
Dimensions and practices of the collaborative relationships between cultural and creative organisations and business

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Abstract: According to the Open Innovation approach, collaborative relationships between cultural and creative organisations and business are consistently growing in the last few years. This paper first develops a typology of these relationships. Then, adopting a multiple case-study research method and using a selected sample of Italian manufacturing and services companies, these kinds of collaborative relationships are empirically investigated. Motivations, practices as well as factors enabling or hampering these collaborative relationships are identified and analyzed.

Keywords: collaborative relationships; cultural and creative organisations; Italy; managerial practices; open innovation.

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1 Introduction

Nowadays different global trends are transforming the competitive environment and forcing organisations to develop new capabilities. Increasingly, organisational value creation capacity is not only linked to the definition of efficient and consistent organisational systems, as traditionally postulated by modern management, but it is increasingly tied to the establishment of adaptable and resilient systems that are able to meet changing market demands and continuously emergent business problems (Hamel, 2007).

In the new business age, companies need to be more and more flexible, agile, intuitive, imaginative, resilient, and creative in order to face the increasing complexity, turbulence, and pace of change of the competitive environment (Schiuma, 2011). These dynamics are connected with the increasing organisations' needs to do business in different ways. In fact, nowadays, the traditional rational- and efficient-based way of managing business is no longer sufficient to guarantee profits and sustainable competitive advantages: it is more and more important to consider the ability to use new sources for supporting innovation capacity and performance improvements, as well as the capacity of catching and anticipating emerging needs in the society.

In this view, *open innovation* (Chesbrough, 2006; Felin and Zenger, 2014; Huizingh, 2011; Saebi and Foss, 2015; Van de Vrande and De Man, 2011; Von Hippel, 2010; West et al., 2014) has emerged as a significant strategy, which balances the powerful value creation forces that can be found in creative individuals and innovation communities, with the need of the company to capture value in order to sustain its own competitive positioning (Eftekhari and Bogers, 2015). Moreover, open innovation operates as a democratic approach for innovating organisations with affordable efforts, by leveraging the network as a cross-industry and inter-organisational form (Enkel and Gassmann, 2010).

In line with the relevance of the open innovation practices (Laursen and Salter, 2006) and the development of business ecosystems (Elia, Secundo and Passiante, 2015; Romano et al., 2014), where companies recognise that most of their valuable knowledge for innovation and value creation resides outside their boundaries (Dell’Era and Verganti, 2010), executives are looking for ways to improve their capacity to design and implement collaborative processes and in that way to find and explore common resources: in this vein, collaborative relationships between business and creative, cultural and arts organisations and professionals are consistently growing in the last few years (DCMS, 2001). However, despite the recent surge in academic and managerial interest, the theme of the collaborative relationships between business and cultural and creative organisations remains still an under-researched topic.

In order to fill these gaps, this paper first develops a typology of these relationships on the base of a literature review. Then, adopting a multiple case-study research method and using a selected sample of Italian manufacturing and services companies, these kinds of collaborative relationships are empirically investigated. Specifically, the key research question has been investigated through a multiple case-study is: *why and how Italian companies operating mainly in traditional business are developing and implementing collaborative relationships with creative, cultural and arts organisations in order to enhance their open innovation practices and support new value creation dynamics?* Finally, motivations, practices as well as factors enabling or hampering these collaborative relationships are identified and analyzed.

The article is structured as follows. First, the conceptual background of the study is presented. Then, in the third section, based on a literature review, a typology of business-cultural, creative and arts organisations collaborative relationships is elaborated and analyzed. The empirical research is introduced in the fourth section. Finally, in the fifth section, the empirical results and the principal managerial implications are presented and discussed, underlying limits and directions for future research. Conclusions will end the paper.

2 Conceptual background

2.1 Open innovation and open innovation practices

Open innovation is defined by Chesbrough (2006) as “both a set of practices for profiting from innovation and also a cognitive mode for creating, interpreting and researching those practices”. To stress the practical implications for companies, open innovation has also been defined as “the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation, and expand the markets for external use of innovation, respectively (Chesbrough et al., 2006).

More recently, Chesbrough and Bogers (2014) define newly open innovation as “a distributed innovation process based on purposively managed knowledge flows across organisational boundaries, using pecuniary and non-pecuniary mechanisms in line with the organisation’s business model”

To develop open innovations, companies adopt open innovation practices (Laursen and Salter, 2006). Different scholars stress that open innovation practices are collaboration practices (Dahlander and Gann, 2010; Huizingh, 2011; Mortara and Minshall, 2011).

Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) define an open innovation practice as both a set of inbound or outbound activities and the ways and reasons such activities are adopted. Pisano and Verganti (2008) prefer using the expression open innovation collaboration practices and classify them based on the kind of adopted partnership and the governance mode. Van de Vrande et al. (2009) distinguish “technology exploitation practices” (such as venturing, outward IP licensing, etc.) against “technology exploration practices” (such as customer involvement, external networking, and outsourcing R&D inward IP licensing).

