of the process of a furniture installation is emotionally important and a strong way to create a connection between the company and the user.



“

*Nothing can  
replace the  
discipline,  
patience and  
hard work  
required to make  
a good product.*

*[Fyrn website]*

Second of all, the difference prices can reach more and different “wallets” and customers.

To explain the service with an example: the Mariposa chair, as shown in the side image, is available for \$495 for those who wish to assemble it at home, and for customers who want to get a fully-assembled chair delivered, then the Mariposa can be yours for \$725.<sup>5</sup>

This strategy allows the DIYer consumers to get involved, to not pay a service they don't want, to save some money, maybe even exercise some muscles and mostly it helps the company saving the labor and the shipping costs.

<sup>5</sup> Reed N., "10 furniture companies excelling at Ecommerce - and soon at ICFF", 2017, <https://commandc.com/10-furniture-companies-ecommerce-icff/>, [21/12/2018]

The screenshot shows the Fyrn website's product page for the Mariposa chair. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for ABOUT, PRODUCTS, HOW TO'S, PRESS, FAQ'S, PHOTO JOURNAL, and a shopping cart icon. The main content area features a large image of the Mariposa chair. Below the image is a row of smaller thumbnail images showing different views of the chair. To the right of the image, the product name 'Mariposa' is displayed in a large font, followed by 'Standard Chair'. Below this, two assembly options are listed: 'Home Assembly' for \$495 and 'Fully Assembled' for \$725. Each option includes a list of bullet points detailing benefits and lead times. At the bottom of the product information, there is a configuration section with dropdown menus for 'Assembly' (set to Home Assembly), 'Wood Finishes' (set to Blond Oak), and 'Bracket Finishes' (set to Black). The final price shown is \$495.00.

“

*FYRN knows its customer, and he's someone who likes to build it himself.*

*[Nicole Reed]*





## Case Study

All the products, that can always be sold through e-commerce on their website, have studied and stylish pictures, coherent with the brand and its identity

### THE EXPERIENCE OF PRETTYPEGS

In 2012 a Swedish company, named Prettypegs, came out with an idea: a line of stylish and fun customizable legs that fit any of the IKEA furniture. From funky to retro to more traditional shapes, the possibilities are endless, even for the color choices. Only by replacing the legs you can completely change the look of a furniture.

This experience is very important to quote because the products and the business model are incredibly perfect for e-commerce: they are "details" and little components customers don't need to try before buy.

### KEY POINTS

**PERSONAL:** "All the inspiration and all the courage you need to let your home express who you are."<sup>7</sup>

The choice is wide, and the products they sells now are not only legs, but also knobs and front layers. It means that it is possible to create infinite combinations of these elements and their colors and shapes.

**ACCESSIBLE:** "Easy and affordable. Affordable and easy. In no particular order."

The big choice allows to have different prices, affordable

<sup>7</sup> source: [www.prettypegs.com/mission&values](http://www.prettypegs.com/mission&values)



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*You can now  
get a completely  
customized  
look for your IKEA  
furniture*

*[Caroline Williamson,  
Design-Milk]*

for every wallets. The company also repeatedly states that ships worldwide. Therefore delivery is not an issue.

**BOLD:** *"If trusting your gut, saying no, yelling yes and trying new things is bold, well then we're bold!"*

Prettypegs as a strong identity and wants their consumers to be the same: be creative and customize their house in order to communicate who they are. And with Prettypegs this process become easy, since they offer you to personalize very specific furniture - the IKEA ones - investing the right amount of money.

#### **OTHER SIMILAR EXPERIENCES**

Prettypegs is the most important and famous example, but not the only one. Other companies came out with a similar concept, offering other products.

**Bemz.com** sells covers in fabrics to update IKEA sofa, armchairs, chairs and more.

**Mykea.com** offers a deep customization, where you can design your own decor or buy one from a designer and then stick the cover on the furniture.



DIY FURNITURE

# Case Study

## THE EXPERIENCE OF DIY FURNITURE STORE

DIY Furniture Store is a company from Colorado which provide a furniture kit service. As a matter of fact customers, won't receive a finished or assembled product but components to build a piece and assembly directions. "It's like Blue Apron," Donnie Criswell, owner of the company, said. "You get a recipe in a box and you put it together."<sup>8</sup>

DIY Furniture's customers are people who like to craft their own house, in order to make it personal, but need guidance with a made-to-build kit.

### KEY POINTS

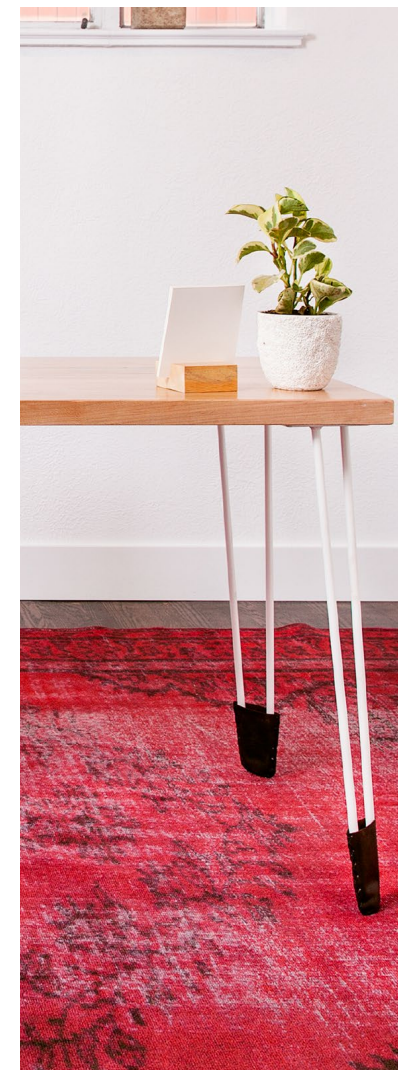
This concept allows to consumers to build their own furniture and their own order.

For example, if you need a shelf, you can decide how to do it and what to order.

If you want to buy everything on DIY Furniture Store you can pick the whole pack of brackets and wood panel, selectioning the colours you prefer. If you only need to buy the brackets because you already have the shelf (or maybe buy it somewhere else) you can just order those components.

<sup>8</sup> Yen L., "Woodworker brings DIY concept to the furniture market", 2017, <https://businessden.com/2017/08/25/woodworker-brings-diy-concept-furniture-market/>, [3/03/2019]

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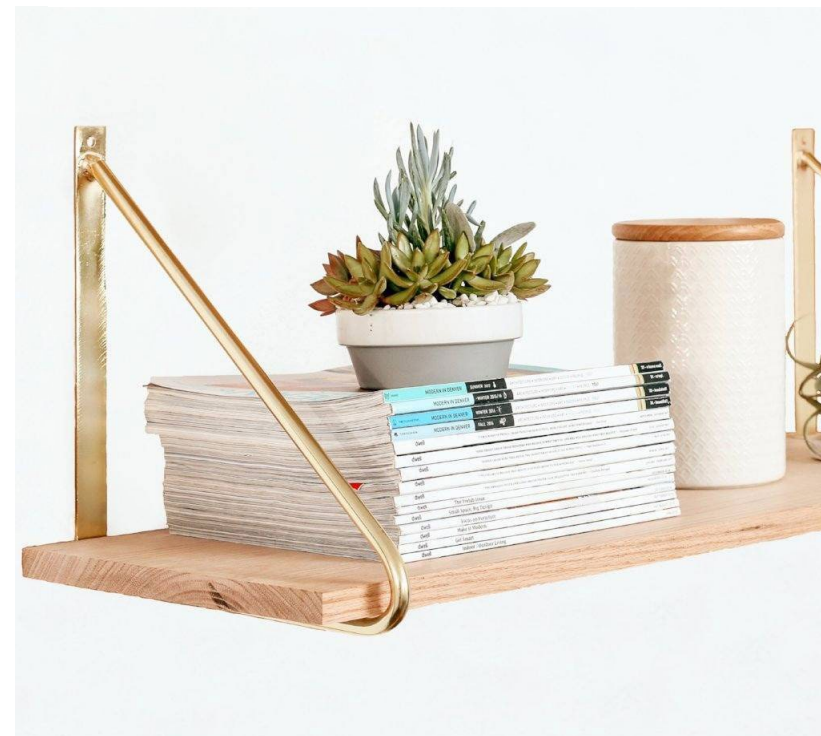
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*We make the table legs, you make the projects. Together we create beautiful, one of a kind furniture.*

*[Diy Furniture Store]*

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This methods involve every type of consumers, from the most craftsmen to the less ones, and all the wallets. Thanks to the support of some videos they show how to install the products, specifically how to fix the legs. Similarly to Made.com they have a section on their website dedicated to customers' pictures of the DIY Furniture Store products assembled and contextualized in the homes of their users. Anyway at the moment, the company apply this very interesting strategic concept only to shelves, benches and tables. The products choice isn't that wide.



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*We are eliminating all the little hurdles. We shouldn't assume everyone has garage space and tools*

*[Donnie Crisswell]*

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## Case Study

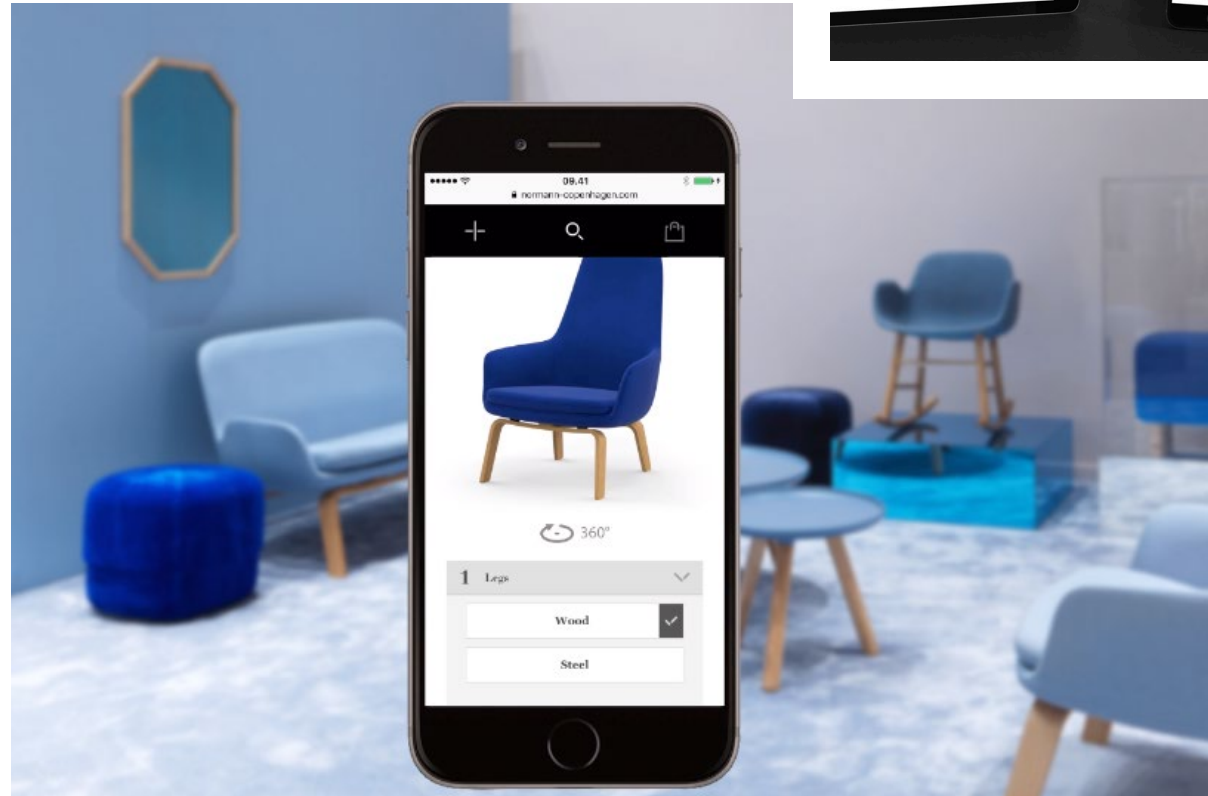
### THE EXPERIENCE OF NORMANN COPENHAGEN AND THE CUSTOMIZER

The famous danish company is one of the best examples of furniture online customization.

On the website users can find a dedicated section called, obviously, "Customize". The possibility is limited to some products: Era Sofa, Era Chair and Form Chair.

After selecting one of these items you can start customize first the legs and then the sitting, changing material and colors on a 3D models that you can interact with.

The Scandinavian design offers a wide range of fabric tones and textures that could suit every interior design with infinite combinations. Velvet, leather, steel, wood: you decide the style.



# 70.000 COMBINATIONS

“

*Every interior is different with individual traits of character and style.*

*[Normann Copenhagen]*

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## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF IKEA'S NEW COLLECTION

SJÄLVSTÄNDIG is a limited-edition collection from IKEA, launched in September 2018. It is all about *doing it your way*, inspired by the movement of DIY and hacking. With these products consumers feel independent, because they have been designed with the intention of *you making them your own*.

Modular carpets, differently shaped pillows, buildable furniture legs and more.

"We really dug into the topic of creativity and started looking at what it means to be rebellious and independent with products and home furnishing" IKEA Creative Leader, Maria O'Brian says.<sup>9</sup>

Since almost everyone loves a helpful furniture hack or DIY project (if you haven't used at least one IKEA hack in your life, you're doing it wrong), the brand has made it their mission to bring those pieces to life in stores.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ikea, "Ikea collections: SJÄLVSTÄNDIG limited edition collection", 2018, [https://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/ikea-collections/sjalvstandig/index.html](https://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/ikea-collections/sjalvstandig/index.html), [17/02/2019]

<sup>10</sup> Mead T., Morgan B., "IKEA's New Collection Is Inspired By Hacking Their Products, And It's Finally Here", 2018, <https://www.housebeautiful.com/shopping/g23067521/ikea-new-sjalvstandig-collection/>, [13/02/2019]



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*It is a way  
of expressing your  
identity  
in a home context.*

*[Maria O'Brian,  
IKEA Creative Leader]*

The SJÄLVSTÄNDIG, which means "independent" in Swedish, collection is available in physical stores, and not available to shop online, where you can just view the full line and check the availability.

**SOME ITEMS**

**Rug:** modular rugs in various shapes, colors, and patterns, to be arranged in endless configurations, thanks to the hook and loop fasteners.

**Room Divider:** indoor/outdoor room divider made of powder-coated steel; to be used to hang clothes inside or display plants indoor/outdoor.



“

*It's about showing off your personality, that you're not bought. I think it's kind of what you strive for in life and in work.*

*[Maria O'Brian, IKEA Creative Leader]*

“

*They give people the freedom to play around with furniture at home*

*[Hanna-Kaarina Heikkilä, IKEA designer]*

FURNICHANNEL

# Case Study

## THE EXPERIENCE OF FURNICHANNEL

Platform created by Tiziano Pazzini and Alberto Galimberti - founders of Lovli - as a natural development of that marketplace project.

Tiziano Pazzini explains:

"It is a set of activities that we were already doing with Lovli.it but that we have now decided to separate and transfer to a ad hoc platform to make these services more evident also outside Italy".<sup>19</sup>

Therefore on one side there is Lovli who represents B2C, while on the other side Furnichannel represents the B2B, curating "tailor-made" services for partner companies, from customer service to international logistics, up to digital marketing.

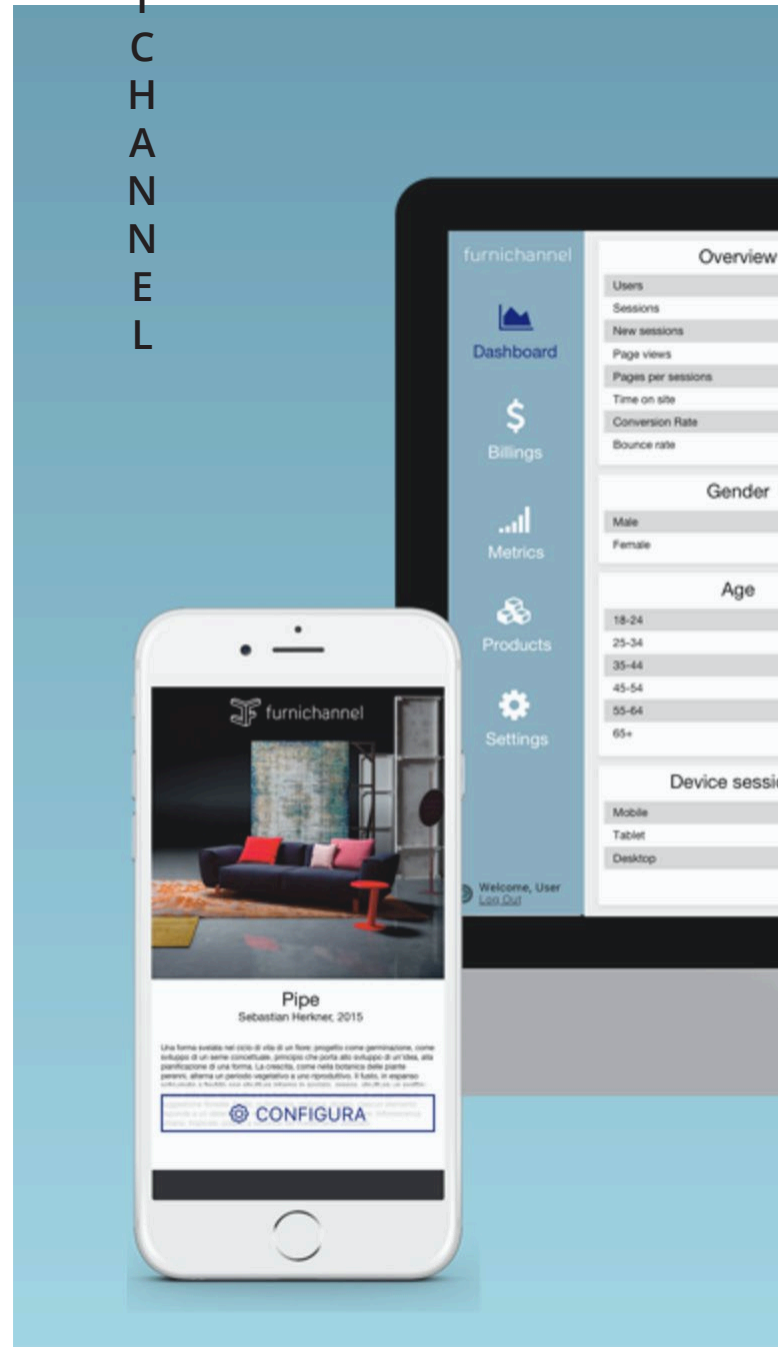
## OMNICHANNEL

Furnichannel becomes the most important platform, in the furnishing sector, to take care of the omnichannel experience. The final customer could research online the latest news proposed by the brands and subsequently finalize the purchase in his closest point of sale.

Numerous additional services facilitate this flow, such as

<sup>19</sup> Mancini G., "Nasce Furnichannel, la piattaforma B2B dedicata alle aziende dell'arredo-design", 2017, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/impresa-e-territori/2017-03-27/nasce-furnichannel-piattaforma-b2b-dedicata-aziende-dell-arredo-design-085003.shtml?uuid=AEb9E5t>, [17/11/2018]

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“  
The services we offer are very specialized and innovative for the furniture-design field, even in an international point of view.