Fritsch and Lukas (2001) use the expression “cooperative relationships” to include contacts for information purpose, organised exchanges of information and experience, involvement in planning and operations of projects, pilot uses of an innovation, joint uses of equipment or laboratories, joint R&D projects, research contracts. Sobrero and Roberts (2002) study the collaboration by focusing on what they define as “contractual coordination mechanisms” and the key relationship output, as well as the importance of the context wherein the collaboration takes place. Finally, a further stream of literature has focused on the criticality of the collaborations (Gelderman and van Weele, 2005).

A company that moves towards open innovation collaborative practices behaves as a living-based system, which makes the search for external knowledge an important managerial task (Laursen and Salter, 2006). In such companies, employees act as innovation actors, which are fully engaged to give the best of them and to exercise their creativity in order to solve existing problems, promote changes and generate new valuable business opportunities.

Accordingly, collaborative relationships are increasingly established as a relevant tactic to systematically explore innovation efforts in incumbent companies, and increase the competitive positioning. Collaborative relationships allow also for looking far from established industries to increase the value of innovation. Successful collaborations require integration of external partners with diverse perspectives, mindsets, and educational backgrounds who are motivated to contribute to the development of novel ideas, concepts, and technologies (Enkel and Gassmann, 2010).

2.2 The collaborative relationships

Collaborative relationships between business and creative, cultural and arts organisations have grown in recent years as businesses have shown an increasing deal of interest in working with the organisations and professionals from the creative, artistic and cultural sectors.

In a general manner, businesses can develop collaborative links with organisations in the same sector (within-sector relationships) or with organisations in different sectors (cross-sector relationships). While within-sector relationships have received traditionally a wide research attention (Das and Teng, 1999), research and practice have given substantially less attention to cross-sector relationships.

This is unfortunate for two main reasons. First, cross-sector relationships are increasing in number (Berger, Cunningham and Drumwright, 1999). Second, the dynamics of cross-sector relationships differ from those of within-sector relationships in

terms of background, profile, leadership and operating styles of the individuals involved (Wimer and Samu, 2003).

There have been calls for developing a comprehensive model to examine better the cross-sector relationships (Pisano and Verganti, 2008), and this paper tries to respond partially to this issue by presenting a typology of the collaborative relationships between business and creative, cultural and arts organisations, which complements and integrates prior research.

The utility of generalising prior research on business-to-business relationships to business-creative, arts and cultural organisations relationships is questionable. Previous research on business-to-business relationships has portrayed alliance formation as being motivated by the need to develop new markets, products or technologies (Cunningham and Varadarajan, 1995; Webster, 1992). Business-to-business relationships tend to be long-term in their focus, needing trust and commitment to succeed (Das and Teng, 1999; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), with organisational compatibility and equal power being crucial to their success (Bucklin and Sengupta, 1993).

Conversely, relationships between business and cultural, creative and arts organisations often consist of fundamentally different types of organisations. The creative, artistic and cultural organisations tend to be interested in reaching a broader market and increasing awareness, while the business could be more interested in both a promotion and public relations objective, managerial internal purposes or in being socially responsible. While some business and cultural, creative and arts organisations relationships may share characteristics of business-to-business relationships, there are sufficient differences to warrant a closer examination.

2.3 The creative and cultural organisations

Defining and characterising the creative, cultural and arts organisations is a matter of considerable inconsistency and disagreement in the academic literature and policy circles as well as among practitioners (UNCTAD, 2010).

Despite these relevant criticisms concerning definitions, characteristics and boundaries of the creative and cultural organisations, according to UNCTAD (2004) it is possible to define cultural and creative organisations as “*(the organisations operating in the) cycle of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs. They comprise a set of knowledge-based activities that produce tangible goods and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives*”.

On the base of a review of the academic and practitioners-oriented literature on the topics it seems to emerge that the creative, cultural and arts organisations are traditionally grouped under five headings as follows:

- *Small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs)*. The predominant company type in terms of size are creative SMEs. At the smallest level, this group includes professionals and artists operating individually. They may sell directly to consumers, or they are engaged in supplying goods and services to other firms.
- *Not-for-profit organisations (NPOs)*. Voluntary NPOs in the cultural sector include performing arts companies presenting drama, dance, opera, music, circus and similar enterprises.

- *Public cultural institutions.* A particular type of NPOs found in the cultural industries is the publicly-owned or publicly-financed institution with a significant national, regional, or urban presence. This group includes various kind of museums such as public art galleries, heritage sites, symphony orchestras, nationally- or locally-recognised opera or ballet, acting companies, and public broadcasting organisations.
- *Large commercial corporations.* When the size level for a SME grows, the company moves into the category of large corporations. In the cultural industries, these corporate enterprises are typically found in the media, publishing, production and distribution of audio-visual product.
- *Cultural and arts centres.* Cultural and performing arts centres are organisations promoting culture and arts in different ways. Cultural centres can be neighbourhood community arts organisations, private facilities, government-sponsored, or activist-run, traditionally identified and labelled in the category of the independent cultural centres. Normally, they are structured as not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) and charities, but other legal and governance models commonly emerge in the practice.

It is clear that the panorama of creative, cultural and arts organisations is very heterogeneous, embracing from individuals and SMEs to large corporations. They can be both not-for-profit and for-profit organisations, and their activity scope can be local or global. Thus, the collaborations they may activate with business organisations can be of various types, which are described in the following section.

3 A typology of the collaborative relationships between business and cultural and creative organisations

The specific interest of this scoping study is to understand the possible dimensions of collaborative relationships between the business and the creative, cultural and arts organisations. According to a literature review (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006; Murphy, Perot and Rivera-Santos, 2012; Rondinelli and London, 2003; Schiuma, 2011; Smagina and Lindemanis, 2012), they are specifically identified in the following dimensions.

3.1 Vectors of value added

Collaborative relationships with creative, cultural and arts organisations can be adopted as management means to increase the value of products, services, processes, and organisational components. In fact, they can play the role of value vectors aimed to create and incorporate intangible value into products, services and other organisational infrastructural components.

The fundamental idea is that creative, cultural and art forms can be deployed and exploited to create intangible value to be embedded into organisational products and infrastructures. The attention is focused on the use of principles, contents and processes to increase the economic value of a product often by incorporating aesthetic dimensions. From a pure economic perspective, this corresponds to recognise that the price of a product incorporating arts-based traits and features is affected by its aesthetic value

(Schiuma, 2011). This is becoming increasingly important in today economy because for many products, the margins to improve the functional and material value are narrow, and customers search experience-based consumption. The employment of creative and art forms to shape the aesthetic properties of products is crucial. They allow the creation of products that are capable of involving people in aesthetic experiences evocating emotions and energy. These are essential aspects of the intangible value that increasingly characterises the twenty-first century products. The products leveraging aesthetic dimensions are able to interpret and communicate emotional and energetic states, which appeal to consumers. These products can be considered the result of artistic processes. Indeed, they are generated by a free-floating community of architects, suppliers, photographers, critics, curators, publishers, designers, artists and craftsmen (Verganti, 2006), who implicitly use art principles, contents and processes as key elements to develop new and existing products. The use of art forms to infuse artful qualities into products and create intangible value can take different forms. A traditional approach is the convergence of arts and design. Several studies demonstrate the fact that consumers increasingly make brand choices on the basis of the aesthetic and symbolic value of products and services. As underlined by Dell'Era and Verganti (2010, p.123), *“designers can support companies in exploring customers’ needs and the appropriate signs - such as form, colours, and materials - that give meaning to products. Managing collaborations with designers is therefore a critical issue”*.

3.2 *Licensing agreement*

In this type of relationship, cultural organisations (the licensor) allow business companies (the licensee) to use and link to their names and logos as well as intellectual property rights, often in return for a flat fee and/or royalties. Business company is primarily interested in generating sales from the licensing agreement with creative, cultural and arts organisations, therefore, the business’ focus is mainly on itself and, secondarily, on the cultural and creativity organisation.

The key elements of a licensing agreement include the scope of the agreement (with possible exclusivity or territorial restrictions), the financial aspects (e.g. royalty rates or way of calculation), the guarantees of minimum sales, the renewal options, the termination conditions, and the time scheduling for the “go-to-market”. This last issue is of particular interest for the licensor in order to regulate those cases in which the licensee never markets the product.

3.2.1 *Sponsorships*

In sponsorships, the business pays the cultural, creative and arts organisation a sponsorship fee for using the business’s brand in the culture’s advertisements or other external communication (Abratt, Clayton and Pitt, 1987). A business participating in sponsorships is primarily interested in promoting its brand or company name, although sponsors also want to promote/fund the event. Such events can take different formats such as art events, projects, programs and productions in the cultural institutions where arts generally take place. They can be also focused on initiatives in the workplaces, such as using corporate public space for temporary or permanent art installations and exhibitions, which may be also related to educational programs such as lectures, films and performances. Collaborations based on patronage and sponsorship may focus on

public spaces and particularly urban spaces like gardens, squares, buildings, courtyards, atriums, and warehouses. They are both different from philanthropy, which is mainly a charitable act, and describe the support that a business organisation might provide to artists and art organisations.

In the perspective of adopting collaborative relationships as a management mean to raise organisation's reputation, sponsorships can be considered as a managerial action to forge a partnership between business and arts that produces mutual outcomes, though the relationships' goals are different and only partially aligned. By building associations with art forms it is possible to give a specific image to the organisation as well as to all organisational stakeholders. This creates an opinion about the essence of the organisation (Schiuma, 2011). For example, an organisation supporting contemporary art may give an image of itself of a dynamic and modern organisation that pays attention to the contemporary trends as contemporary arts reflect. Relationships as a communication device can express and represent meanings and messages that shape the identity of the organisation both internally and externally. In this case the use of collaborations act as a kind of symbolic statement and message that expresses and communicates internally and externally the organisational identity.

Other benefits related to the increase of brand awareness are related to the specific marketing advantages. Usually organisations sponsoring arts productions and events get marketing benefits, such as credit on television and press publicity, as well as print advertising in the form of credit on all arts events related materials, including banners, posters and performance programmes. In particular, these marketing benefits can be considered as an organisational investment and can be translated in economic figures when assessing the arts-related promotional activities in terms of purchasing equivalent advertising spaces.