[Tiziano Pazzini]

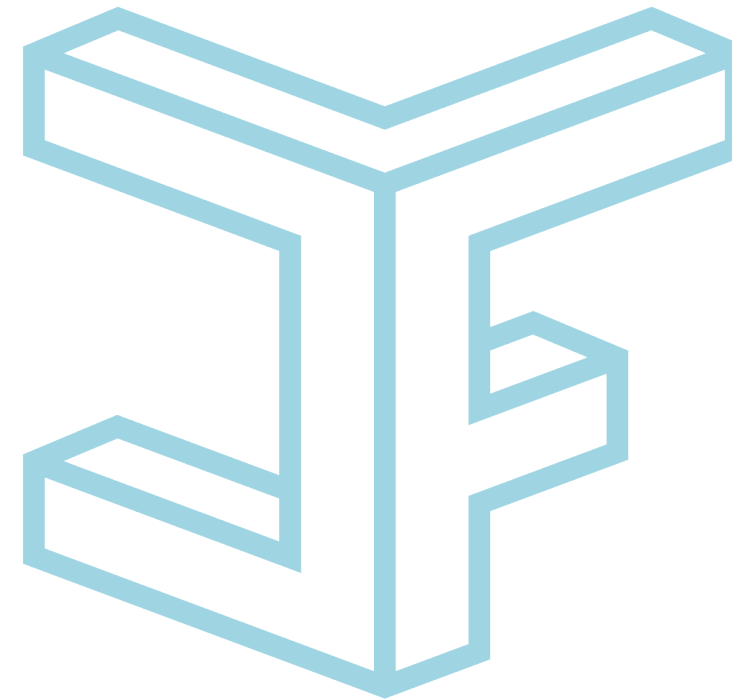


the possibility of making an appointment in the store or ordering a sample of the favorite fabric online.<sup>20</sup> The Furnichannel platform and its founders really believe in the synergy and the integration of the online and physical stores. Then, the portal will also function as indirect sale: through their service called *Catalogi Integration* companies, in just a few clicks, can integrate their products with the large online platforms ones, such as Amazon.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Adnkronos, "Nasce la prima piattaforma omnichannel dedicata al settore design", 2017, <http://ildubbio.news/ildubbio/2017/03/28/nasce-la-prima-piattaforma-omnichannel-dedicata-al-settore-design/>, [22/11/2018]

<sup>21</sup> Mancini G., "Nasce Furnichannel, la piattaforma B2B dedicata alle aziende dell'arredo-design", 2017, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/impresa-e-territori/2017-03-27/nasce-furnichannel-piattaforma-b2b-dedicata-aziende-dell-arredo-design-085003.shtml?uuid=AEb9E5t>, [17/11/2018]



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*In the furniture sector, most companies (...) didn't notice that the user matures its purchase decision in a process that lasts an average of 23 days. Therefore the goal is to use the website to follow the customer in this process, and not lose him.*

*[Tiziano Pazzini]*

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## Marketplaces

*Marketplaces are online platforms for commercial intermediation that put dealers and buyers in direct contact. They are real meeting points that help online transactions, without forcing retailers to necessarily have a website.*

(def. from [www.ecommerceologista.it](http://www.ecommerceologista.it))

As we saw with the previous examples, some companies decide to sell their products through their own and exclusive eCommerce channels.

Other business, instead, decide to benefit of existant market platforms, that means eCommerce marketplace, or as unique online point of sale or as additional channel to their eCommerce, to reach more customers.

On marketplaces consumers can find different products, from different companies. If for example I need to buy a chair, on a marketplace I can explore and even confront multiple type of chairs from different companies.

The reasons of the strategy choice of marketplaces VS own eCommerce are linked to factors such as visibility, management, competition, variety, customization, sponsorship, etc.

As we'll see, marketplaces can adopt very different types of strategies and possess peculiar and distinguishable characteristics: some of them focus their attention on offering super occasional sale's periods, some others require to subscribe, someone use the digital channel only to get the attention of the customers (Haigo) or to collect data on customers tastes (LoveTheSign), then some other decide their products selection referring to only one feature: Italian products (Lovli), style and design for everyone (Westwing), etc.

Anyway, their power is to enjoy high visibility among search engines and therefore among consumers. As a matter of fact, if we generally think about the biggest marketplaces, such as eBay and Amazon, they are

known by all internet users and they always appear among the top positions. Therefore for companies that want to sell their products online and don't have neither strength nor fame to start their eCommerce, it is certainly an excellent showcase for promotion.



# Case Study

## THE EXPERIENCE OF WESTWING

Westwing, the Europe's first curated and "shoppable home & living magazine", is the famous furniture brand founded in 2011 by Delia Fischer.

It acts as a marketplace, selecting the best companies and offers for their customers, but it also design a collection of products branded Westwing.

Its success, confirmed by its over 30 million members from over 14 countries ", is made of interactive features, weekly specials and innovative collaborations.

In the last year it started becoming more and more international: "We decided to unify everything in an international brand called Westwing Group - says Delia - with the aim of expanding the range of products with increasingly trendy products, more tips and small tricks to decorate and international brands that we will bring to the Italian market".

Already part of the group Westwing, the italian company Dalani, from the 1st March 2018 changed officially the name to become Westwing.

11 Waga N. O., "How To Feel Home "Away From Home" - Westwing Founder Delia Fischer on Travel, Escape and Well-Being", 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/neloliviawaga/2018/08/15/how-to-feel-home-away-from-home-westwing-founder-delia-fischer-on-travel-escape-and-well-being/#57ad10464a8f>, [15/02/2019]



“  
As a journalist  
I was always  
surrounded by  
exciting interior  
brands and  
products – but I  
could hardly ever  
find them online.

[Delia Fischer,  
founder and  
creative director  
of Westwing]

### **SUBSCRIPTION**

Westwing works with over 4000 different suppliers, providing big brands for the best price, and offering small local finds from abroad. Everything is presented in a magazine-like environment, accessible only after subscribing. Therefore to surf the website it is necessary to create a personal account.

### **POP-UP STORE**

The 7<sup>th</sup> September 2018 Westwing opens up the first physical store in Italy, in Milan, in a form of pop-up store from September 13 to January 13, in via San Carpoforo n.9, in the Brera district.



## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF LOVETHESIGN

Laura Angius, Simone Panfilo and Vincenzo Cannata, founders of LOVETHESIGN, (they meet in the management department of the huge Privalia e-commerce) italian e-commerce of home design, founded in 2012, winner of *Netcomm e-Commerce Award '15* and Best e-Commerce. *"Created to respond to specific market demands - they explain - identified by analyzing the huge amount of data collected in these two and a half years of activity".<sup>12</sup> "We quickly became a great observatory of what users are looking for - says Laura Angius - what they look at and what they don't buy, what they would like and don't find, what colors, materials, price ranges, objects they prefer. From there, in addition to sharing this data with our e-commerce brand partners, we also designed a series of indications we used to create our collection".*

The experience of this platform shows the importance of the digital channel, not only for sale but also to collect data about trends and users needs.

### DATA COLLECTION

The innovation of this data collection is the free and easy accessibility, by everyone.

Big data or not (probably in this case the most correct

<sup>12</sup> PambiancoDesign Redazione, "LOVETHESIGN lancia il proprio brand". 2015, <https://design.pambianconews.com/nuovi-investimenti-per-lovetheesign-che-lancia-il-suo-brand/>, [21/11/2018]



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*We quickly became a great observatory of what users are looking for*

*[Laura Angius]*

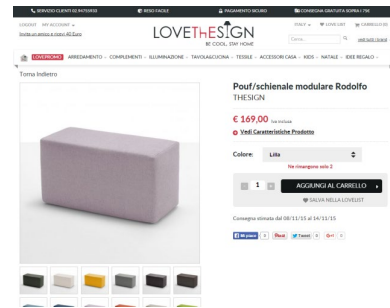
definition is "large masses of data"<sup>13</sup>), even small brands can have feedback without paying a consulting agency. A Lovethesign research made in 2017<sup>14</sup>, operated on a sample of over 3 thousand design lovers, shows that: 60% of them searches inspiration almost daily; 68% of the younger sample (25-35 y.o.) declares to be influenced in the purchases mostly by the web; 89% of design lovers between 25 and 35 y.o. already makes furniture purchases more than 6 times per year; 42% makes almost a purchase per month. These consumers are not unwary: they don't give in to the compulsive charm of brands or designers. They are scrupulous consumers, who are carefully and deeply documented on online catalogs, social networks or web magazines. Paper magazines and physical stores still have a strong influence in the younger age groups. A decisive element is communication, capable of influencing in the choices even more than the history or the "reputation" of a brand.

**PRODUCT EXAMPLE**

Their first collection product was the sofa named Rodolfo: a modular system that "grows together with the family" highly customizable, in terms of colours and sizes.<sup>15</sup>

13 Di Lucchio M., "Il caso Lovethesign: l'e-commerce osservatorio per gli artigiani", 2014, <https://www.economyup.it/food/il-caso-lovethesign-l-e-commerce-osservatorio-per-gli-artigiani/>, [21/11/2018]  
 14 Mancini G., "Tra i «design lovers» cresce l'influenza del web e il peso dell'e-commerce", 2017, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/impresa-e-territori/2017-06-27/tra-design-lovers-cresce-l-influenza-web-e-peso-dell-e-commerce-113159.shtml?uuiid=AERuTmB>, [21/11/2018]  
 15 Gargiulo L., "[Case history] LOVETHESIGN miglior sito e-commerce d'Italia", 2016, <https://www.italianwebdesign.it/case-history-lovethesign-miglior-sito-e-commerce-ditalia/>, [22/11/2018]

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*Starting from the feedback of the users who research and purchase on our site, we could report to a partner company the elements to design what we named the perfect table*

*[Vincenzo Cannata]*

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## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF LOVLI

Lovli is an online store, also defined as a "talent store", that offers furniture and furnishings, whose common element is the "exclusively made in Italy".

Of every new designer Lovli selects from 3 to 15 pieces, to present to the members, with discounts around 20%, up to 70%. Some of them are affirmed names, others are emerging talents... the important thing is that their creations are unique and italians (because we know that, when we talk about design, "italians do it better")<sup>16</sup>.

Lovli comes from the idea of two young italian managers, that, after spending some years in foreign countries for work, decided to start a new business following an intuition on the italian furniture market.

They saw that this italian market produced the 34% of the medium-high furniture, but with a minimum success on the online selling.<sup>17</sup>

Only the 2% of these companies are well digitalized.

Therefore the intention of Lovli was to enter this empty space by offering a channel, especially to foreign

<sup>16</sup> [www.donnaclick.it](http://www.donnaclick.it) "Comprare low cost, i club di acquisto online: Lovli.it", 2013, <https://www.donnaclick.it/casa/27861/comprare-low-cost-i-club-di-acquisto-online-lovli-it/>, [22/11/2018]

<sup>17</sup> Iozzia G., "Design made in Italy, intervista al fondatore di Lovli.it", 2014, <https://www.startupbusiness.it/design-made-in-italy-intervista-al-fondatore-di-lovli-it/85644/>, [8/12/2018]



“

*Italians do it better*

[Lovli.it]

customers, to access the purchase of furniture and design objects created entirely in Italian furniture districts. Today Lovli sells products of about 1500 companies and its business model today includes not only online sales, but the support of companies in their digitalization process.

Considering the female blog Donnaclick people enjoy the Lovli experiences for several reasons.<sup>18</sup>

#### **SALE OFFERS**

The number of offers, limited to two or three per week, helps the consumers to profit of a purchase saving lot of money. And it also avoids the never-ending "scrolling", like we are used to do on websites like Groupon.

#### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

People consider it efficient, kind, prepared and really quick to respond.

#### **"INVITE A FRIEND"**

You can earn discount coupons by inviting friends.

The initiative invites friends only to register, without necessarily buying.

The things that need to be improved are delivery (quite long) and price variety (not for every wallets...).



<sup>18</sup> [www.donnaclick.it](http://www.donnaclick.it) "Comprare low cost, i club di acquisto online: Lovli.it", 2013, <https://www.donnaclick.it/casa/27861/comprare-low-cost-i-club-di-acquisto-online-lovli-it/>, [22/11/2018]



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## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF HAIGO

Fabio and Marica, funders of Haigo, carefully scout international and talented emerging designers whose products (objects/stationery/magazines/technology) “fight the ordinary” and bring them in their store in Milan. This experience is a real balance, combination and co-operation of digital and physical.

Their slogan is not related only to their products, but also to their choice of a space that keeps evolving and expanding. It’s incredibly fascinating how two young dreamers, that travelled a lot and worked abroad, choose to stay, to stop, here, in Italy, in this historical age, with the aim of build and give life to their ambitious and fresh project.

### KEY POINTS

**STORY:** Haigo is a wide experience that started in 2016 with an instagram account that helped them to build a design brand of the idea they had. Then, in april 2017, during the Milan Design Week, they curated an immersive exhibition in Isola Design District with a selection of 8 international designer and a Swedish university collective. In november, they held the “Haigō Nights events” where they talked about design in all of its forms and grew a community of rational dreamers. The sum of all these steps brought them to the opening of concept store in

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*We have high expectations from our city (Milan) and we want to contribute to its majestic evolution.*

*[Haigo website]*

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Milan (february 2018). Their story is evolving a lot during these months. Since their idea conceives a shop that becomes a living space, opened to people and interacting with designers and professionals, this brings us to consider their experience as a new kind of store, where digital interacts with physical as a tool to make people go to the physical shop, meet the product they select, meet them and their entire world (and of course buy something).

**STORE:** it was designed, realised and handcrafted by the founders themselves. It is characterized by 2 opposite and contrasting atmospheres.

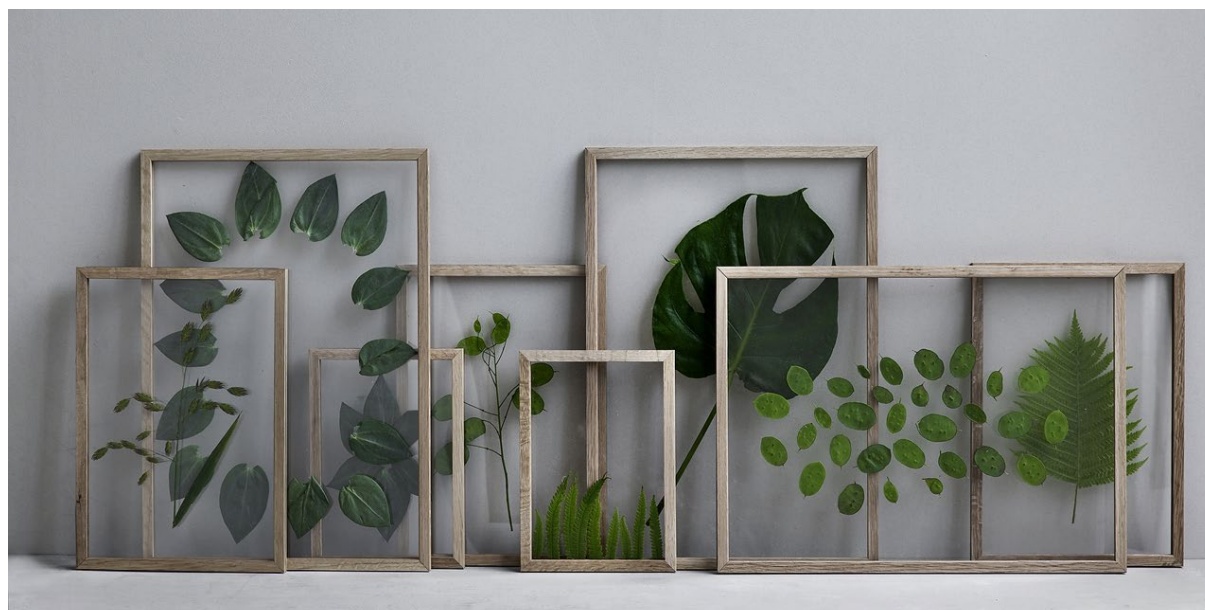
The first one is minimal and refined, with dark tones and low lights; the second one represents the evolution and on-progress feature, so it is made of cement and metal structures.

But this store is just a beginning of a bigger project: Haigo 100%. Their aim is to become an enclosing space, with an immersive atmosphere, to live and explore, composed by three elements: retail, food and beverage and events. <sup>6</sup>

**PRODUCTS:** their style is scandinavian, minimalist and geometric. They select design objects for home and lifestyle, including stationery, magazines and technology, coming from all over the world: Asia, Americas, North of Europe, Italy, etc. The products have a very high quality, they have personality and they are everlasting. The price range is between €13 and €300, and a few thousands of euros for furniture.

**DIGITAL APPEAL:** From their birth on instagram, they proved their ability on social and digital media.

<sup>6</sup> *Permilano.it, "Haigo, il design che sorprende", 2018, [https://permilano.it/zona\\_8/shopping\\_8/haigo-il-design-che-sorprende/](https://permilano.it/zona_8/shopping_8/haigo-il-design-che-sorprende/), [6/12/2018]*



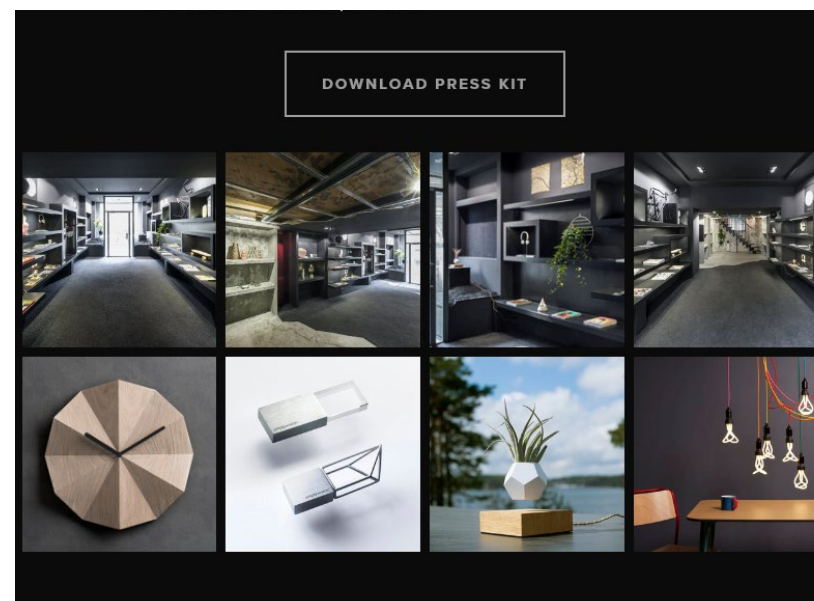
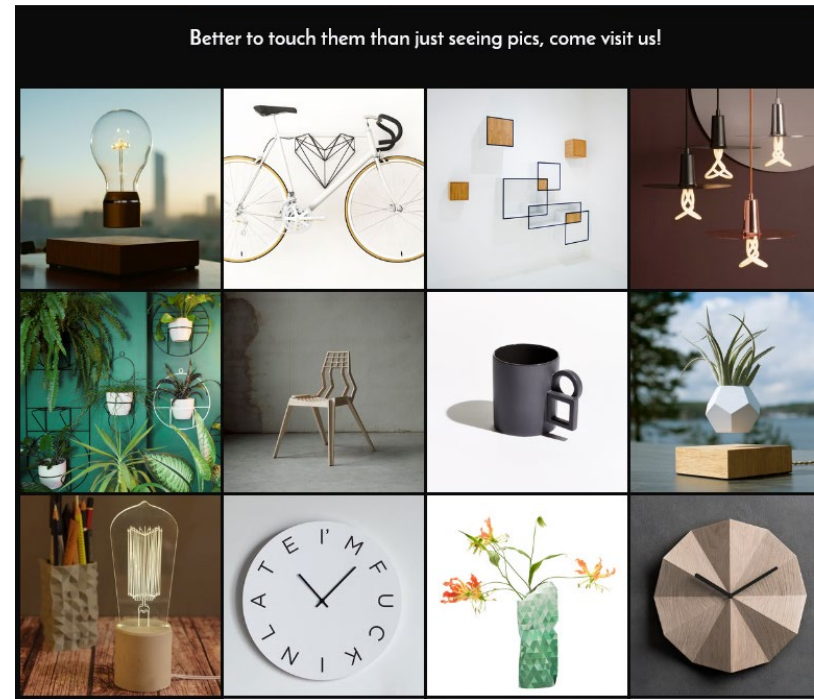
*products in the images:  
Flat Bulb desk lamp;  
Sit chair;  
Frame wooden frame.*

During a conversation with Fabio, one of the two founders, he shared very interesting considerations on the real sale's situation. He noticed the difference between "super cool and liked product" and the ones that really sell. The first ones, the particular and trendy products, act as honey trap: they attract people's attention and convince people to visit their physical store. However, when these same people go to the store they usually buy other products: they choose function, together with meaning, and they often think about the price they are willing to pay. The judgment of this situation can play a significant role defying the importance that digital platforms have: communication and visual/emotional/impulsive impact create an important connection with a possible consumer.