Finally, through patronage and sponsorship business organisations can get the attention of institutions. In this regards, particularly effective might be those collaborative relationships aimed to transform urban and rural areas. Business organisations, either autonomously or in joint venture, as well as in collaboration and cooperation with public institutions can renew and transform urban spaces through outdoors initiatives that contemplates, for example, a relevant interplay of arts and architecture.

3.2.2 Human resource development and training

In the last decades both corporate and public organisations have experimented the use of arts and creativity to support learning process of their staff and competence development programs, by bringing in artists and creative people to develop arts-based experiences. Most of the attention has been paid on the use of arts-based methods as an alternative approach to the conventional organisational development approaches mainly focused on technical knowledge and conceptual frameworks. The artistic skills have been deployed to build different and experiential people development pathways.

The fundamental idea at the basis of this use of the collaborative relationships as a management mean for people development is that culture, creativity and arts-based experiences offer a learning platform to spark and sustain experiential learning mechanisms (Beckwith, 2003; Darsø, 2004; Gibb, 2004; Monks, Barker and Mhanachain, 2001; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009; Vaill, 1989). Indeed, the learning-based dynamics activated are related to their capacity of operating as an analogical device to mediate, externalise and discuss about tacit knowledge and personal understanding (Barry, 1994; Darsø, 2004).

The essential premises of the adoption of collaborative relationships for learning and development purposes are that “artists” can transfer their artistic skills to the company’s employees. Indeed, creative writing, advertising, journalism, reading, storytelling, listening, seeing, presenting, coordinating and improvising, can stimulate the sensibility of the organisational people to artistic products and processes, so that their competences can grow, particularly in domains such as creativity and imagination, personal communication, leadership and improvisation.

3.2.3 Corporate Philanthropy

Some businesses make monetary or non-monetary contributions to creative and cultural organisations on an episodic, informal basis. Other companies allocate funds to a corporate philanthropy budget, have a manager oversee the disbursement of funds, and earmark these funds as charitable contributions for tax deductions. Compared to other types of relationships, it requires the least commitment in terms of business resources and managerial involvement. The primary benefit to the participating business is favourable publicity and a greater public awareness of the business or its brand, while for the creative and cultural organisation is the additional funding.

Through the strategic use of corporate philanthropy, companies increase their name recognition among customers, boost employee productivity, and foster synergy among business units (Smith, 1994). Corporate philanthropy encourages corporations to play a leadership role in social problem solving, by forming strategic alliances with non-profits and by funding long-term initiatives, thus aligning the business scope with the larger wealth of society. Corporate philanthropy is rethinking the company’s approach to marketing and public relations, but also is changing the corporate human resources strategies, thus shaping a new form of corporate citizenship (Smith, 1994); Sasse and Trahan, 2007).

3.2.4 Corporate Foundations

The corporate foundation is a non-profit entity created by a company to manage its social responsibility objectives. Although legally independent, foundations maintain close ties with their parent companies. Similarly to the corporate philanthropy, also in this type of relationship it is emphasised the non-profit mission. In most cases, the foundation establishes a directive, which specifies the types of causes the foundation is seeking to fund. Potential grantees submit competitive grant proposals to the foundation, which awards grants based on the merits of the proposals and available funds. While supporting worthy causes is the primary motivation of corporate foundations, they may also wish their good works to be noticed by their target markets and their employees.

Corporate foundations can leverage social impact through four main ways (Kramer, Pfitzer and Jestin, 2006; Tribbia and Moser, 2008):

- i by enabling corporate investments in new business models with high social returns
- ii by strengthening non-profit initiatives by leveraging corporate capabilities
- iii by building networks, influencing and promoting transparency, and fostering accountability
- iv by guaranteeing to stakeholders the access to resources and information, promoting collaboration and working relationships.

Through corporate foundations, companies widen their boundaries and develop more robust connections with the society, tying their core business with the social investments and facilitating collaborative action with the external stakeholders. Besides, corporate foundations operate as antennas for societal expectations, thus delivering valuable insights to the corporation and its stakeholders. Finally, corporate foundations contribute to strengthen the company's reputation. Table 1 provides a synthetic overview of the collaborative relationships between business and culture, arts and creativity world.

Table 1 Overview of the collaborative relationships between business and creative and cultural organisations

<i>Typology</i>	<i>Aim of the collaboration</i>	<i>Value for the business company</i>	<i>Value for the creative/cultural organisation</i>
Vectors of value added	To increase the economic value of the company's products, services and processes	To create and incorporate the intangible value and the aesthetic dimension into organisational products and infrastructures	Consultancy fee
Licensing agreement	To increase the product's sales of the company	To use the names, logos and intellectual property rights of cultural organisations	Flat fee and/or royalties
Sponsorship	To promote the company brand or name, and raise its reputation, so gaining marketing advantages and getting the attention of institutions	To diffuse the business's brand in the CCI organisation's advertisements, as well as to communicate the identity both internally and externally	Sponsorship fee
Human resource development and training	To experiment an alternative approach to the traditional organisational learning processes and competence development programs, which are mainly focused on technical knowledge and conceptual frameworks	To benefit of artistic skills, so that the employees' competences can grow, particularly in domains such as creativity and imagination, personal communication, leadership and improvisation	Training fee
Corporate Philanthropy	To offer charitable contributions	To benefit of publicity and a greater public awareness of the company's brand and name, as well as to advantage of tax deductions	Additional funding
Corporate foundations	To manage the corporate social responsibility objectives by supporting worthy causes and cultural initiatives	To reinforce the company reputation, and to assess the entrepreneurial potential of the outputs generated, by sensitising the target markets and the company's employees	Additional funding and social impact

Taking into account the above rationale, it is important to acknowledge that the innovation management literature still lacks empirical analysis of the concrete nature, practices and mechanisms of the current collaborative relationships between business and culture, arts and creativity world, as well as of their impact on companies' innovation

dynamics. This calls for a better identification and understanding of the forms and contents of this kind of collaborative relationships. Accordingly, the purpose of the following empirical analysis is to provide insights on real and effective practices to build and manage collaborative relationships.

4 The empirical research

4.1 Data and methods

On the base of the literature review, adopting a multiple case-study research method and using a selected sample of Italian manufacturing and services companies, in this section these kinds of collaborative relationships are empirically investigated. Motivations, practices as well as factors enabling or hampering these collaborative relationships are identified and analyzed. The key investigated question is: *why and how Italian companies operating mainly in traditional business are developing and implementing collaborative relationships with creative, cultural and arts organisations in order to enhance their open innovation practices and support new value creation dynamics?*

In order to derive and test concepts, trace causal pathways and define new hypotheses, a qualitative investigation combining semi-structured interviews enriched with the collection of available secondary data have been designed and implemented. Specifically, we solicited more than thirty Italian companies and sent emails to these companies describing the research idea and questions and inviting senior managers to participate in the explorative study. Out of the population, 24 companies were included in the sample that we analyzed. In Table 2 the investigated companies building the sample are listed together with the details of the sectors that they overall represent.

Table 2 Industrial sectors of the Italian companies included in the investigated sample

<i>Companies building the investigated sample</i>
Benetton Group; Brem; Brunello Cucinelli - Fondazione Cucinelli; Cartiere del Garda; Ceretto Vini; Diesel; Elica; ENI; Favero-Milan Ingegneria; Ferrero - Fondazione Ferrero; Furla - Fondazione Furla; Gobetto Resine Speciali; Gruppo Euromobil; Gruppo Industriale Tosoni; Illy; Italcementi Group; Ridea - Heating Design; Santa Sofia Vini; Telecom Italia; Teseco - Fondazione Teseco per l'Arte; Trussardi - Fondazione Trussardi; Unicredit Group; Zegna - Fondazione Zegna - Pirelli Hangar Bicocca
Industrial sectors of the selected companies
Construction/ Materials for the construction - n. 3
Tyres production - n. 1
Engineering - n. 2
Food - n. 4
Furniture - n. 2
Paper production - n. 1
Services/Commodities & Waste Management - n. 1
Textile/Dressing/Shoes/Fashion - n. 7
Services/Banking - n. 1
Utilities (oil&gas, telecom) - n.2

Specifically, the empirical research has investigated some relevant issues with the aim to collect information about the objectives, the nature, the practices, the mechanisms and the enabling or hampering factors of the collaborative relationships that Italian companies are engaging with the creative, cultural and arts organisations. In particular, the main issues have been investigated are here reported:

- the existence and the nature of collaborative relationships between traditional business companies and creative, cultural and arts organisations
- the sentiment/feelings of the Italian companies about these collaborations
- the strategic objectives that the companies wish to achieve through these collaborations
- the main projects and the specific initiatives that have been developed in the last few years
- the business areas, departments and processes more interested and involved in shaping collaborative collaborations with creative, cultural and arts organisations
- the main obtained or expected results and/or impacts derived from such collaborations
- the main enabling and hampering factors and obstacles for the development and the effectiveness of such collaborations.

On the base of the literature review, as the area of study lacks of consistent theoretical development, we selected an inductive multiple case study-based research methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2005). Case study facilitates investigation of a current phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the observed phenomenon and its context are not evident (Yin, 1994). Within the case study methodology, each case serves to test the theoretical insights gained from the examination of previous cases, and to modify or refine them.

4.2 Sampling approach

We analyzed 24 cases of different business companies operating in different products/services domains. For each case, companies' personnel was contacted and asked to be involved as participants in the study. Each participant was subjected to an interview, which has been integrated with the information and documents uploaded in the companies' official websites. The relatively small case sample size was therefore compensated by the intensity and quality of data (Morse, 2000), which was assured by archives data. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), the case selection was defined to maximise the utility of information extracted from small samples and single cases.

4.3 Data collection approach

Due to the innovativeness of the topics, short semi-structured interviews were conducted with the dedicated personnel of the selected business during the period from June 2013 to January 2014. The duration of each interview was about 10 minutes. Interviews were conducted until a convergence of views was accomplished (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Interviews were transcribed within 5 days after each interview. According to the

guidelines of Minichiello et al. (1995), after introducing the purpose of the study, the early stage of the interviews focused around the research idea, and then going forward to investigate collaborative relationships elements. To finalise the questionnaires and cross-check the ex-post data (Doz, 1996), some additional data sources were used (e.g. companies' websites).