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**FIGHT THE ORDINARY**



“

*You know  
what it is,  
but  
you've never seen it  
like this*

*[Haigo website]*

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# Blogs

## VERACITY

An online channel is then an excellent tool for information, in every sector. Especially in home living, the experience of blogs becomes one of the main sources, as they act quickly and manage a huge volume of information, reaching anyone and for free.

The authority of a blog is given by the number of clicks and by the users who visit it. It's a system with its own rules where the differences between criticism, communication and information fade away. The democracy of the blog ensures that any well-presented project can have great success in virtual life (which may differ a lot from reality: a super viral project may not even be manufactured).

Therefore on one hand blogs must know how to select the most suitable projects for media success. On the other hand, designers are increasingly trying to do projects that have been defined *blogified*<sup>22</sup>, that means that products are not real artifacts but just made for blogs.

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*Blogs not only make a product successful, but they also design it.*

*(Chiara Alessi)*

It is significant how the products widely promoted and diffused then, most of the time, don't really exist! There is not a real check on the truth of the information and the product often are developed without respecting any technical constraints imposed by manufacturing.

<sup>22</sup> Alessi C., "Dopo gli anni Zero, Il nuovo design italiano", Editori Laterza, 2014



Consequently we need to reflect on the real challenge of regaining a role of guidance, upstream of the project. Certainly it is important to know how to communicate a product, a project, especially in a world so digital and so full of information, but designers, cannot lose sight of the substance and truthfulness of a project can't lose .

## INSPIRATION

Blogs have a great influence on us and our opinions. Sometimes a newspaper article, a company, a product - unlike if written by a stranger or someone known to whom we trust - can change a lot in terms of evaluation (very good or even very bad). In the furniture market it often happens to find blogs or influencers, who share with their *followers* what they like and which could be an inspiration or a starting point for others. Here it is: we are talking about inspiration. Home is our dearest environment, for which we spend time and energy in order to make it tailored to our life and our style. This is why the sales process becomes long and fragmented, as we have already observed.

## SELLING

There is a strong relationship between the inspirational reality of blogs and that of sales: more and more these coexist. Those born as blogs then begin to select and offer a series of products to sell (which becomes their biggest economic return) and those who are born as markets then insert a section dedicated to articles, trends, inspirations exactly in a blog/magazine style.

## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF ARCHIPRODUCTS

Archiproducts is another Italian big furniture "database" for furniture design.

They particularly care about the design process of the products they present, internationally famous.

Each designer and studio is interviewed and described with the list of the products that Archiproducts also sells.

As a matter of fact they also work as a marketplace where users can buy furniture design items.

Their policy also put them very close to consumers during the Design Week, when they always set up special environments and experiences. For designers then, their famous awards are recognized all over the world.



Arper, Cila designed by Lievore Altherr



Living Divani, Era designed by David Lopez Quincoces



F OK designed by Konstantin



## Case Study

### THE EXPERIENCE OF DESIGNBEST AND WEBMOBILI

Designbest is an online editorial whose aim is the promotion of offers and services of the most qualified Italian and international furniture companies.

The platform is the evolution of Webmobili, famous Italian distribution since 2001.

The peculiarity of this experience is its magazine+marketplace formula. As a matter of fact it has developed a great influence not only as a marketplace that offers famous design pieces with great discounts, but also as a blog. As a matter of fact they periodically select some products considered relevant and interesting, and they also publish a lot of articles to discuss about trends, innovation, styling, interviews and more.

designbest

RICERCA

INSPIRATION

VIDEO

PROGETTI

Home | Design Culture | Materiali e innova



# Case Study

## THE EXPERIENCE OF DESIGNBOOM

Designboom is the world's first digital architecture and design magazine. Founded in Milan in 1999 now is based also in Beijing and New York. It has gained a global reach of 3.5 million readers and 450,000 newsletter subscribers. It sources over 45,000 articles of useful information and insightful interviews, studio visits, documentation of new products, reviews of exhibitions and books, and historical surveys. They also offer a shop section where they sell their selection of products.

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español  
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lectores productos interiorismo videos entrevistas libros oficinas



archive (7,582)

Tomohiro Hata integra plataformas escalonadas en el interior de Re-Slope en Japón

### NOTICIAS



Nelson Garrido documenta los efectos en la arquitectura de la crisis financiera en Portugal

ARTE

0 shares

### ARTÍCULOS DESTACADOS



Simón Vélez, el arquitecto del bambú en la Arquitectura de Venecia

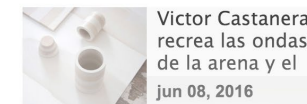
ARQUITECTURA

El arquitecto ha probado innovaciones, tales como el uso de bambú en la arquitectura

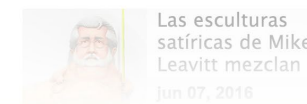


publica tu trabajo

### lo más popular



Victor Castanera recrea las ondas de la arena y el agua  
jun 08, 2016



Las esculturas satíricas de Mike Leavitt mezclan arte y naturaleza  
jun 07, 2016

“

unearthing the best projects and curating a selection of the most interesting aspects of contemporary culture...before you can find it anywhere else.

[Designboom.com]

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Guidelines



*What does all this mean for a product designer?*

How does distribution affect design?

*Are there specific outputs that a designer must be able to produce?*

**In particular how does e-commerce influence the design of a product, especially a piece of furniture?**

**How does the complex experience the consumer lives with the online market bring value to design?**

**WHAT SHOULD A PRODUCT DESIGNER E-COMMERCE AND DESIGNING**

**KNOW WHEN APPROACHING A PRODUCT THAT WILL BE SOLD ONLINE?**

# Guide Lines



## SCENARIO

definition of the possible scenarios that lead to approach e-commerce and product design, particularly focused on furniture



## PRODUCT

analysis, description and distinction of products features and typologies, in relation to different business models and markets, referring to Donald Norman's emotional design



## CONSUMER PARTICIPATION

definition of the possible roles of customers in the e-commerce market, both in the business strategy and in the influence on the product itself



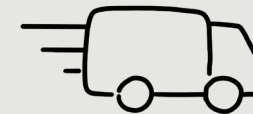
## WEB FEATURES

advices and suggestions on the key elements of an e-commerce webpage and description of those



## OUTPUT

description and list of the most important output to produce and share online, starting from images - highlighted in their roles and typologies - to downloadable files



## TRANSPORT

customer journey step that drive to a list of elements to consider both in the design of the product (materials, dimensions, weight...) and in the strategic map

*furniture e-commerce driven design*



## Scenario

There are several scenarios that lead to the approach of a digital distribution. Here there are three particularly significant cases, that help bringing to life different considerations and consequently different strategies. It is important to define and deeply understand the starting scenario in order to be able to outline the addressing consumer and the type of strategy that the business must adopt.



### 1. New eCommerce brand

A first case can be a new brand that founds its product distribution on eCommerce market. It means *giving birth* to something new, which raises the need of a strong communication and advertisement strategy in order to reach the possible users and then generate profit by selling products. The news of this scenario leads to deeply study and design both the website and the products themselves.

**E.G.:** *Hiro.design and the independent design strategy: simple, small, appealing products.*



### 2. Existing brand / sub-brand with a new product - or collection of products - made for eCommerce

A second case, very close to the first, is the one of an existing brand developing a product or a collection specifically designed to be sold online.

This is the case of companies that, already present in the traditional market distribution, decide to include in their strategy an eCommerce channel with a dedicated and restricted type of product. These products will be conceived to be attractive and appealing for the eCommerce channel. Configurability, customization, product interactivity, for example, can be interesting ingredients in this design.

**E.G.:** *Normann Copenhagen designed a configurable and customizable armchair collection, that has a specific section inside the website.*



### 3. Existing brand that starts selling its products online

A third case is an existing brand that decides to put all its catalog in the eCommerce market (*end-up*). In this scenario products are not designed with features for online sales, therefore it is essential to study "all the environment around": website's interactions and technologies that make the eCommerce journey a special and different experience for the consumer. He needs to be able to consult the entire catalog and view the product in its complexity and with innovative and increased methods. A world of information services, support and accessories can be integrated into the shopping experience, in order to conquer the virtual customers.

**E.G.:** *Ikea offers the mobile application Place, that, using virtual reality, allows to visualize their products in your rooms.*



## Product

The eCommerce trade, since it is linked to the web, offers the consumer an infinite series of possibilities and options. For this reason it becomes important to know how to define the value of what is offered and, above all, to know how to speak to the consumer.

Donald Norman, in his book *Emotional Design* (2004) describes the involvement of users by distinguishing three different levels of what he precisely defines as emotional design.

Emotion is therefore the starting point. In the case of eCommerce, it can be stimulated through the product itself, the website and the accessory technologies used (VR, 3D configurators, etc.).

### 1<sup>st</sup> level: **VISCERAL**



the first level is the automatic, impulsive, unconscious, which leads the consumer to affirm "how beautiful!", prompted by appearance, shapes, senses; therefore it has an aesthetic and very sensory character

### 2<sup>nd</sup> level: **BEHAVIORAL**

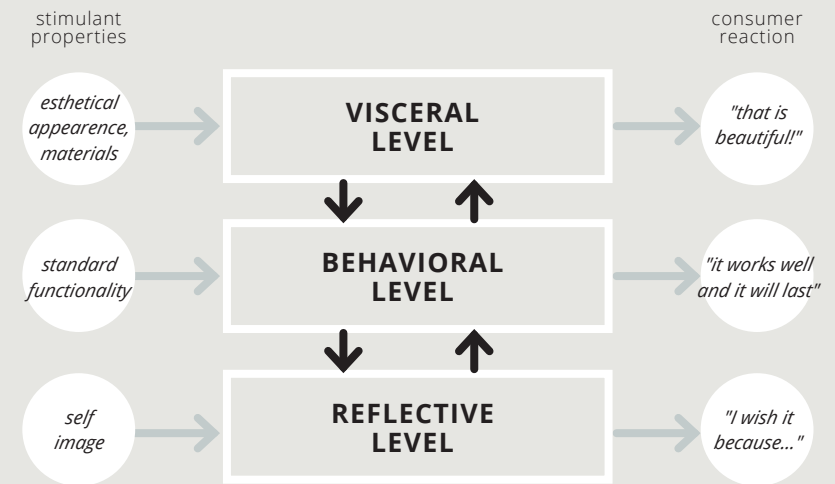


the second level concerns experience, use, performance, efficiency; the consumer feels the control of the product and perceives its usability and functionality with awareness and safety

### 3<sup>rd</sup> level: **REFLECTIVE**



the third level is the reflective one, it leads the consumer to a more complex and deep dimension, where the final outcome is the result of a long and thoughtful reasoning.



Pitassi, E., "Perché progettare per emozionare?", 2012, <https://www.yourinspirationweb.com/2012/02/17/perche-progettare-per-emozionare/>, [27/02/2019]

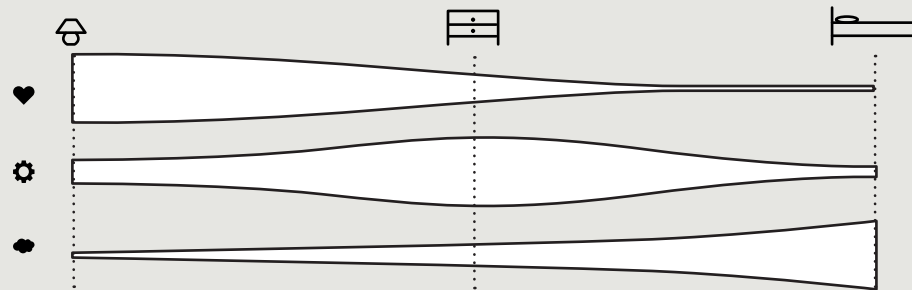
- ♥ visceral
- ⚙ behavioral
- reflective

## Features

Different emotional levels correspond to different business strategies and different products. Therefore it is possible to reflect on products features that make possible the distinction of the different paths.

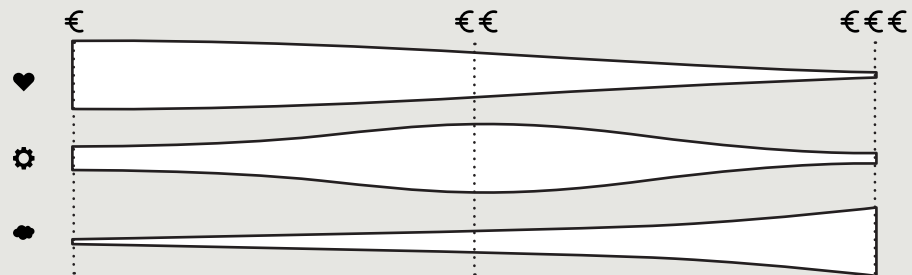
### DIMENSION:

*the distinction between furnishing accessories (such as chairs, desks, tables, fabrics, vases, mirrors, magazine racks, lamps, clothes hangers, etc.) and big furniture (such as beds, wardrobes, sofas, etc.) can help us to clarify the great variations in terms of product sizes; the first ones, being smaller and with consequently proportionally less expensive, stimulate impulsive purchases, the other ones instead involve more important and reasoned investments.*



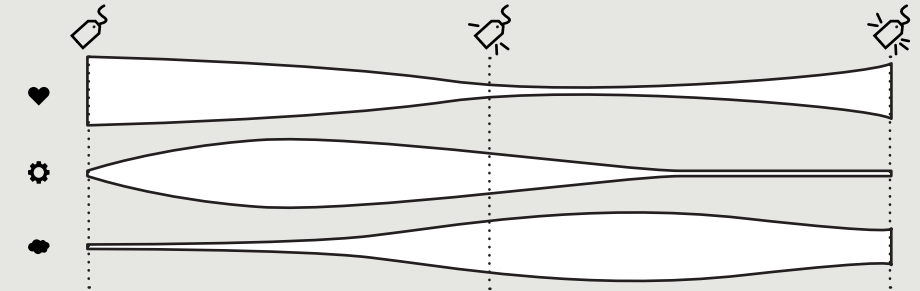
### PRICE:

*even price can change a lot, in particular depending on the size of the object and according to the brand; if a candle holder has a certain price, a bed will be proportionally much more expensive. The combination of all the other factors and features will then massively influence the final price, starting from the offered services to the possibility of customization.*



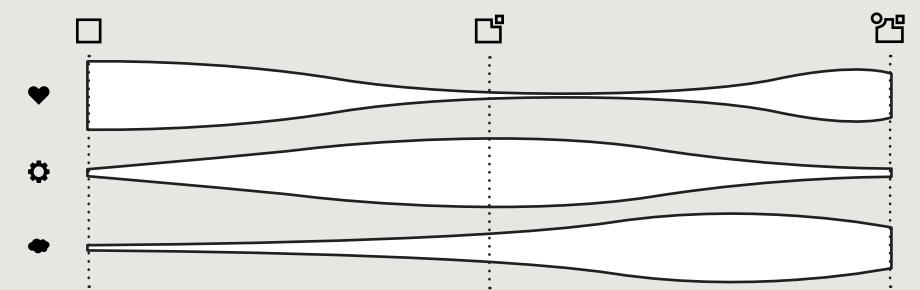
## BRAND NOTORIETY:

*brand often certifies quality and creates trust and safe-sense in the consumer, and, if the brand is particularly known, it increases the price. If on the one hand the choice to buy a famous brand product is a long-thought process (mostly because of prices), on the other hand it often happens that big brands offer sale periods (especially through marketplaces) to grow the emotion of the "unmissable offer" and therefore of visceral/impulsive purchases.*



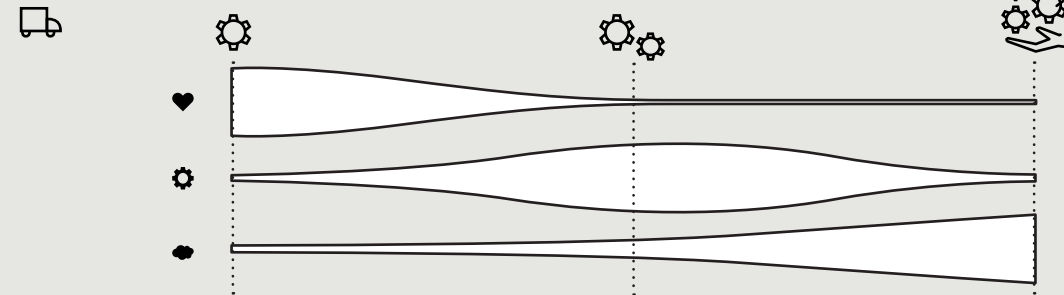
## CUSTOMIZATION:

*the level of customization is a feature that depends on the business choice of the companies; in fact it generates a price increase because it means creating products variants and making the production system more complex. A wide product customization is usually associated to large companies that work on big lots. Smaller brands, instead, adopt strategies with a customization focused only on some elements.*



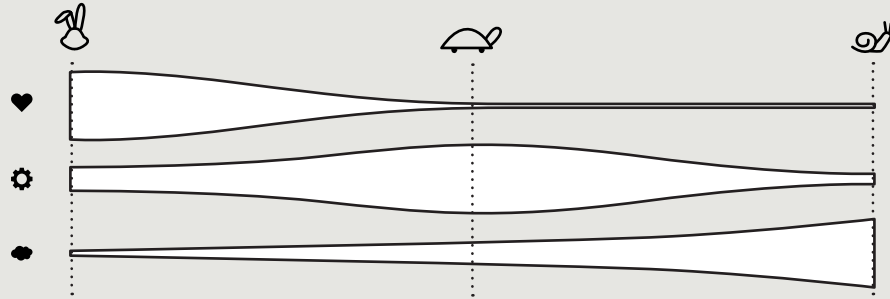
## ASSEMBLY AND SERVICES:

*complex products (especially big furnitures, rather than furnishing accessories) require assembly and installation services supported by the brand; also in this case the more the services are complete and helpful to the consumer, the more the price increases. On the other hand, self-made or self-assembly policies lead to lower prices, by putting the consumer to work.*



## PURCHASE TIME:

complex products (big and expensive) require a more accurate and thoughtful reflection by the consumer, for all the features we mentioned before, such as price and offered services; simpler and usually less expensive products, tend to be purchased in a short time, for their visceral emotional nature.



## Typologies

A particular attention is on the distinction of furniture typologies, because they can have different features and markets.

If the intention is to open a new market, a new brand, which sells through e-commerce, the advice is to select "liquid" products, low-priced, adaptable and accessible [easily identifiable in furnishing accessories].

Their accessory and simultaneously decorative function, often characterized by a great stylistic impact, a multiple functionality or a strong emotional value, has the power to attract the consumer and bring it to an impulsive purchase.

On medium-small sized product, transport and delivery do not present difficulties or obstacles. (impulse or emotional purchase)

If, on the other hand, you have a brand with a strong identity and fame, known and trusted by consumers, you can also think of selling big furniture (even if this type of products sometimes need to be tested, have high prices, additional costs for transport and assembly services) that have a market that refers to a more thoughtful choice. Many strategies bypass complexity and solve limits (for example with pop up stores, where it is possible to view the product before buying it online; super efficient transport and assembly services; materials samples, etc.).