4.4 Data analysis approach

Data analysis was conducted taking guidance from Miles and Huberman (1994), which specifies data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as key activities in qualitative data analysis. Rather than imposing a prior conceptualisation or framework from the literature within which evaluating the findings, this study adopted Strauss and Corbin's (1990) interpretation of grounded theory, which facilitates the emergence of important themes and patterns in the data while assuming prior knowledge through the reviewed literature and ex ante conceptualisation. Finally, to avoid the critical 'fit' and 'applicability' concerns, as noted by Glaser (2005), this study acknowledged that the discussion of the findings is open to both supportive and contradictory existing literature.

5 Results and discussions

The fieldwork investigation revealed different and interesting insights about the collaborative relationships between traditional businesses and creative, cultural and arts organisations.

The first evidence shows a limited but increasing awareness of the companies to consider the relevance and develop collaborations with the creative, cultural and arts organisations, as well as to adopting new culture-based and creativity-based processes for improving their innovation dynamics and processes.

Indeed, it emerges that most of the Italian companies of the sample do not have currently structured connections with creative, cultural and arts organisations. Most of the relationships tend to be stand-alone and not organised, but rather emergent in nature. The existing collaborations seem to not respond to a structured strategy, and are mainly the result of emergent relationships generally driven by the personal interest of the entrepreneur and its family, or top management. From a practical point of view, the collaborations tend to be developed with single professionals, artists and consultants (for example curators) rather than to be based on structured relationships or partnerships with cultural and/or creative organisations.

There is a general interest and feeling of the role and relevance that arts, culture and creativity can play for company competitiveness. In other words, executives have the intuition that organisations could benefit and tap into creative, cultural and arts world as a way to enhance innovation capacity and deliver better value to stakeholders. Nevertheless, they lack of frameworks and clear understanding of how this can be achieved and governed in practice. In addition, the economic recession, which strongly affected the economic performance of Italian companies, has put managers in a difficult position in experimenting new approaches and tools that could turn into failures without generating return on investments. In this prospect, structured investments in the relationships with arts, culture and creativity was seen highly risky and not capable of producing clear benefits for companies' bottom line results. It is also worth to mention

that there is a lack of attention on the assessment of the impacts/benefits produced by the relationships with the cultural and creative sectors.

From the empirical investigation, it emerged that the Italian companies analysed establish relationships with creative, cultural and arts organisations along three fundamental dimensions:

- i *Corporate foundations*, mainly oriented to support worthy causes and cultural initiatives.
- ii *Sponsorships*, mainly focused on promoting marketing, branding and communication goals.
- iii *Vectors of value added*, devoted to add the economic value of existing products, services or processes, by incorporating the aesthetic dimension.

The main way companies adopt for establishing and managing relationships with the creative, cultural and arts organisations is the creation of corporate foundations. Indeed, it is possible to highlight that corporate foundation is the traditional and quite common approach of interaction between culture, the arts and business. Most Italian companies develop collaborative relationships with creative, cultural and arts organisations mainly through initiatives and practices related to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The focus is on delivering value propositions for stakeholders, creating direct value for communities and society, and indirect value for environment, by deploying culture-based and/or creativity-based activities and projects.

Unicredit represents a good example of Italian company that have shaped its collaborative relationships as a CSR initiative. Unicredit is an international banking group, which is successfully exploiting relationships with cultural industry as a way to create and delivery socio-cultural value to stakeholders. The basic idea moving *Unicredit* is to support talents to emerge and to have success through the reinforcement of the relationships among artists, arts lovers, galleries, critics and specialised magazines. Specifically, *Unicredit* has established relationships with “Castello di Rivoli” (a contemporary art museum), MACRO (a contemporary art museum based in Rome), MAMbo (a contemporary art museum based in Bologna), MART (a contemporary art museum based in Trento and Rovereto), and the “Museum der Moderne of Salzburg”. In addition, *Unicredit* is greatly involved in supporting music and opera. It actively promotes, through the support of orchestras, the attention and the promotion of the classic music engaging audience at large. It is partner of the “Teatro alla Scala” of Milan, the “Arena di Verona”, the “Filarmonica ‘900” of the “Teatro Regio” of Turin, the “Teatro Massimo” in Palermo, the “Teatro dell’Opera” of Rome. At international level, through its controlled banks such as Bank Austria and HypoVereinsbank, *Unicredit* also supports respectively the Filarmonical of Wien in Austria, and the Opera of the Bayern in Germany, as well as it promotes relevant regional events in Bayern, such as the Rheingau Music Festival, the Mozart Festival at Würzburg, the Richard Strauss Festival at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and the Opera Academy at Gut Immling with the programme “Jugend Kulturell”.

A further case of Italian company pursuing CSR through the development of relationships with CCI is *Telecom Italia*, which is a company operating in the telecommunication sector. *Telecom Italia* is supporting culture as part of their CSR strategy by partnering with “Galleria Borghese” based in Rome, the “Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia” of Rome, as well as by sponsoring the “Mostra

Internazionale di Architettura” of Venice and the MAXXI Museum of Rome. In addition, *Telecom Italia* is partner of the “Salone Internazionale del Libro” of Turin, and the RomaEuropa WebFactory, which is the web community dedicated to artists operating in multimedia sector. Along the same approach stands there is *ENI*, one of the major Italian and international oil corporations. *ENI* supports actively the cultural life of the territories in which operates, particularly through the support of artistic initiatives and by sponsoring renovation projects of heritage assets. The analysis of the relationship developed by the Italian companies has revealed that most of the organisations have created a Foundation (see for example *Fondazione Ermenegildo Zegna*, *Fondazione Nicola Trussardi*, *Fondazione Cucinelli*, *Fondazione Ferrero*, and *Pirelli Hangar Bicocca Foundation*).

In particular, *Pirelli Hangar Bicocca Foundation* is an institution dedicated to the creation and promotion of contemporary art. The space wholly funded and managed by Pirelli, which is one of the world leaders in tyres industry, was founded in Milan in 2004, and is the outcome of a process that led to the conversion of an industrial plant into a venue for art and contemporary culture. Following restoration work that retained the characteristics and unique aspects of the site, in 2012 Pirelli Hangar Bicocca re-launched its programme of exhibitions and events. With a rich and intense schedule, Pirelli Hangar Bicocca presented exhibitions by leading international artists distinguished in areas of research and experimentation, focusing particularly on site-specific projects that establish a link with the unique characteristics of this space. Alongside major projects and activities of international scope, Pirelli Hangar Bicocca has also developed an ongoing close-knit relationship with its immediate neighbourhood as well as the City of Milan.

It is important to note that the attention to establish relationships for CSR purposes is not a prerogative of Italian multinationals, but it characterises also SMEs. In particular, *Favero-Milan Ingegneria*, operating in the engineering field, and *Cartiere del Garda*, operating in the paper production, both support cultural initiatives in region of Trentino and collaborate effectively with cultural associations, institutions and foundations.

Concerning the *sponsorships*, which are the second main observed dimension of the collaborative relationships, the key points are marketing, branding and communication. In this case, the fundamental purpose of sponsorship with creative, cultural and arts organisations concerns the creation, communication and protection of the company’s identity, brand and reputation. The scope of this kind of relationship is mainly to impact on customers and intermediaries, but also more generally affect the perception of a company from the point of view of its different stakeholders.

One of the key example of Italian company that has traditionally leveraged creativity and culture as a way to build its brand and reputation is *Benetton*. Among others, it is worth to mention the initiative named “Fabrica”. *Fabrica*, which was founded in 1994, is the Benetton Group’s communication research centre in which a group of creative young people of various nationalities work together with the aim of developing ideas and potential inspirational creativity-based projects that can be valuable for promoting the company worldwide.

Other examples of Italian companies that are deploying and exploiting the collaborative relationships for marketing and branding purposes were identified in *Gruppo Euromobil* (home furniture), *Teseo* (facilities and waste management), *Diesel* (fashion), *RossiModa* (textile), *Gobbetto Resine* (materials for the construction sector), *Gruppo Tosoni* (engineering), and *Santa Sofia Vini* (wine production).

Finally, as for the practices aimed to provide a *vector of value added*, the first insight that emerges from the empirical analysis is that creative partners can contribute successfully to the idea generation and to the new product development processes. In such a way, creative partners contribute to infuse the artful energy into products, services and processes, and increase the economic value of a product by incorporating aesthetic properties and characteristics. Italian companies have been traditionally very effective in differentiating themselves and their products by incorporating artistic, cultural and creative features into products and services with the result of creating embedded intangible value.

Meaningful examples are *Ridea* and *Brem*, two Italian companies operating in the design and production of heating products, which have linked their market success to the ability to offer heating systems and solutions that incorporate aesthetic and design features. The focus is on finding a continuous advanced equilibrium between functionality and elegance, utility and aesthetic, high technology and environmental sustainability. The value proposition is to deliver to the market not only an object that heats but also real furnishings objects that can be integrated perfectly in the home atmosphere contributing to create a living house.

Furla represents a further example. Giovanna Furlanetto, owner of Furla, stated: “*The arts have delivered to the world a very different perception of my company*”. Furla is an interesting case since it experiments on its core-products (i.e. the female bags) the work of young creative people sponsored by the Furla Foundation, as well as it exploits the talents of young filmmakers to reinvent communication through new “stories” in which the bag becomes input, fetish object to be transformed, and even destroyed and desecrated. For example, the project “*#candycool*” has been an open laboratory in which creative people have been invited to re-interpret the Candybag playing with fantasy and unusual components such as chains, textiles pieces, and even biscuits. In 2007, this approach was institutionalised through the so-called *Furla Talent Hub*, a centre for the promotion of young talents in fashion design, which offers to them the chance to design a complete collection.