*"Furniture is the art and technique of shaping interior spaces with various elements (dividers, armchair, furnishings, etc.) in order to make them more functional and aesthetic."*

*(Renato De Fusco)<sup>1</sup>*



*Furniture are big sized products that represent the fundamental part of homes or rooms used for other human activities (such as offices for example). They originally have two functions: supporting and contain.<sup>2</sup> (This category includes beds, sofas, wardrobes, shelves, kitchens, etc.)*



*Furnishing accessories are all those accessories and objects that, together with furniture, are part of the decor of a space, both indoor and outdoor. (This category includes chairs, desks, tables, consoles, but also fabrics such as curtains, crockery such as glasses and plates, vases, mirrors, paintings, magazine racks and shelves. Flowers, posters and cushions are also considered furnishing accessories, poufs, lamps, ornaments of all kinds, clothes hangers, umbrella stands, wall clocks and humidifiers.)<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> De Fusco A., *Arredamento*, in *Universo del Corpo*, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana 1999

<sup>2</sup> Praz M., *"La filosofia dell'arredamento"*, Longanesi, Milano, 1987

<sup>3</sup> Castiglioni A., *"Complemento d'arredo - Glossario dell'artigianato"*, 2017, <https://www.artimondo.it/magazine/complemento-d-arredo/>, [10/02/2019]



## Consumers participation

The consumer often also becomes a protagonist in the eCommerce action. Particularly in the furniture field he will pay particular attention to the purchase, as he wants to feel part and sometimes his own designer. His intervention can take place in different moments of the journey. Therefore, it is necessary to define in each business model what role the consumer plays, in which phase and how.



### a. Pre-purchase

The latest innovations show the consumer going back to the origin of the process. On one side he can work together with the designer on the perfect product for what he needs: through different channels and ways he can contact the designer/company to realize an idea or customize it. On the other side, he can become a "financier" or a vehicle to realize a project/product: contest situations (projects proposal) and crowdfunding systems (funds donations or raising, in order if the consumer is a common user or a designer) are increasingly growing, actively involving the user and giving him voice and power.



### b. During the purchase

Another type of user participation is given by the possibility to customize the product: change some features (color/shape/material) using online configurators. In this type of experience, products need to be designed in order to be assembled with different component alternatives, or to perform different tones of colours, etc.

To allow customizations many companies now offer, for example, the possibility of asking for free material samples.



### c. Post-purchase

Then, the user can participate in the post-purchase phase. This intervention can play the success or the failure of a product and even an entire company.

The user must be able to express his thoughts/questions, as he must have the opportunity to hear the opinion of those who already bought. (Let's think about how much we value Amazon reviews, for example.)

Especially for less known brands, maybe recently born, it is necessary to increase trust in users.

"Give voice" to users means letting him tell his experience both in words and images: different examples of *unboxing* receive positive and satisfying feedback from the users (example of Made.com, who dedicated and created a special section in the website, always updated and follow-up), they feel involved and particularly active in sharing images about their homes, their styles, their creativity.



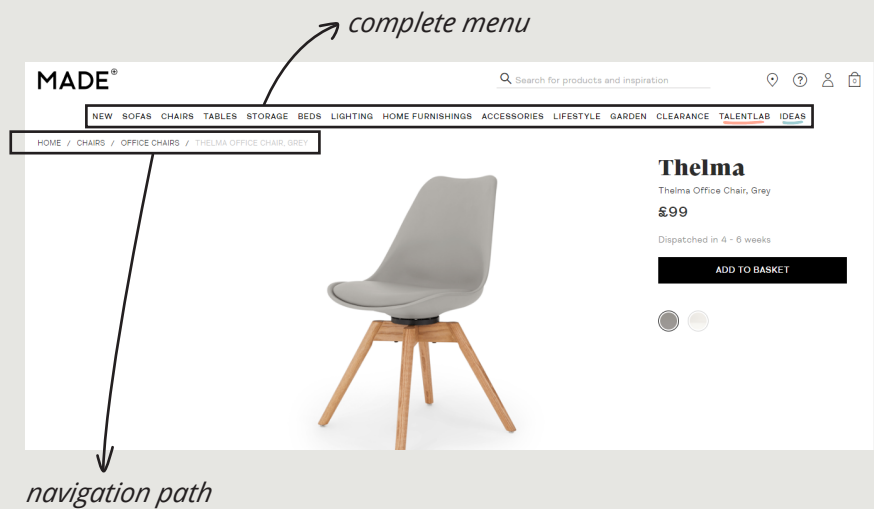
# Web features

An eCommerce website rises up as an online catalog of products and services. Its main function is to present all the information of the products and offer the possibility of buying them online. The usability of a website in this case is a very important factor. If the user doesn't understand how to surf, he gets annoyed, he doesn't feel safe, and mostly he will never buy. Certainly the website must be professional, aesthetically pleasing well executed, never penalizing the ease of use.

## Elements

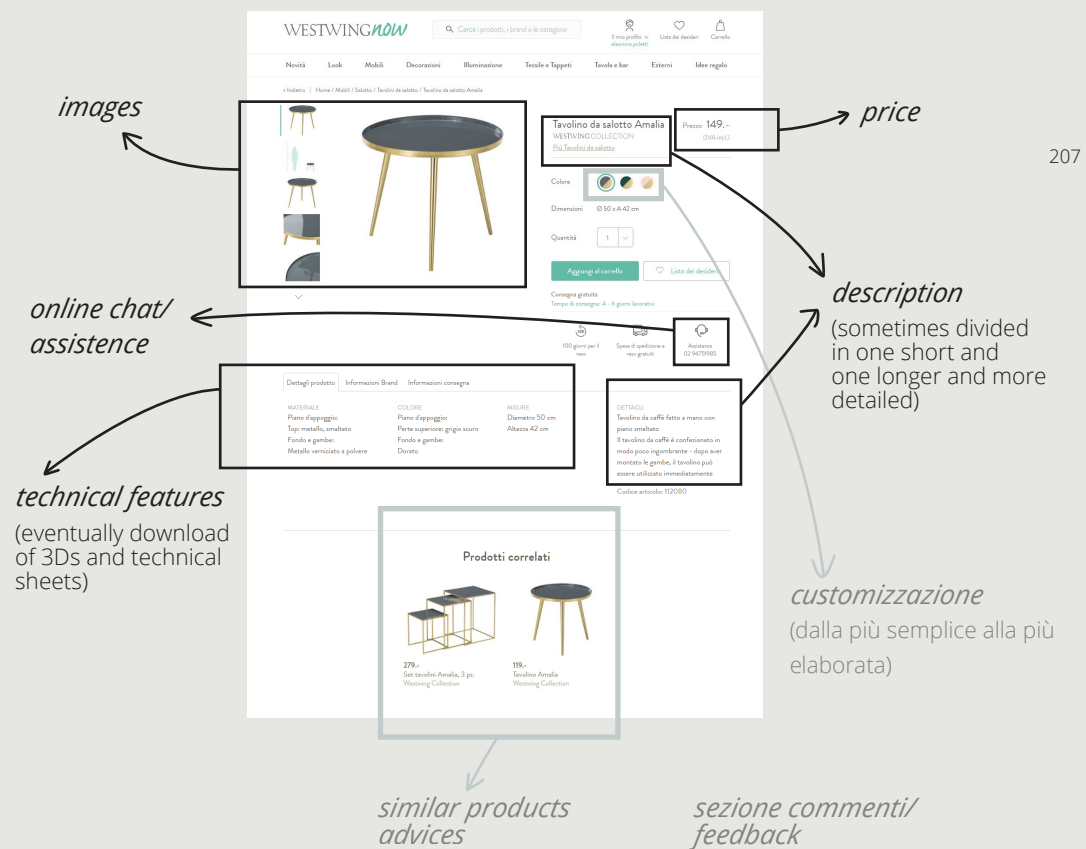
**MENU AND CATEGORIES:** they must be clearly visible from the home page. The structure of the products should be organized by categories and sub-categories, in order to simplify the research by users. The menu and its sub-categories should always be visible, even on the single page of the product, to facilitate the continuation of navigation.

206



Made.com, <https://www.made.com/thelma-office-chair-grey>, [10/03/2019]

**PRODUCT PAGE:** all product information must be collected on a single page, not too short or too long. Its function is to provide the user essential information: different elements can convey the different info, some are *fundamental* and other *variable*, depending on the business model:



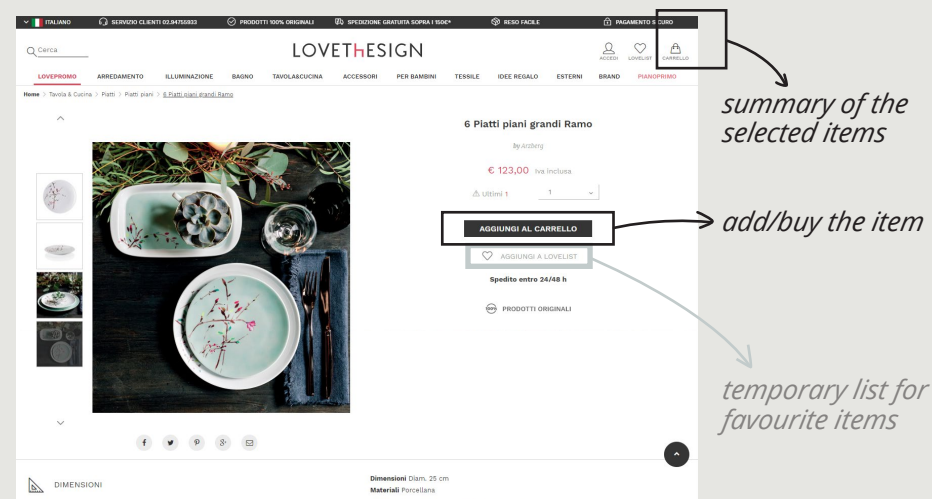
207

Westwing, <https://www.westwingnow.it/tavolino-da-salotto-amalia-90056.html> [10/03/2019]



## PURCHASE BUTTON:

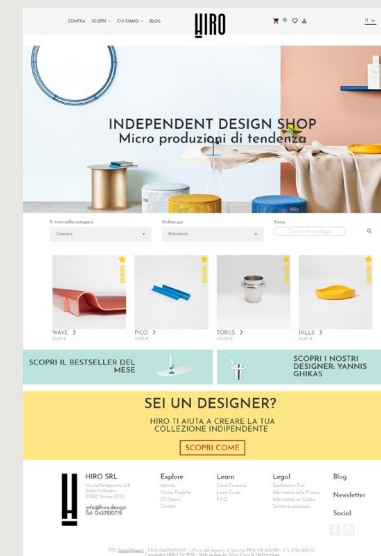
First of all it must be easily identifiable on the page, otherwise the risk is that the user loses patience and closes the site. Furthermore, in the "shopping cart" the user must be able to add all the products he wants. It is very important to reassure the user, giving him the possibility both to insert and to remove the products in the cart, before proceeding with the payment.



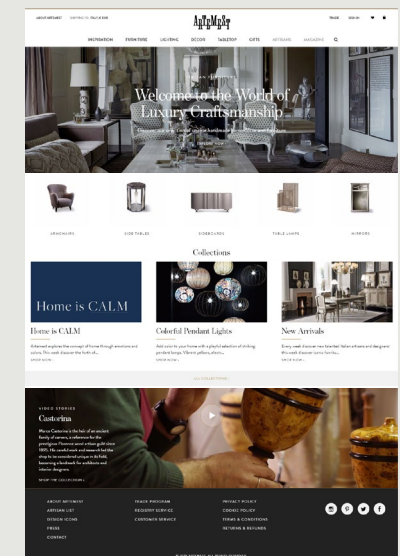
## Style

As for a showcase website, even an eCommerce must first be in line with the corporate identity, communicating the values of the brand graphically and textually. Images, colors, graphics play a decisive role: they gain confidence and remain impressed in consumers minds, or in the worst cases it happens the opposite. Some features are universally effective:

- **clean and clear page:** a chaotic site full of information and windows bothers the user, confuses the gaze and therefore the process. For this reason it is important to select and simplify the elements to guide the consumer's eye and invite him to stay on the page and proceed in the purchase;
- **identity:** it is important to make people identify the proper visual identity through colors/fonts/images, to stay impressed in the minds of users and not be confused with other sites and brands;
- respect for **trends:** keeping up with the times for users is synonymous of quality and trust, together with research and user care.



Hiro.design, <https://www.hiro.design/it/2-compra>, [13/03/2019]



Artemest, <https://artemest.com/>, [13/03/2019]



## Outputs

### Images

There are different types of images to present a product. Here are some that should not be forgotten as important and effective for communicating and telling the product.

*"Everything that the user cannot touch must be described"*

*(M.G. Andali)*



#### WHITE SETTING:

the first presentation image of the product must show it as an entire figure on a neutral background. The protagonist is in fact the product, which must emerge and describe itself with its proportions and visual impact. Particular attention must be paid to the camera's angle (to avoid a distorted perspective and product) and to the lights, so that the colors are shown in their natural way.



#### DETAILS:

(one or more - be careful not to overload) it is important to zoom on details, to describe joints, material textures, key features of the product, details of use (components that are possible to open/close/move/change).



#### AMBIENTATION:

especially a piece of furniture, but also all the products, needs to be displayed in a context, in an environment in order to better understand its dimensions in relation to the surrounding objects, and to be able to observe how it integrates with other products; and perhaps get inspiration for your own home.

Westwing now, Lucky Armchair, <https://www.westwingnow.it/poltrona-in-velluto-lucky-93063.html>, [13/03/2019]

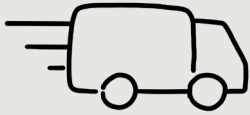
Together with images usually there are also **VIDEOS**, increasingly widespread as an effective and realistic product representation tool. The clips last few seconds and usually frame the product in its finishing details with a slow moving shot that allows the consumer's eye to overcome the obstacle of the "fake photo". Video is a very direct and sincere tool mostly for colours and materials.

### 3D models

Based on the latest technological developments and services, inside the websites or through apps 3D files are inserted and shared to be used in different ways and by different types of users. For example, a type of file that is exponentially growing is **BIM**, used by designers, architects or engineers. Moreover a 3D file can be used as a possible download but also as an online visualization method to observe the product 360° or for configurator softwares.

### Technical info

Another important output, that should not be underestimated is about technical data, the product sheet. Sometimes it is added in the description of the furniture or in the form of downloadable pdf. It becomes an important element to convey professionalism and quality to the user.



## Transport

Transportation is a very important factor in the design phase of the product, which must be kept in mind from the beginning, as it can bring limits related to weight and dimensions, and consequently materials, packaging, shipping and assembly, that will affect costs and environmental impact.

All couriers base their rates on various factors, including:

-  pack dimensions
-  pack weight
-  starting country
-  delivery country
-  monitoring
-  insurance

It is not easy to compare the possible services, as they all offer slightly different options; in addition each business has unique and different variables.

### Adapt the format

To optimize the transport costs it is essential to adapt the packaging format to the goods it contains, banning useless voids. Rather than standard boxes (where empty spaces are filled with bulky fillers) **it is better to choose boxes that can be adjusted in height depending on the product or, even better, made-to-measure packaging.** Moreover, when packages deviate from some standard measures, the couriers can apply extra tariffs.

To quote an example: Formabilio, in the rules of its contests always included these limitations in this regard:

*"The products must be able to be packed and shipped easily. The smaller the packaging, the lower the shipping cost and the lower the ecological footprint linked to the transport. Packing up to 230 cm in length and with a maximum weight of 30 kg for each package."*

*(Formabilio, contest rules)*

## Le 3 R: ridurre, riutilizzare, riciclare

Consumers have never been so expert and careful. A recent Nielsen study states that 52% of purchasing decisions are influenced by the environmental impact of the packaging. Packaging manufacturers respond to the market's pressing demand for ecological packaging mainly in these ways:

- Reduction of thickness and quantity of materials
- Use of renewable materials: sustainable packaging with performance equal to traditional packaging. The boxes can be in recycled cardboard or made with pure kraft paper certified PEFC or FSC, obtained from responsibly managed forests.
- Use of only one material to facilitate waste: many merchants decide to improve the consumer's shopping experience even in the recycling phase, using a single packaging material for shipments: for example, a cardboard box, a paper filler and a paper ribbon so that the e-shopper can throw everything together in "paper", without demanding divisions.
- New life: others adopt strategies where the packaging, once assumed its function, becomes another product with a new life.



## Customer shipping strategies

Before shipping the products, it is advisable to choose the strategy regarding shipping costs to customers.

**Free shipping:** an increasingly widespread and often crucial choice to ensure that the customer finalizes the purchase and does not empty the cart at the last moment. However shipping is never really free: someone has to pay for it.

Here there are several possibilities:

- a. Increase product prices to cover shipping costs  
(customers pays)
- b. Pay the entire shipping costs using own margins  
(the company pays all).
- c. Partially increase the price of products to cover part of the shipping costs.  
(partition between the company and the user).
- d. Free shipping on orders over a certain amount.  
(minimum order).

This last strategy can help cover shipping costs by encouraging a higher level of purchase in the online store; but it is important to notice that the company is the one who absorbs the cost.

**Application of courier fees:** make customers pay the current tariffs applied by the various couriers, in order to bring their prices back live.

**Single rate: *forfait*** costs rate, with a single rate, which is neither too low nor too high. It works very well in the case of a collection of products that are very similar in size and weight; while it becomes a bit more complicated with very different products.

It is also important to study how to act in the event of products returns (for dissatisfaction, shipping errors, wrong measurements, damage to transport, etc.): on one hand it is necessary to prevent them and on the other hand know how to reassure and persuade the user: for example, free returns often become a reason for an increase in spending at a specific website.

## In conclusion

The transport and shipping phases are certainly among the most difficult aspects of any ecommerce, as they influence different design factors.

Evaluating case by case, it will be possible to develop the best strategy. However, don't forget: revisit your choice every six months, in order to be sure of always offering the best prices, the most rewarding customer experience and the most satisfying service.

It is therefore important to keep in mind all these factors from the beginning as if they are considered only at the end the risk is to feel "stuck" in an expensive and complex road.

This is why, to summarize, we need to study from the beginning:

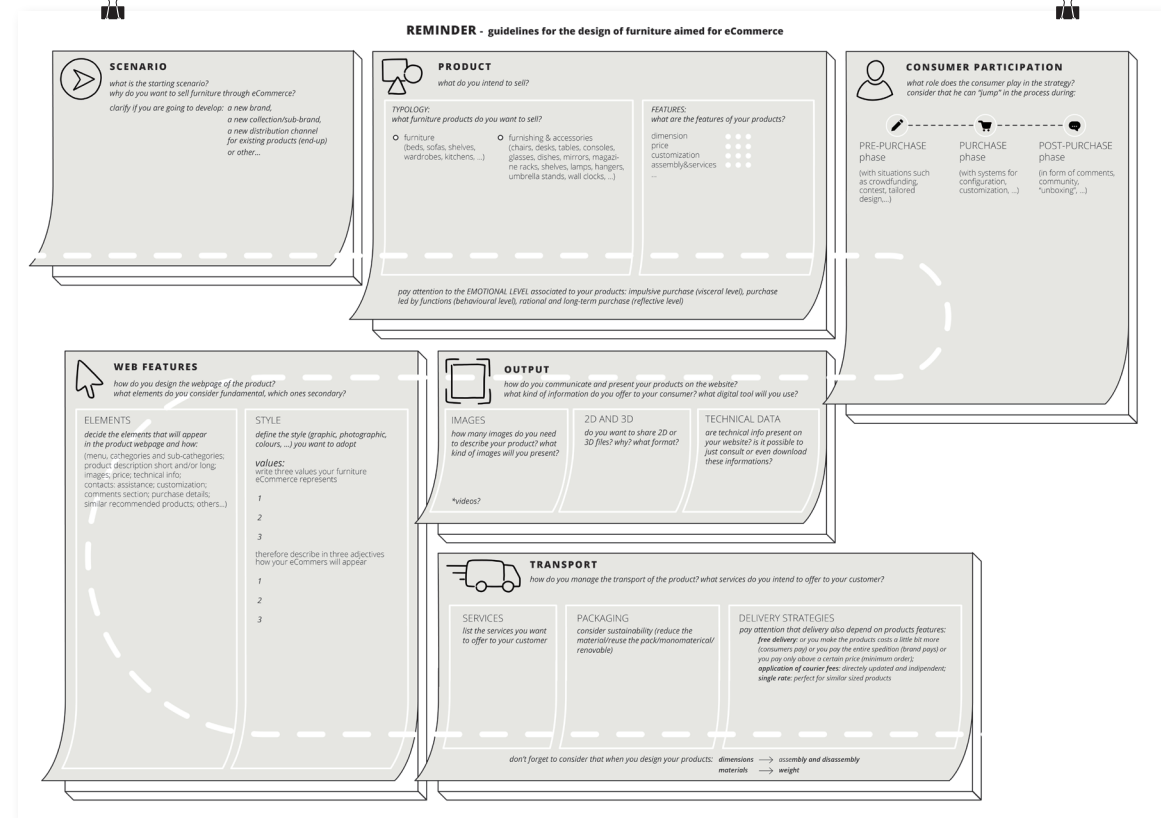
1. dimensions and volumes of the product and of the components, eventually possible to assembly and disassembly
2. total weight, therefore the choice of materials
3. packaging

# Reminder Tool

All the observations, reflections and advice previously described can be organized in a poster, that can act as **reminder** divided into the sections described in the guidelines. It helps to clarify the situations, to consider all the aspects, to pay attention to some limitations or some possibilities and to define the elements useful to plan the eCommerce website.

It is an organized list that gives a reading model of an eCommerce platform and tells you what you shouldn't forget. Developed as a printable tool on an A3 paper, it can be used by anyone who needs it.

The layout as "post-it" wants to convey the idea that it is a tool that helps you to work on some topics, that needs a lot of thoughts and discussions. A dotted line shows a possible flow for the "compilation", but the disposition of the different parts, close and embed, shows the essential connection between them.



*Experimentation*

# Considerations

The observations made during the research part and the reflections produced during the definition of the guidelines led to new questions:

*All the "cool" opportunities the digital market offers can generate appropriate business models and products made-for-digital?*

*How can a product, in particular a piece of furniture, sold online be distinguished from any product sold through traditional systems?*

*How can it be differently designed?*

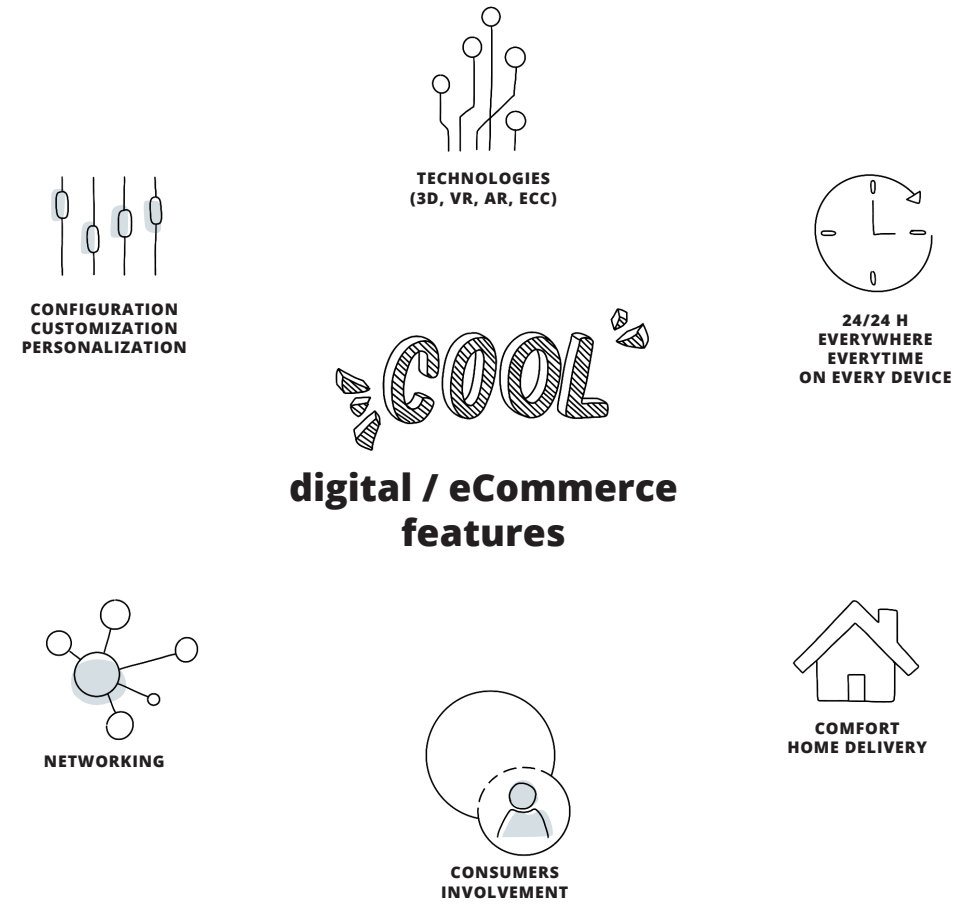
All the things described in the previous chapters, all the changes we are experiencing today and the transformations we are observing, lead us to some reflections.

As a matter of fact, the digital world opens up a series of possibilities and continuous research that represents an absolute innovation.

Let's take as example the virtual reality. It represents an innovation. As such, on one hand it can be applied to something already existing, but on the other hand it can be interpreted as a starting point to generate something new, built on that innovation.

The same thing can be applied to eCommerce: on one hand it can be applied to what already exists and simply become a new distribution channel; but on the other hand it can become a starting point for a new system, entirely based on the fact that the product is sold online. As we see in the side diagram, summarizing the observations of the previous chapters, what is currently happening in the eCommerce market and what the companies/marketplaces are experimenting, can become a starting point for new business models and architectures of products.

And this is exactly what we're going to do in this section.



# The idea

Develop a new eCommerce business model, - a new brand - that enhances digital channels opportunities, mostly in terms of *customer involvement*, *customization* and *networking*, introducing a new medium/ small furnishing collection whose product architecture is designed as modules, distinguished in core element and standard finishings, easily assembled by the customers.

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# Personas

Therefore, the audience the project is addressed to can be represented by different profiles, whose common thread is represented by some features, already anticipated on the previous page.

First there is the **predisposition to the digital world**, which can be represented both by millennials, that, as analyzed in the research phase, now makes most of its purchases online, and even by the most adult generations, who are increasingly trusting online market: only few keep being hostile, instead there is more and more confidence and curiosity to experiment eCommerce.

Secondly, the consumers targeted by the brand are people who desires to **feel protagonist** of what they do, and this means putting practical efforts into everything they approach, and their home is one of the perfect applications.

Finally these consumers aren't satisfied if they have the same object as other millions people. They want to make every object "own", they want their objects to *talk about them* (avoiding omologation), be different because they took part and made something special: "A little bit hobby and a little bit life philosophy". Indeed we hear more and more the word **HACK** combined with furniture [*<<unusual or improvised alterations to equipment or processes>>*], usually referred to computer and informatics but now also applied to home living, particularly on Ikea furniture.

Following there are three personas, built and profiled inspired by real known people, that represent the consumers of the designed product/service.

1 Gastaldi F., "Ikea hack: 20 idee da copiare subito", 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.it/lifestyle/casa/2019/01/15/ikea-hack-20-idee-da-copiare-subito>, [28/03/2019]  
 2 "Hacking" def. Techopedia.com, [28/03/2019]

“  
*Millennials are big DIY project enthusiasts, especially for anything focused on personalization and home improvement*


Rodriguez-Cayro K., "7 DIY Furniture Projects That Are Actually Worth It", 2017, <https://www.bustle.com/p/7-diy-furniture-projects-that-are-actually-worth-it-2409657>, [13/03/2019]

“  
*I like stories: the ones about people and their courage to feel free and to look for themselves*

*(context)*  
 Miriam is a young and strong millennial woman. She loves travelling and discovering new cultures. She believes in the richness and uniqueness that every person brings. She lives independently in her tiny new apartment that she is decorating through the years with things that "speak about her" and tell stories.

*(what she is looking for in her purchase experience)*  
 personality, creativity, colours, identity

*(know-how)*  
 trendy person with her own personal style, willing to get her hands dirty



MIRIAM

**TELL-ABOUT-ME**

*(age)*  
**31**

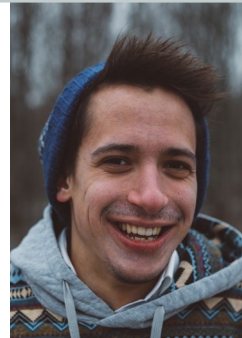
*(education)*  
 graduated in International Relations

*(job)*  
 communication and social promotion specialist

*(marital status)*  
 single

“

*I like meeting people, learn new things, get inspired and make my ideas concrete.*



*(context)*

Andrea recently started living with his girlfriend; he works together with some friends in an association where he gets in touch with craft jobs. He likes keeping his eyes opened to new possibilities and he loves keep learning new things. He wants to get distinguished.

*(what she is looking for in her purchase experience)*

quality, make something with his hands, a little bit of design, detailed information

*(know-how)*

passionate craftman, not afraid of using tools for building stuffs

## ANDREA

**CRAFT FOR PASSION**

*(age)*  
**28**

*(education)*  
graduated in communication sciences

*(job)*  
communication manager and content strategist

*(marital status)*  
cohabiting

“

*I believe that good things and beauty ask for care. I love taking care and I share what I love.*



*(context)*

Lucia is a modern woman and mum who recently got passionate about the digital world. She likes blogging about her life, her passions, her sons. She she takes cares a lot of her house and her family. And she is very good in photograph.

*(what she is looking for in her purchase experience)*

innovation, experimentation, creativity applied to new technologies

*(know-how)*

good and elegant tastes; she is the head and her loving husband her arms for the most difficult crafts

## LUCIA

**NEO-DIGITAL**

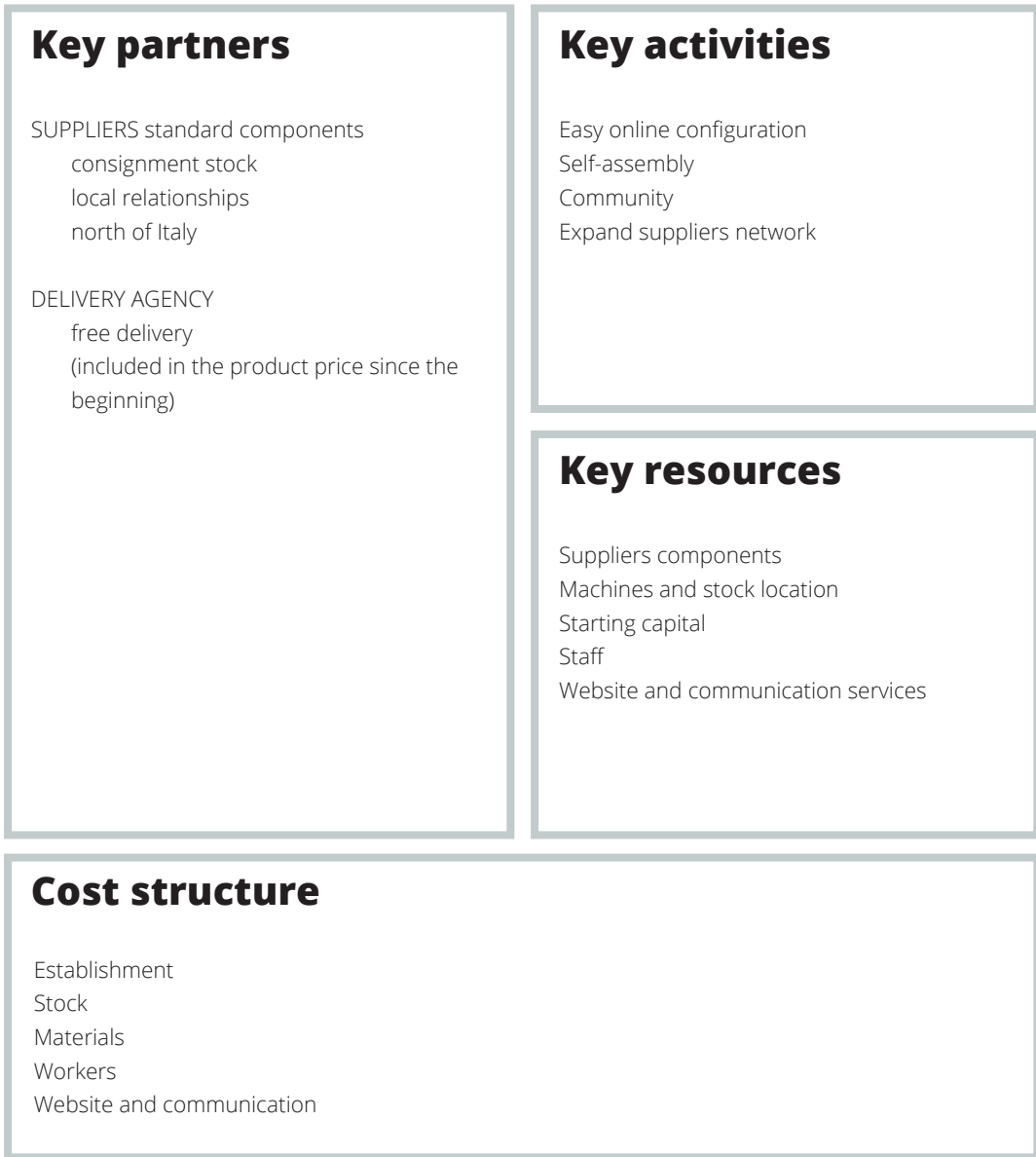
*(age)*  
**47**

*(education)*  
graduated in International Relations

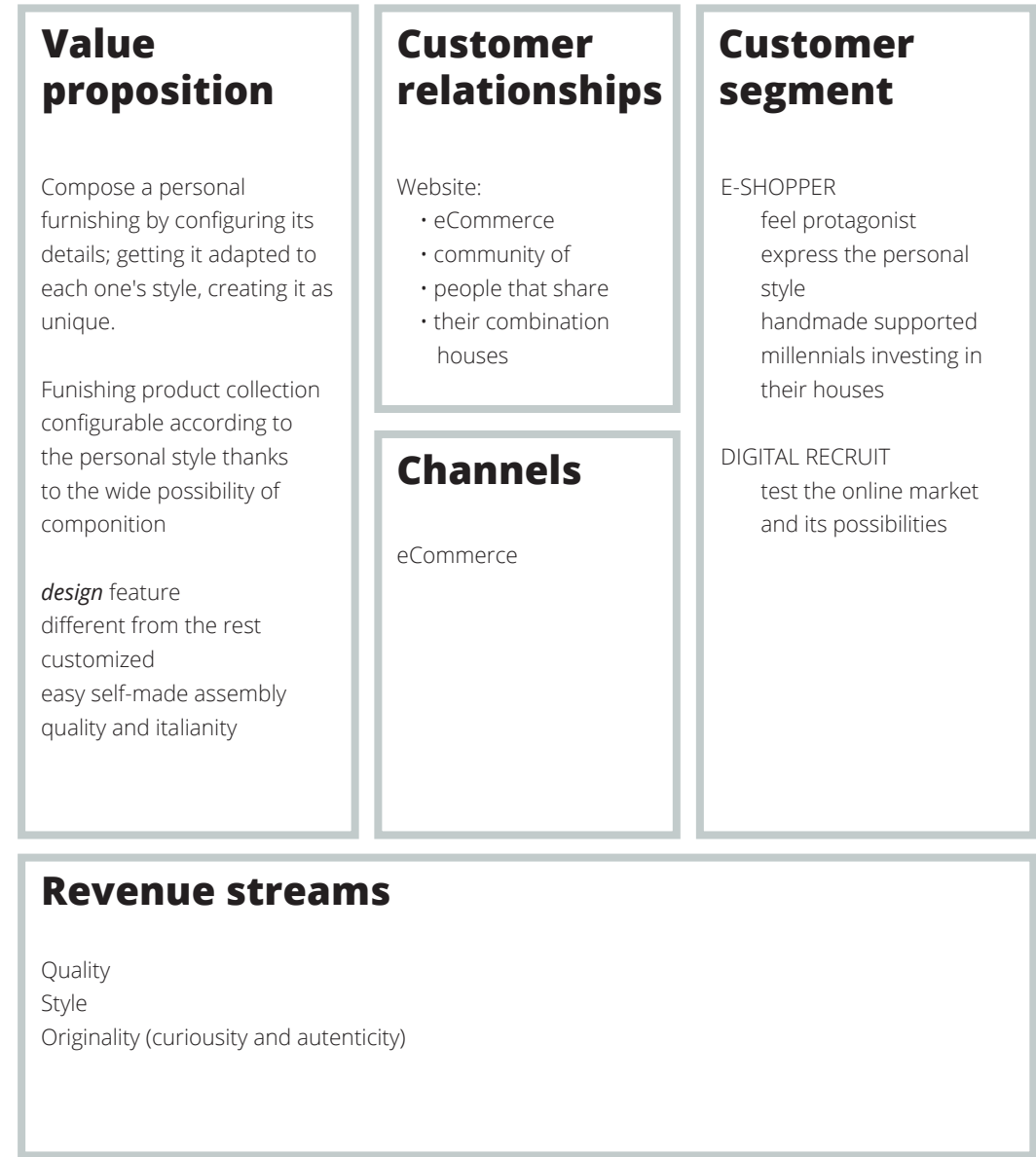
*(job)*  
graduated ?