A further case example is *Italcementi Group*. This company represent one of the major actors in the concrete industry at international level. To face the recent crisis of the construction sector, *Italcementi* relied on building deep collaborations with customers, designers, architects and building community. Among these dimensions, great attention is paid to the architecture as a mean to impact on the sustainable transformation of territories. The collaborations with architects allows for developing relevant projects able to be symbols of innovative and sustainable use of cement. This view is resulted in the development of projects with famous architects such as Nervi, Ponti, Meier, Perrault, and Cucinella. In order to make this kind of collaborations more stable and structured, *Italcementi Group* has launched since the end of ‘90s an initiative named “*Incontri Millenium*”, which is aimed at developing conversations with Italian faculties of architecture through workshops and events.

An Italian company that has been able to leverage on artistic, cultural and creative dimensions to transform a commodity such as coffee, into a product with high value-added is *Illy Caffè*. Among the different initiatives put in place by *Illy*, one of the most significant is the so-called “*Illy Art Collection*”. It consists in a series of 70 little cups for coffee limited in number, designed by famous artists, such as Michelangelo Pistoletto, Marina Abramović, Sandro Chia, Julian Schnabel, Robert Rauschenberg, Jeff Koons, Kiki Smith, Joseph Kosuth, James Rosenquist and many other young emergent talents.

As result of this project, the little cups for coffee became real porcelain sets through which the arts and the aesthetic dimensions were linked to the sensorial pleasure of the coffee, promoting at the same time brand management and enriching customers' experiences.

Since 2006, *Illy* largely adopted the idea of using art as a mean to enrich the value incorporated into products with the vision of making art accessible and applied to common objects. In this perspective, a further example of application of creativity and culture is the creation of another iconic *Illy's* product: the "250g" box of the coffee named "Barattoli d'Autore" (authored coffee boxes). According to a number of famous contemporary artists, such as James Rosenquist, Michael Lin, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Tobias Rehberger, and Sebastião Salgado, the box provides a new symbolic message interpreting the surface of a box and transforming it in a circular and infinite picture. To underline the relevance and the exclusivity of the artistic boxes, they are limited in number and available only twice per year. The above are examples of how art, culture and creativity can be deployed to increase the value added of products and differentiate them in the market. A further emerging practice in terms of value added to the whole companies' tangible and intangible infrastructures, is represented by the attention to exploit arts, culture and creativity as an instrument for shaping better workplaces.

Among others companies, this is the vision that has inspired *Ceretto Vini*, which has established a collaboration with creative organisations with the aim to 'beautify' the work environments. *Ceretto's* executives see the workplace design as one of the major factors affecting the performance of workers and the organisation overall. Their fundamental assumption is that the physical setting and the workplace environment have measurable effects on building relational capital, social life and organisational context, which in turn influence work productivity. Workers are more productive when working within a positive, stimulating and enjoyable environment. Accordingly, arts are used as instrumental means to create a space and an intangible aura within and around the organisation, with a positive impact on people, by stimulating a constructive emotional and energetic state. They have designed and built facilities in such a way that they embed symbolic meanings, so that they positively shape and affect the workplace.

Finally, it was identified and analyzed a company very keen in adopting arts, culture and creativity as instruments that permeate the overall organisation rather than been just a managerial dimension. This is the case of *Elica Group*, a world leader in the kitchen hoods business. Through the insights of the empirical research, it is possible to state that *Elica Group* represents a case of excellence, as well as a benchmark for understanding how collaborations with creative, cultural and arts organisations can drive a real transformation of the organisation. In such a way, the organisation and its people open the boundaries to a new consciousness, supporting continuous organisational changes and evolution.

The empirical research has allowed also showing that the most important *enabling factor* for the development of effective collaborative relationships is represented by the commitment of the entrepreneur and/or top management. Moreover, the most significant *barriers* for the engagement of arts, culture and creativity into the business models can be traced into three main issues:

- i the reluctance of employees to be engaged into art, culture and creative-based innovation processes

- ii the difficulty in forecasting the benefits that such kind of relationships can generate for the business
- iii the lack of structured service offering by arts, cultural and creative providers to enhance companies' innovation dynamics.

6 Conclusion

Collaborative relationships between cultural and creative organisations and businesses are increasing and may represent a promising avenue to renew the competitive postures of companies. This paper has presented six typologies of these relationships (specifically vectors of value added, licensing agreement, sponsorship, human resource development and training, corporate philanthropy, and corporate foundations), highlighting the aim of the collaboration, and the value created both for the business company and the creative organisation. An empirical investigation of 24 Italian companies allowed for understanding how these typologies of relationships take shape in real word setting. The analysis carried out provides valuable insights for both academic and practitioner implications. Indeed, the empirical scoping study has pointed out that there is an interest on developing collaborations with the creative cultural and arts organisations as well as on better understanding how to use and integrate arts, culture and creativity into daily business models. However there is still a lack of a strategic understanding about how this can be carried out. Finally, it is possible to underline the need of a more in-depth and extensive research investigations that could shed light both on the empirical practices and on the conceptual frameworks of how business may dialogue and exploit collaborative relationships to benefit innovation processes and organisational value creation dynamics.

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