*(marital status)*  
married, 3 kids

# Business model canvas

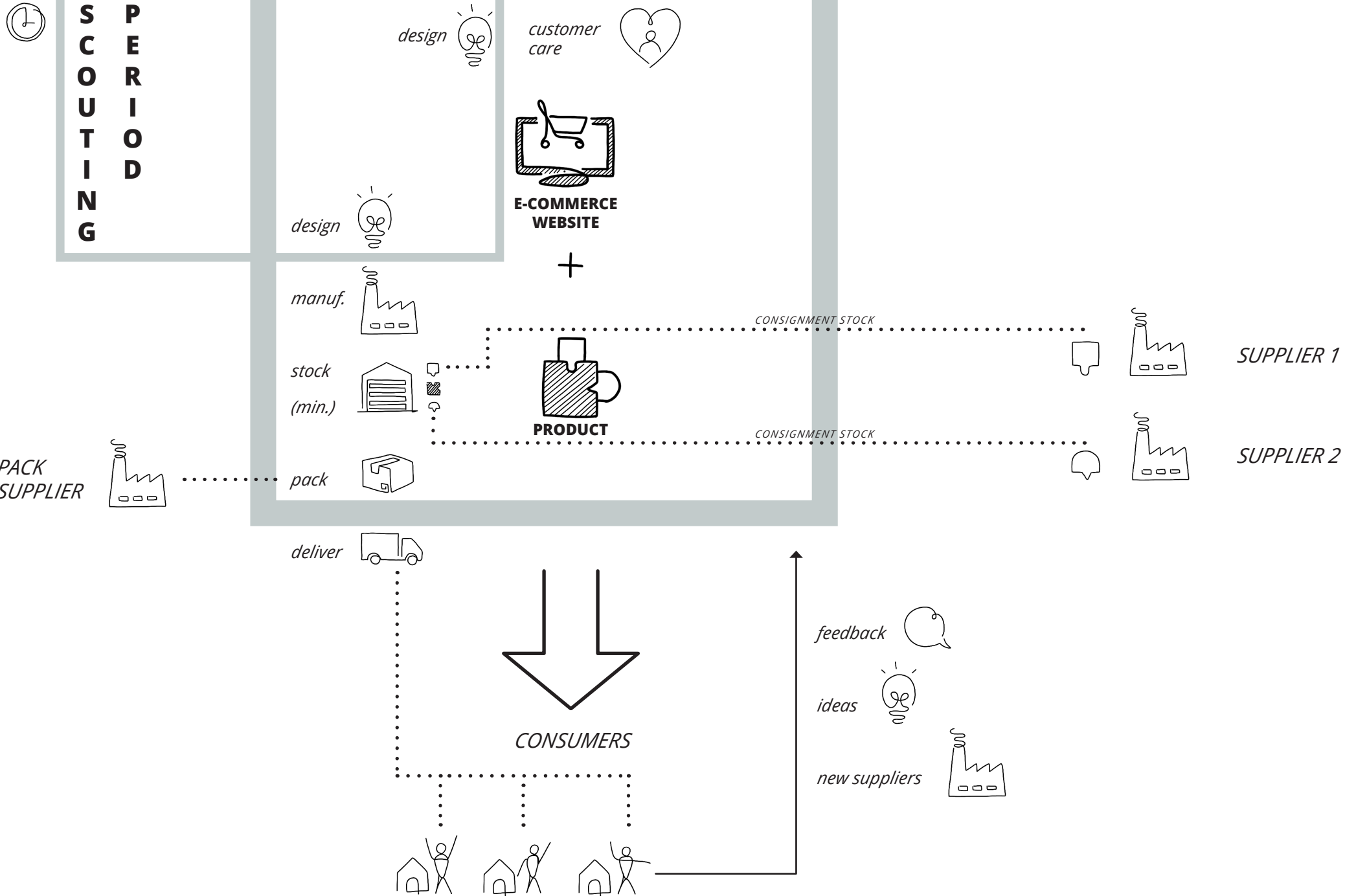


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NEW E-COMMERCE FURNITURE BUSINESS



# Guidelines-Reminder

The canvas created as a summary tool during the project phase of the guide lines definition can help defining the eCommerce features of the business strategy designed.

**REMINDER - guidelines for the design of furniture aimed for eCommerce**

**SCENARIO**  
 what is the starting scenario?  
 why do you want to sell furniture through eCommerce?  
 clarify if you are going to develop: a new brand, a new collection/sub-brand, a new distribution channel for existing products (end-up) or other...

*new furniture brand conceived to be sold online*

**PRODUCT**  
 what do you intend to sell?

**TYPOLOGY:**  
 what furniture products do you want to sell?  
 ○ furniture (beds, sofas, shelves, wardrobes, kitchens, ...)  
 ✕ furnishing & accessories (chairs, desks, tables, consoles, glasses, dishes, mirrors, magazine racks, shelves, lamps, hangers, umbrella stands, wall clocks, ...)

**FEATURES:**  
 what are the features of your products?  
 dimension  
 price  
 customization  
 assembly&services

*functional and esthetical at the same time for a visceral and behavioural impact (since it is a new brand) core component: monomaterial!*

*with common standard finishing components*

pay attention to the EMOTIONAL LEVEL associated to your products: impulsive purchase (visceral level), purchase led by functions (behavioural level), rational and long-term purchase (reflective level)

**CONSUMER PARTICIPATION**  
 what role does the consumer play in the strategy?  
 consider that he can "jump" in the process during:

**PRE-PURCHASE phase**  
 (with situations such as crowd-funding, contest, tailored design...)

**PURCHASE phase**  
 (with systems for configuration, customization, ...)

**POST-PURCHASE phase**  
 (in form of comments, community, "unboxing" ...)

*sentiment phase customers help to select suppliers and companies (industrial history and needs)*

*they design they're own product*

*active community that shares they're experiences and suggest other possibilities and ideas (unboxing and comments)*

**WEB FEATURES**  
 how do you design the webpage of the product?  
 what elements do you consider fundamental, which ones secondary?

**ELEMENTS**  
 decide the elements that will appear in the product webpage and how (menu, categories and sub-categories, product description short and/or long, images, prices, technical info, contacts, assistance, customization, comments section, purchase details, similar recommended products, others...)

*- self configuration for customization*  
*- super big images with possibility of zoom*  
*- agile and easy purchase*  
*- system dedicated to videos and community (direct link to this page (help to convince the public))*  
*- new things very accessible*  
*- interactive images (important that change for example in the language)*

**STYLE**  
 define the style (graphic, photographic, colours, ...) you want to adopt

**VALUES:**  
 write three values your furniture eCommerce represents

*1 joy of self-made*  
*2 dynamism of personalization*  
*3 Italian specificity and beauty*

therefore describe in three adjectives how your eCommerce will appear

*1 personalizable*  
*2 stylish*  
*3 active/collaborative*

**OUTPUT**  
 how do you communicate and present your products on the website?  
 what kind of information do you offer to your customer? what digital tool will you use?

**IMAGES**  
 how many images do you need to describe your product? what kind of images will you present?  
 product on white background  
 photo on website of product  
 video for dimensions  
 \*videos? not necessary

**2D AND 3D**  
 do you want to share 2D or 3D files? why? what format?  
 all information available and downloadable  
 all his configurations

**TECHNICAL DATA**  
 are technical info present on your website? is it possible to just consult or even download these informations?  
 technical data: Italian quality and sustainable products

**TRANSPORT**  
 how do you manage the transport of the product? what services do you intend to offer to your customer?

**SERVICES**  
 list the services you want to offer to your customer

**PACKAGING**  
 consider sustainability (reduce the materials/trace the pack/monomaterial/renovable)  
 monomaterial, essential, with instruction for assembly

**DELIVERY STRATEGIES**  
 pay attention that delivery also depend on products features:  
 free delivery or you make the products (can't be little bit more (consumers pay) or you pay the entire operation (brand pay) or you pay only above a certain price (minimum order))  
 application of owner fees, directly updated and independent; single rate; perfect for similar sized products

*free shipping: the products are not so light but are not important to show that we're not trying the heavy because it's not as effective*

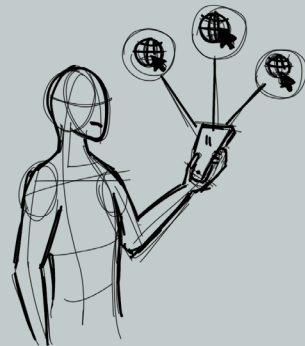
*new business*

don't forget to consider that when you design your products: dimensions → assembly and disassembly materials → weight → single not split!

# User Journey



**1** Andrea wants to buy a new bedside table for his room



**2** Andrea starts surfing online looking through lot of different websites



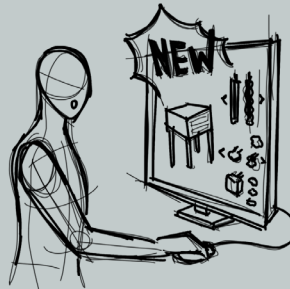
**3** Andrea isn't happy: none of the bedside table he saw fits his room and his tastes



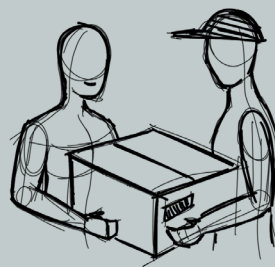
**4** Andrea sees on Instagram a post of his friend with a beautiful table she just bought



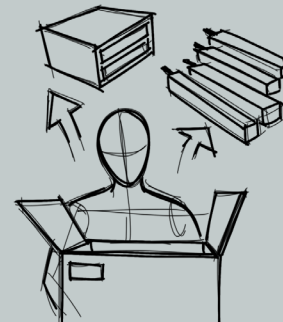
**5** Andrea finds out about this new furniture eCommerce



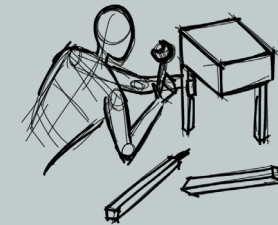
**6** Andrea starts surfing on this website and creating the perfect bedside table for his room and buys it.



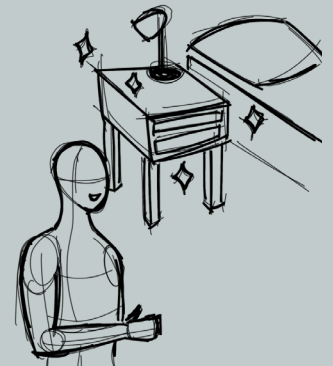
**7** Andrea receive the pack delivered at home



**8** Andrea opens the pack with the side table and the finishing components he chose



**9** Andrea starts to assemble his personal bedside table



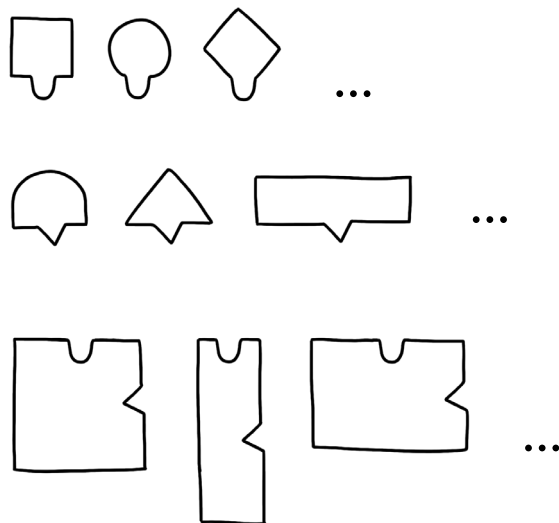
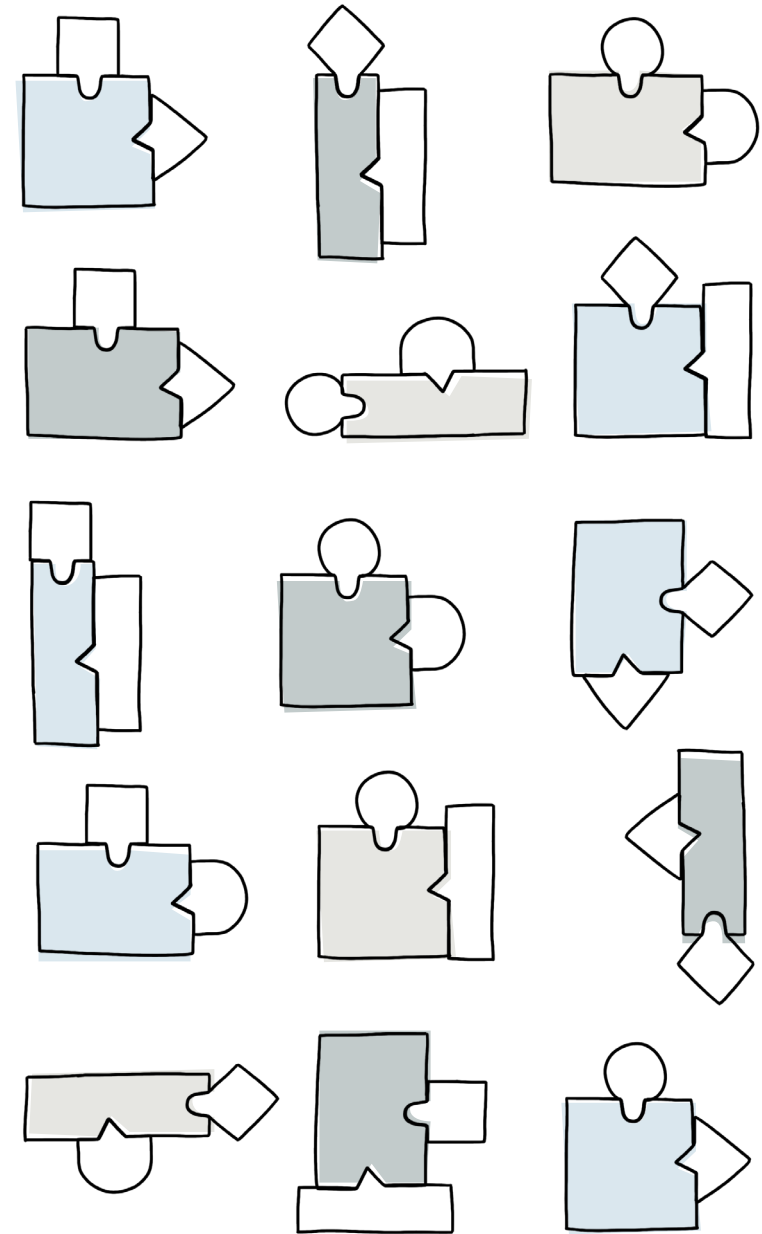
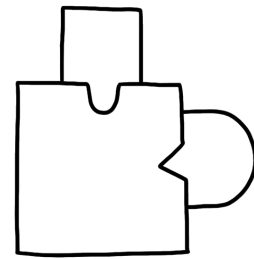
**10** Andrea is super happy because the product perfectly fits his room and his wishes

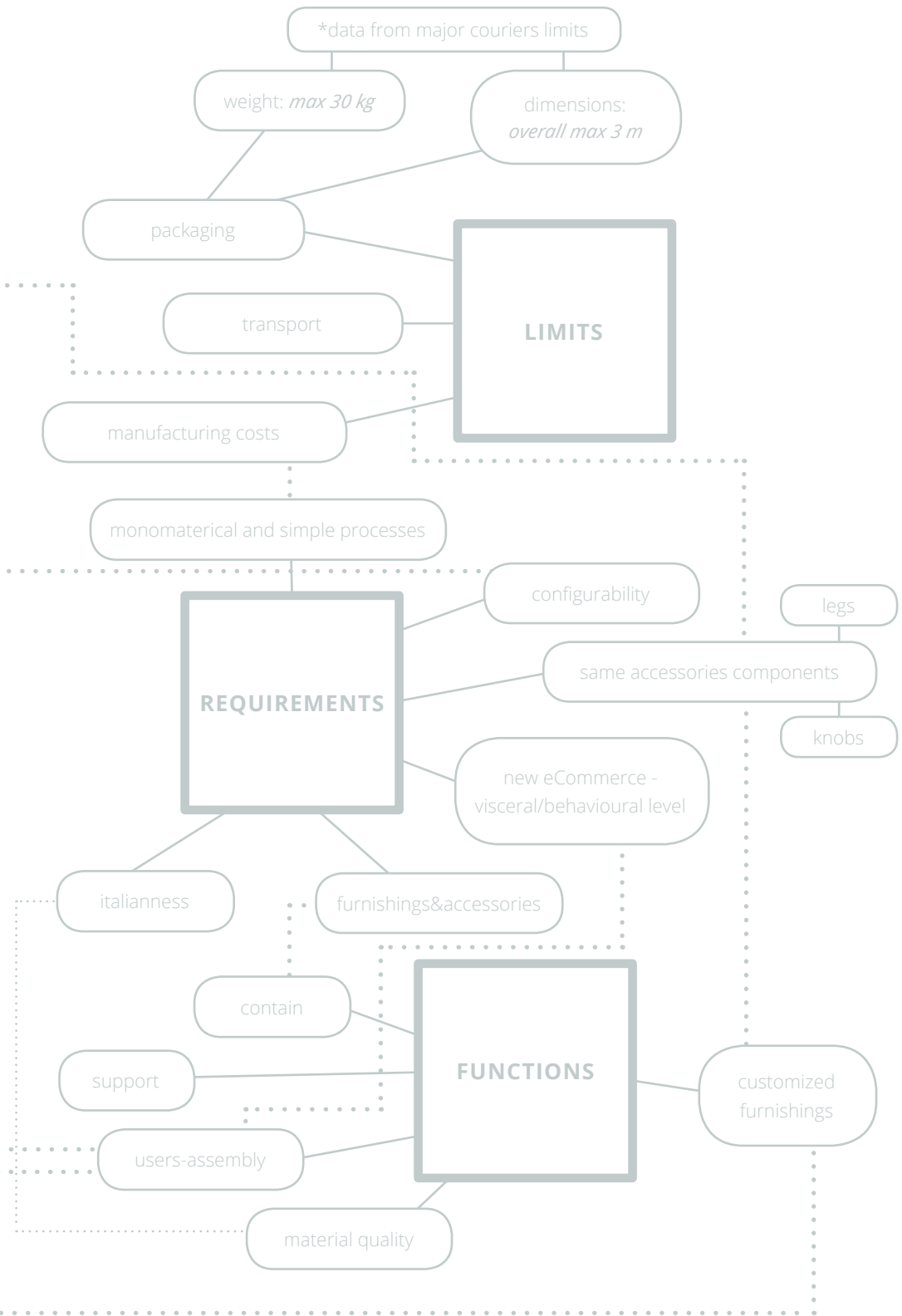
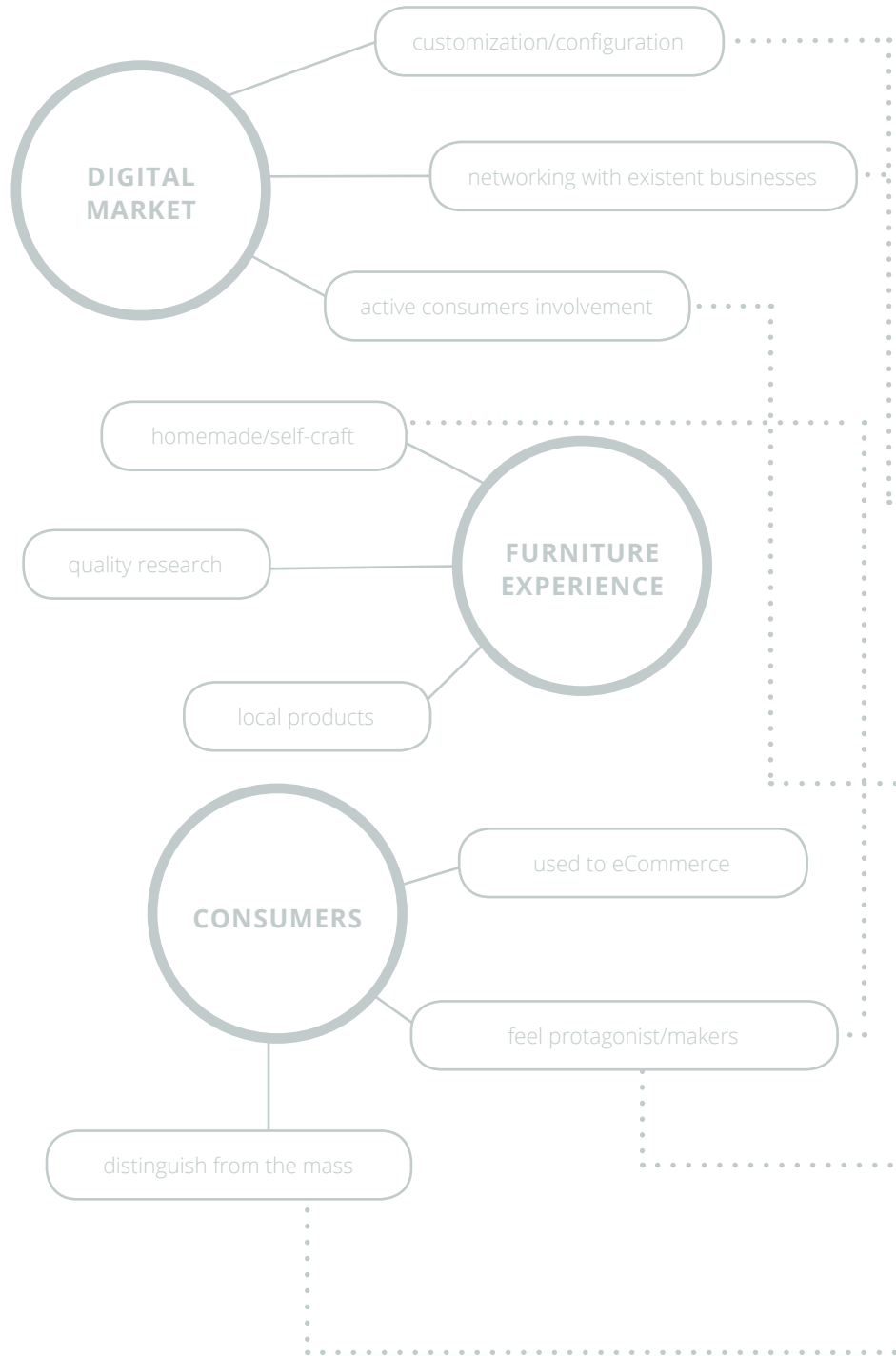
# Product

## CONCEPT

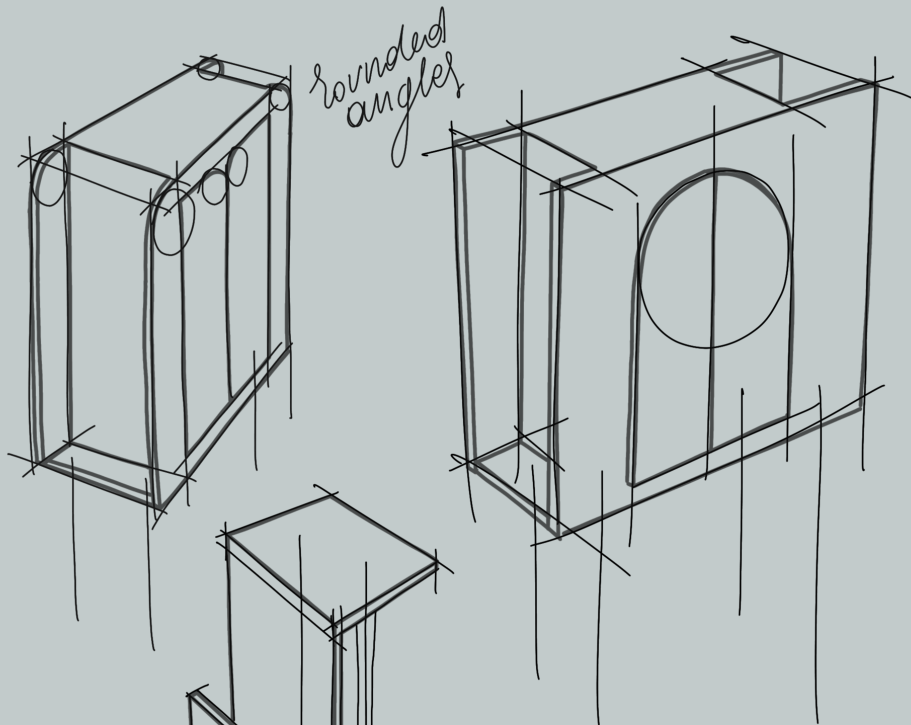
The concept which conceived the product mainly concerns its product architecture: it is made up of modules, distinguished in the *fundamentals* (designed by the brand) and assembled to the *secondary* ones, which as standard components complete the finishes.

The core element, customizable in terms of painting colours, is then designed with standard attachments for the components from the supplier collaborators. Therefore the different and multiple combination possibilities will give the user a wide customization.

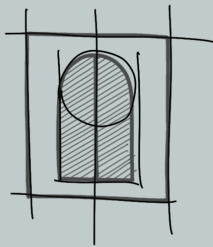




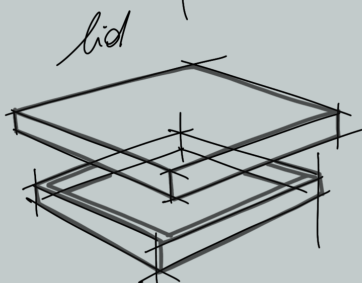
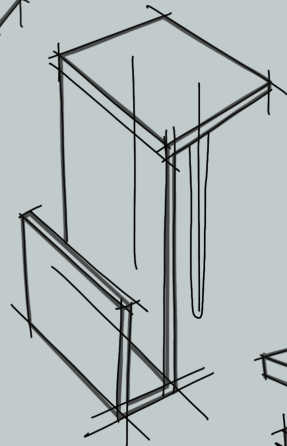
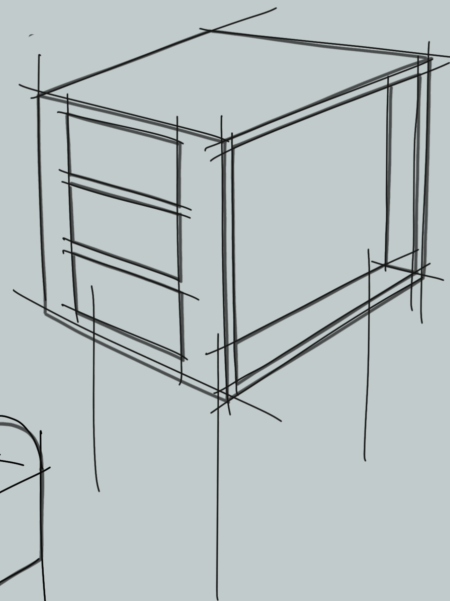
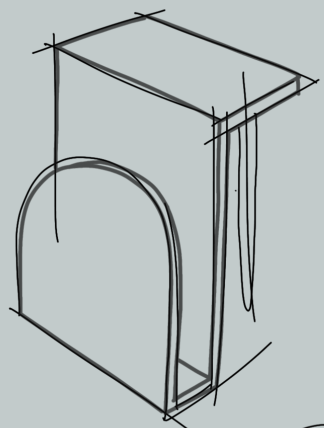
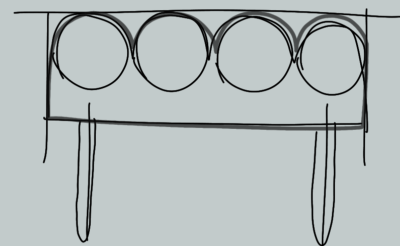




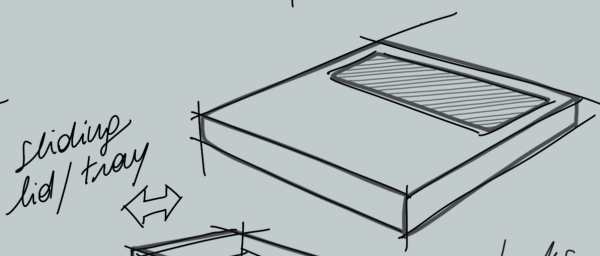
rounded angles



Semisphere

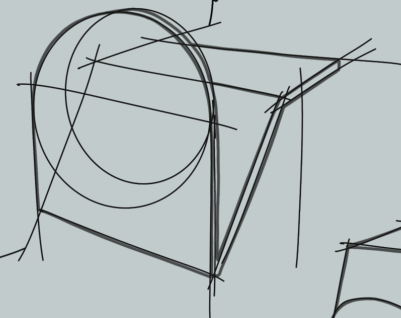


lid

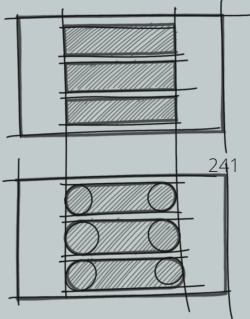
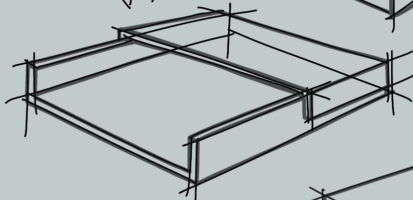


sliding lid/tray

wagon wheels

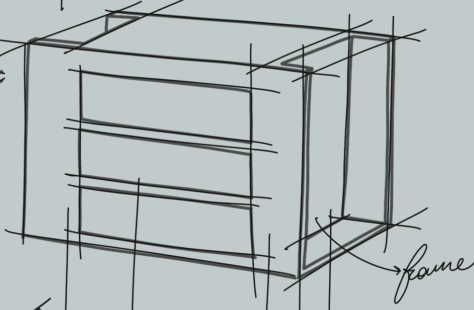
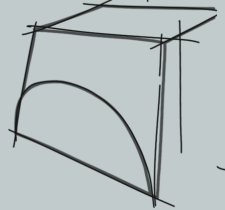
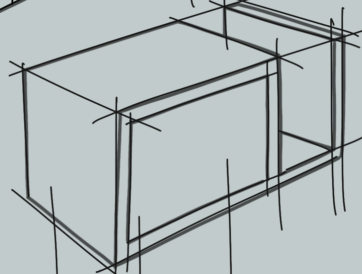
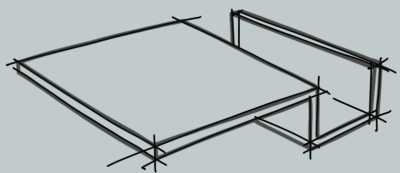


books support

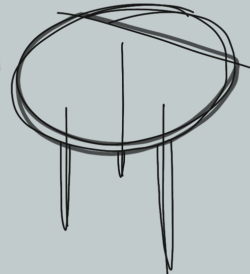
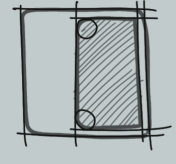
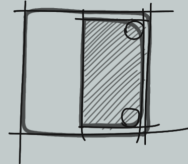
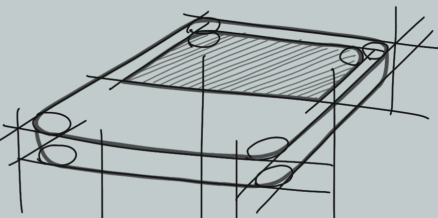


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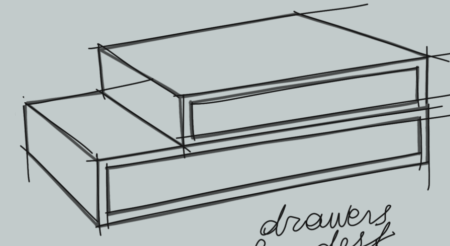
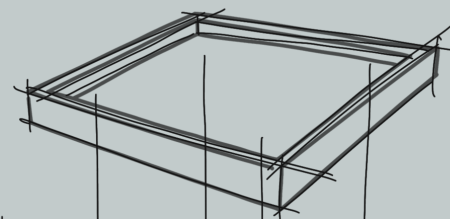
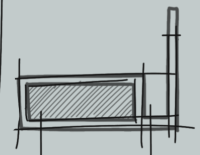
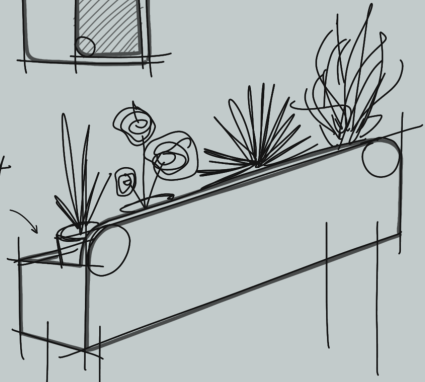
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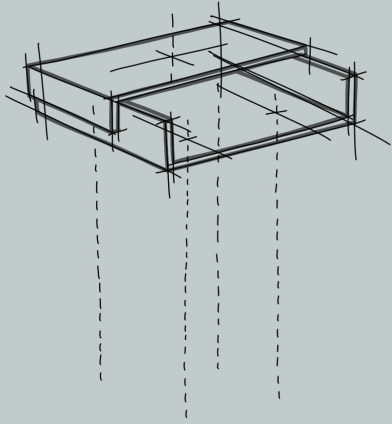
frame



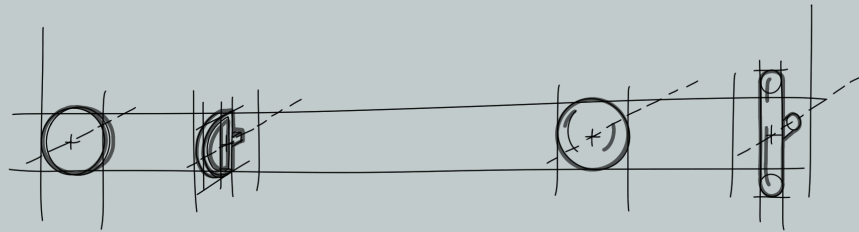
plant box



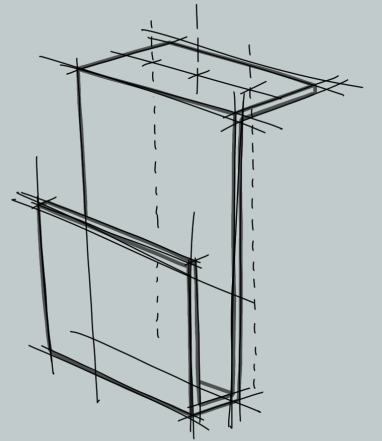
drawers for desk



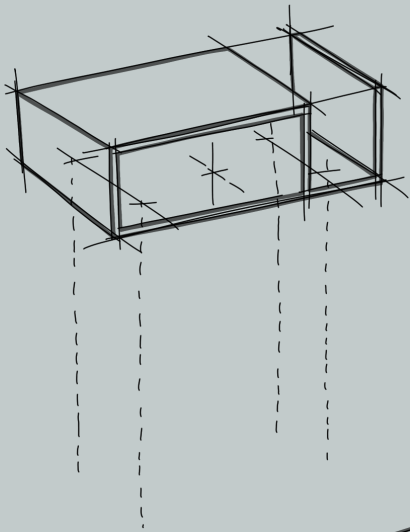
coffee table



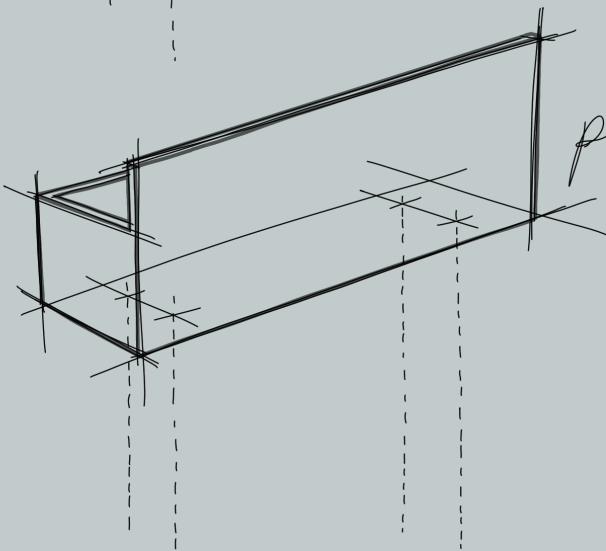
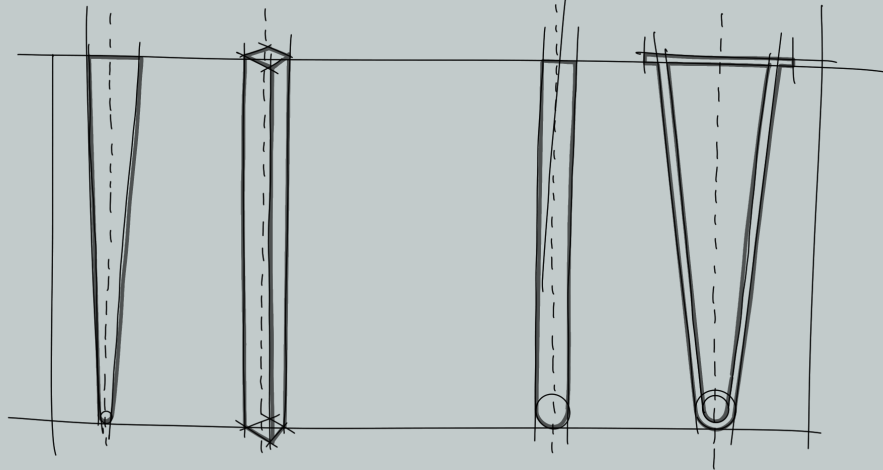
magazines  
racks



SUPPLIERS  
standard  
components

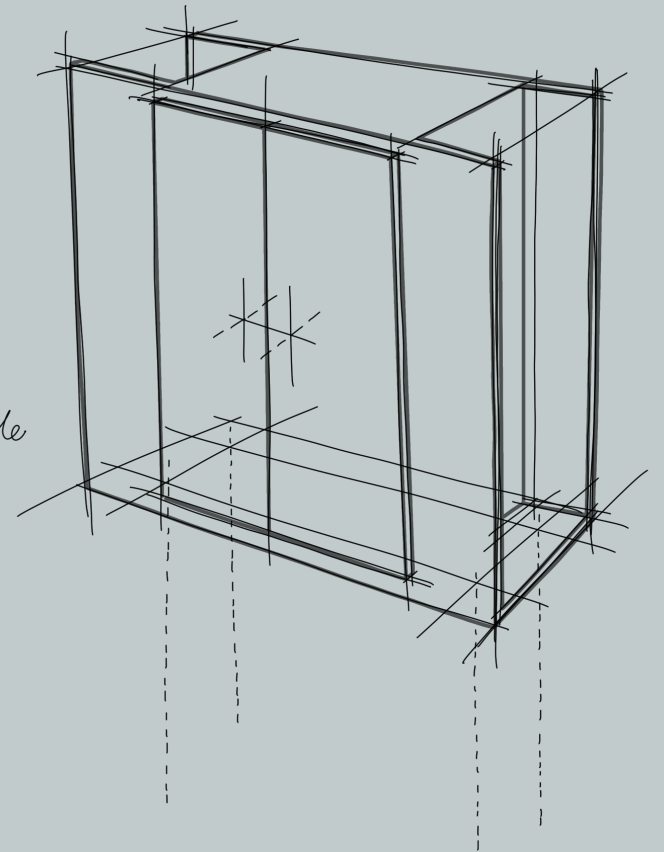


bed side table



plant box

console



### **CUSTOMIZATION AND CONFIGURATION**

The products designed for the illustrated concept and strategy will be highly customizable.

Starting from the core elements, realized in ash wood and eventually painted in other different colours (grey and dark brown), the standard finishing components will offer different possibilities and combination.

But the idea is that the more the system grows the more the network of supplier grows and offer more and more configuration possibilities, in terms of shapes, finishing components, materials, colours.

It means that the combination can become endless and different for every customer.



## THE COLLECTION

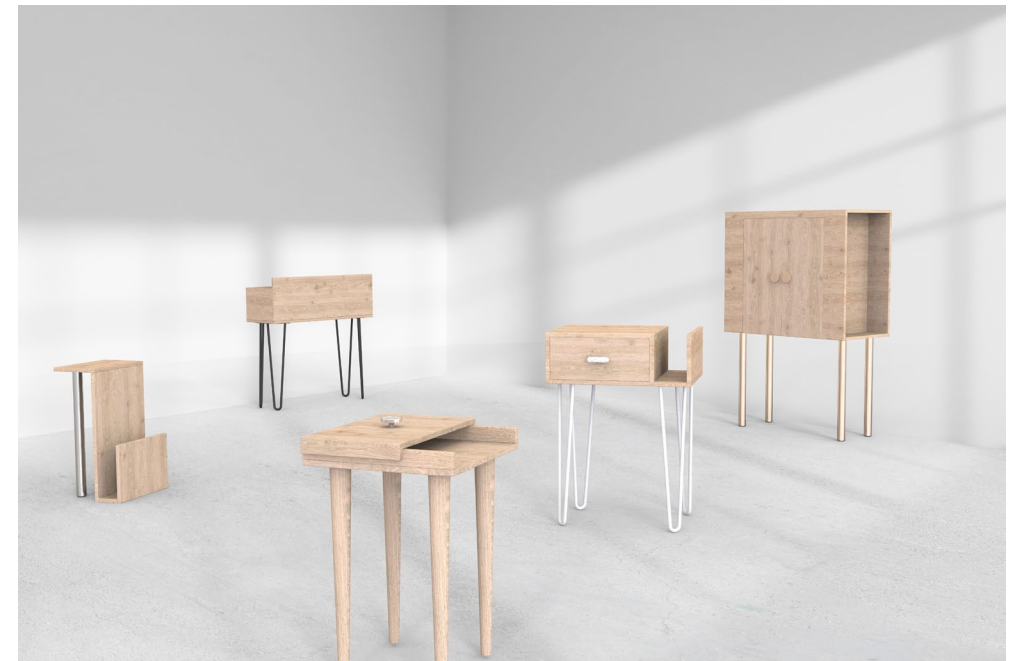
The collection illustrated shows a selection of products that could represent the concept of the identified strategy. Storage and support products such as coffee tables, magazine racks, plantboxes, consoles, bed side tables are the most sold on the most famous eCommerce platforms thanks to their affordable prices, dimensions, accessory function and current trends (including for example the entrance furniture and indoor cultivation). They commonly share the finishing components: legs and knobs. Customers can choose the ones that best fit with their house, their style, their idea.

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**You no longer need to surf  
on thousands different websites.**

**You no longer need to scroll  
through thousands of different  
types of the same product  
to find the most suitable for you.**

**Now you do it your way!**



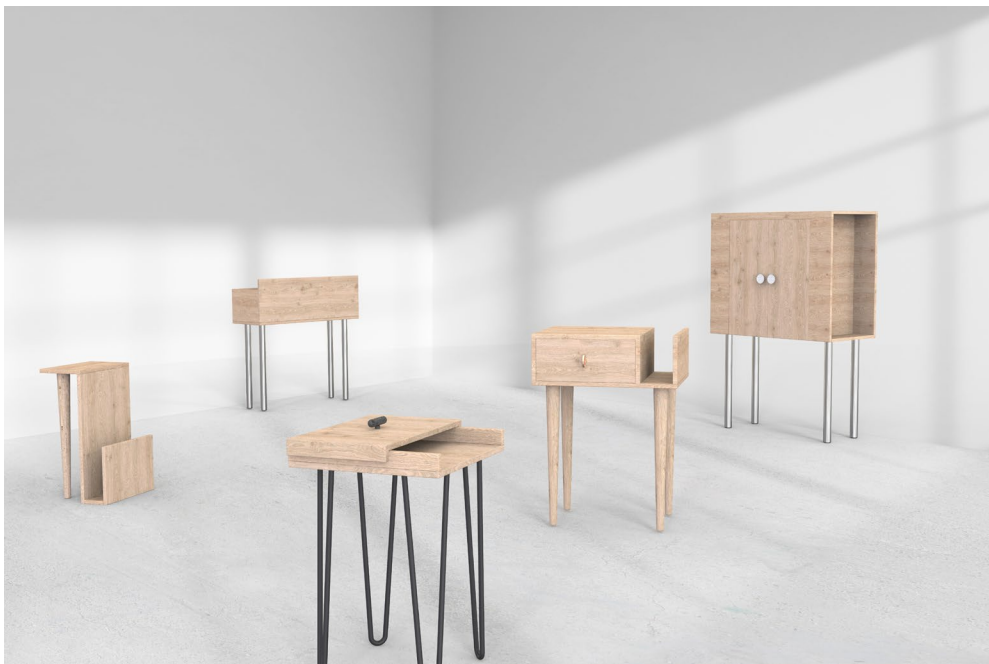
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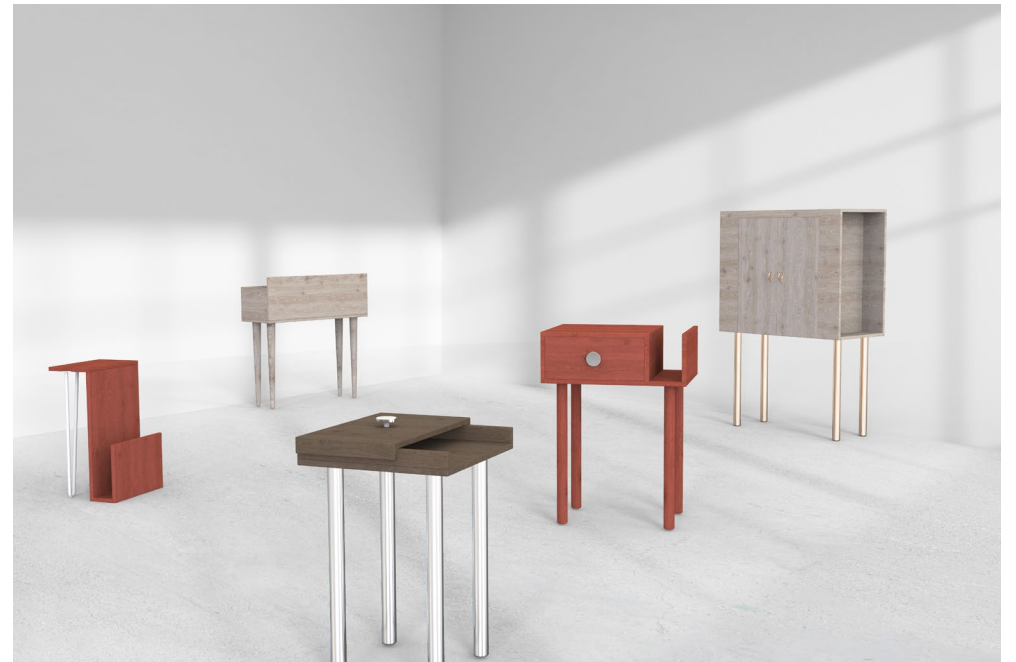
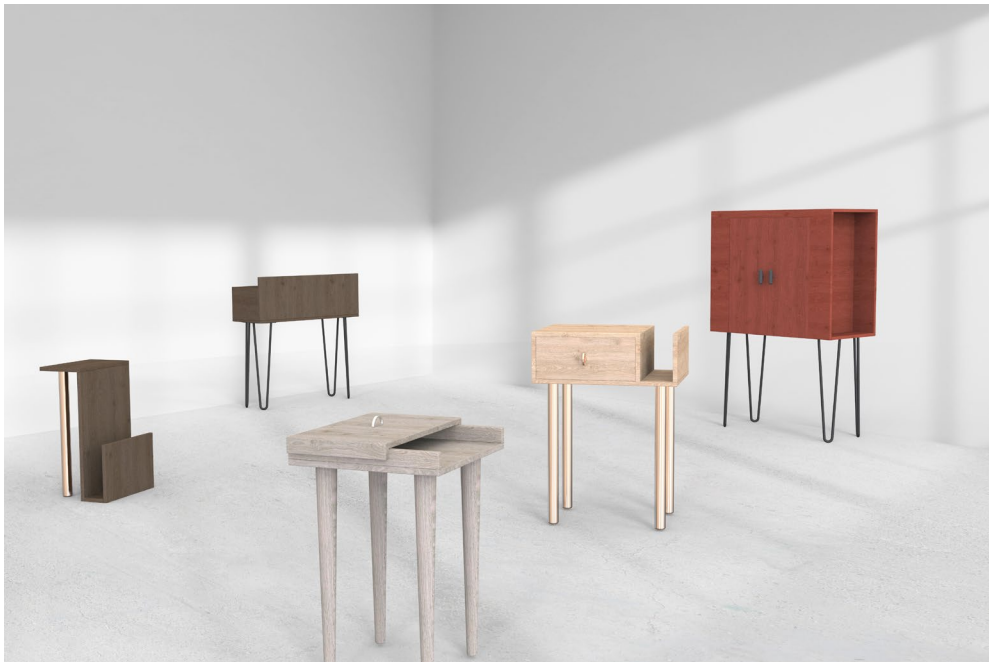


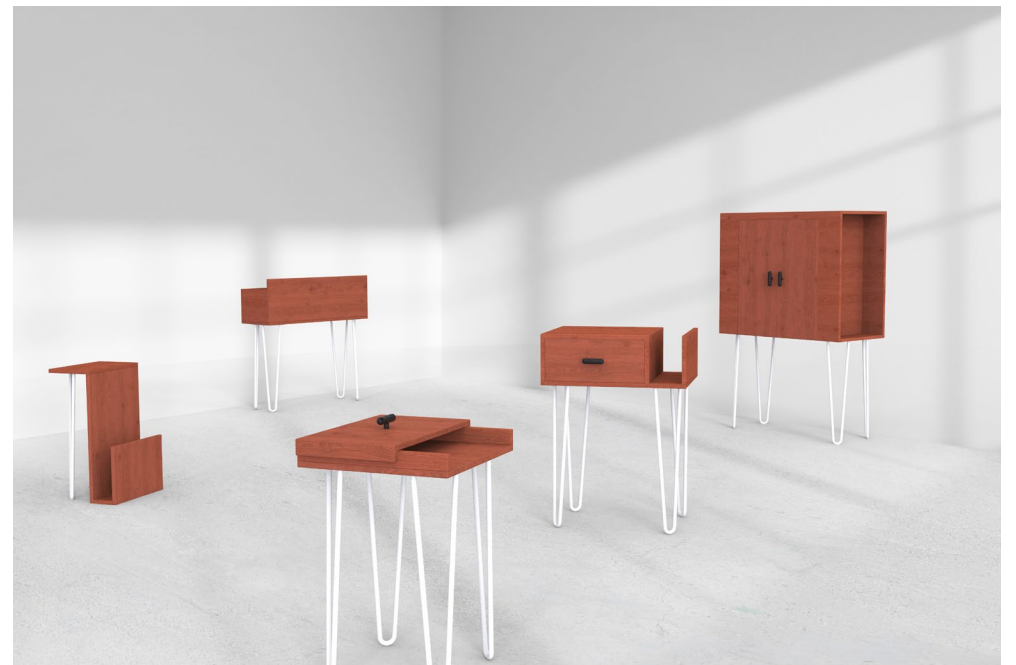


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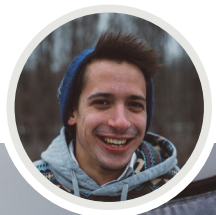
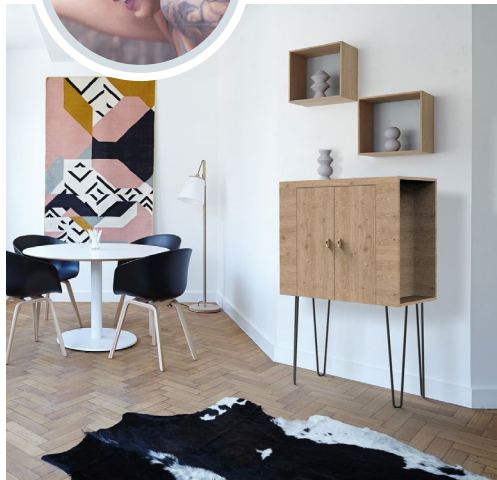
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## eCommerce platform

Combo is the eCommerce platform imagined for the business strategy created.

In the following pages some mockups offer the example on how it is conceived, in its home page, in the description of the product and the section about the community.

The platform wants to give space and relevance to its partners for the finishing components (legs and knobs), to ensure the Italian quality and the importance of the network relationships.

The name Combo comes from the word

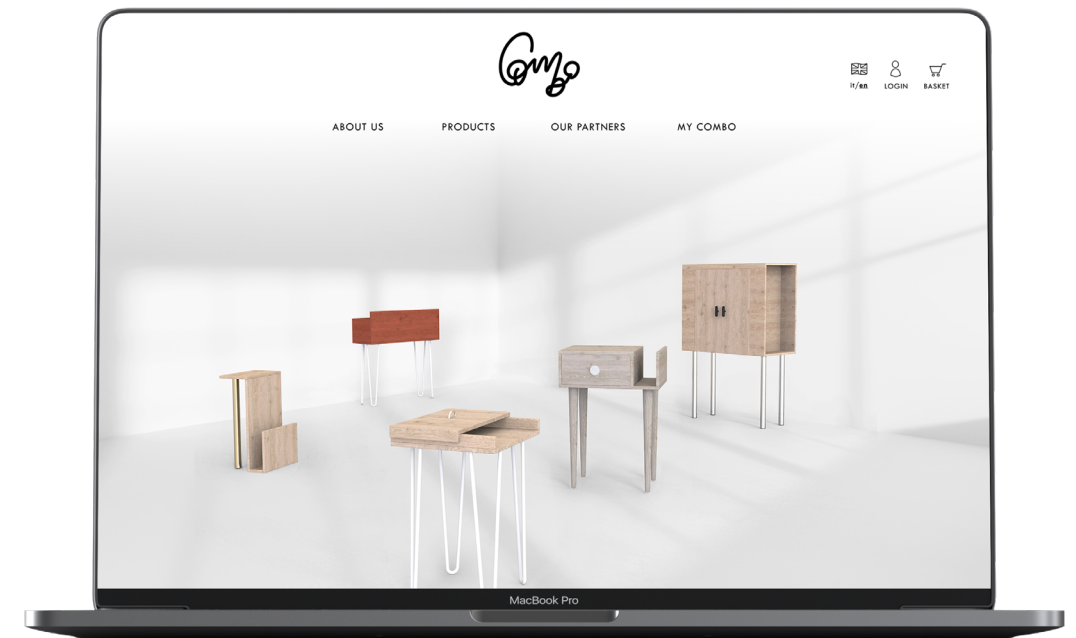
258

*/combination/:*

*a joining or merging of different parts or qualities*

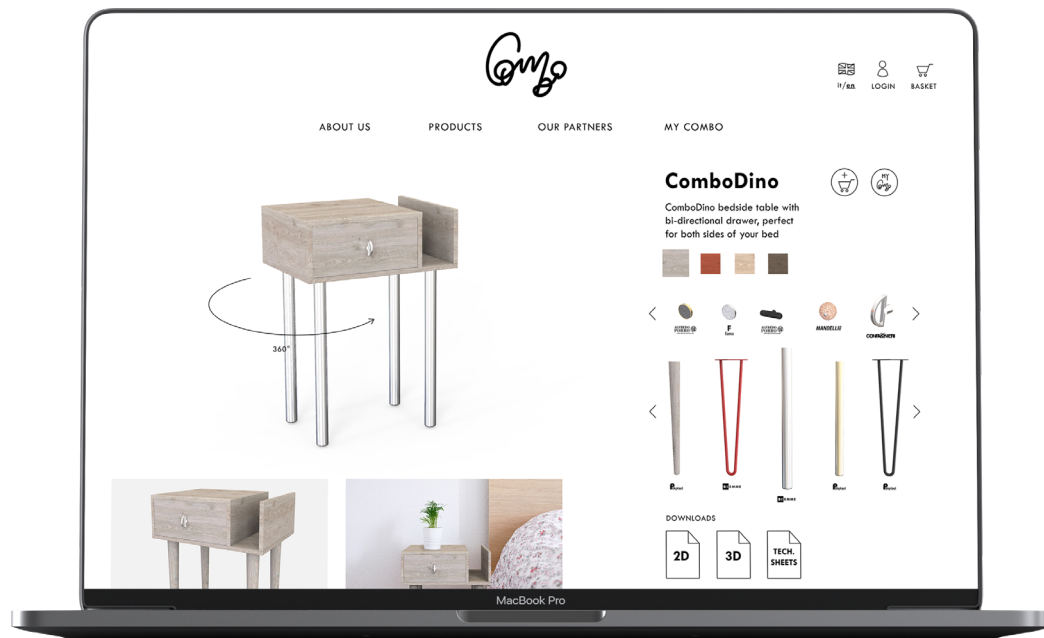
*in which the component elements are individually*

*distinct*

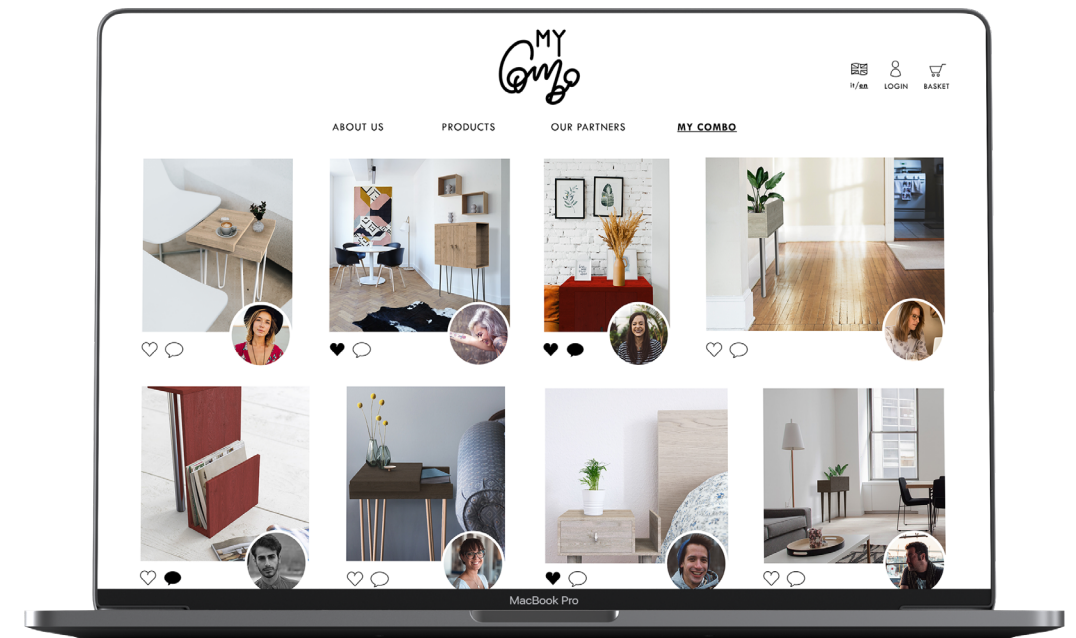


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*The home page shows immediately the collection offered by Combo, that during the years could grow and expand. Clicking on the products it is possible to go directly to the configurator, otherwise the menu offers different possibilities of navigation: "about us" (the story and the experience of Combo), "products", "our partners" (the chosen suppliers and collaborator), "my combo" (the community) and the account section accessible through "Login". Waiting in this webpage, customers will slowly see some components fading away and changing, in order to interactively show the infinite combinations.*



The product page allows customizing the product thanks to a 3D configurator. It is possible to interact with the products and the components zooming in and out and combining all the finishing accessories, or changing the wood colors. It is also possible to download some files or directly go to MyCombo to see how other people configured their own ComboDino, the bedside table, to get inspired.



Combo eCommerce platform has an appropriate section for the community of its users. MyCombo offers the possibility to show how consumers combine the components and create their own products, in order to share ideas and styles and to make the experience real and trustable. People can comment on each other posts and get in touch with this maker/craft/creative experience.

## Conclusions

The work of these months wants to be a reflection in order to learn to look at the transformations that are taking place, in social and technological terms, to broaden the gaze, but above all, as a designer, to possess a vision that starts exactly from these transformations.

Designing new visions, new interactions, new products means starting from the change, knowing how to build the world of today and tomorrow, the people of today and tomorrow.

Furniture is a field that can appear among the most classic and historic of all. True, of course. However, it also represents one of the closest to people, because it enters homes, dear/precious/guarded place.

Therefore the society of today, where digital channels step in people's lives in micromoments, spontaneously and quickly, asks for communication and distribution methods that meet the users through new forms and new systems.

Essentially: take advantage of the opportunities that digital offers to better integrate with the physical world and get close to people, meet people. That's all...or maybe just the beginning!

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Thank you!