

Case Study

Impacts of Digital Communication Tools on Fashion Brands Success –The NUDE Project

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Abstract. The global scale, changing fashion industry can be characterised with low predictability, high volatility, seasonality, short life cycle products and highly impulse consumer purchasings decisions, addressing ethical and sustainability matters. Fashion as generic collecting name can be defined as styles of clothing and accessories worn at any time by different groups of people. One of the main opportunity and challenge for this complex, multi actors sector introducing digital solutions, which can provide significant contribution of restructuring the supply chains, optimising the production techniques, reducing its negative environmental externalities supporting the future sustainability. Possible reason beyond this digitization trend can be changing consumer attitudes and expectations. Majority of consumers have tendency using digital channels before, during and after their purchase, so fashion brands have to take into consideration this new reality. The convenience and accessibility of online enjoyable shopping opportunities have reshaped consumer expectations including personalized recommendations, and user-friendly online social media platforms (video channels, websites, mobile apps, and secure payment systems). Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Pinterest have transformed the way fashion brands communicate and connect with their audience creating loyal social network. Digital transformation requires more than just implementing new technologies; it necessitates a cultural shift within fashion brands. Case study of the NUDE Project analysing its challenges and main competitors as well, can serve as an illustrative example how can the digital communication tools contribute to the fashion brand future success and prosperity.

Keywords: Fashion Brand, Digital Communication, Personalised Customer Relations, Cultural Shift

Introduction

The global scale, continuously changing fashion industry –from textile and clothing manufacturing industry to sales and marketing - reflects economic trends, consumer preferences, purchasing power and market dynamics, reshaping social and cultural norms at the same time. The sector brings together wide range of stakeholders, including designers, manufacturers, retailers and consumers. Each actor in this complex network contributes to creation, distribution and consumption of fashion products implementing numerous innovations resulting transformations in the industry as manifested consequences of globalization, digitization and sustainability challenges. The fashion industry's total revenue reached 770,9 billion dollars in 2024 and according to the preliminary market forecasts, revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2024-2028) of 8.94%, resulting in a projected

market volume of 1,128 billion dollars by 2028. In the Fashion Market, the number of users is expected to amount to 2.8 billion users by 2028 [1]. This trend is illustrated by the below Figure 1.

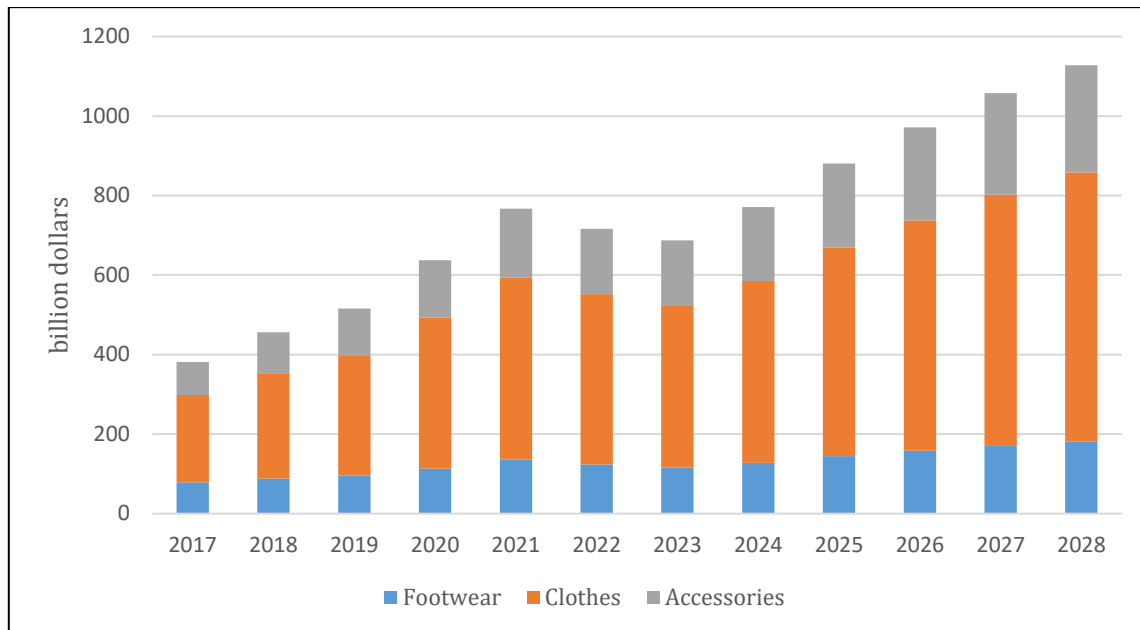


Figure 1. Revenue trend of the global fashion industry between 2017-2028 (in billion dollars)

Source: Own edition based on [1]

The possible reasons beyond the revenue growth trends can be popularity of mobile applications for online shopping expecting fast, reliable delivery, raising consumer disposable incomes, at the same time changes in their preferences, impacts of tourism, nevertheless it will slightly slow-down in the future due to the increasing consumer price sensitivity as consequences of inflation, uncertainties arising from reshuffling of global trade. Due to its negative environmental externalities, the sector is facing burning ethical dilemmas, such as labor exploitation, damages the environment. The fashion industry would be able significantly decreasing its greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40%, its water need by up to 70 % by 2030 if companies would be ready to committed themselves applying renewable and recyclable materials in the frame of strategic partnerships with other industrial sectors, introducing innovative solutions, such as 3D printing, water-efficient production methods. In this context, fashion industry faces serious challenge how circular economy can take into practice instead of linear economy approach, which is largely hindered by lack awareness of this model among consumers. Furthermore, understanding consumer behaviors and identifying prevailing trends are essential elements of success in the fashion industry. Consumer preferences, influences and purchasing decision making mechanisms shape market demand, brand positioning and product development strategies.

The digital technologies opened new dimensions to transformation, impacted on every aspect of the industry, from creative processes to customer engagement and supply chain management. The main driving forces beyond this trend can be favorable online shopping, increasing numbers of Internet users, impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI), social commerce trends. Digitalization refers to the use of digital tools to improve efficiency, reducing waste, create new products or maximise the positive customer experience. In the early 2000s, with the rise of the internet and digital technologies, brands began to

recognize the potential of online communication. Digital communication allows for two-way interaction between brands and consumers, fostering a more engaging and personalized marketing approach. This evolution has enabled fashion brands to tailor their messages, reach specific target audiences, and gather valuable consumer data. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, brands now utilize a variety of channels, including websites, email marketing, and social media platforms, to engage consumers effectively. The shift towards digital communication is particularly relevant in the fashion industry, where trends change rapidly, and consumer preferences can be influenced by real-time interactions and feedback [2]; [3]; [4].

The main objective of this paper is to highlight how digital communication contributes to the growth of fashion brands in today's market. Furthermore, this study reveals which digital strategies can be most effective in enhancing brand visibility, building consumer trust, and speed-up sales. Analysis of NUDE project and making comparison its main rivals providing insights into how brands can leverage digital tools to foster sustainable growth in a highly competitive industry. The applied research methodologies consists of a combination of case studies, interviews, and data analysis, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how digital strategies affect brand performance.

1. Digital Communication in the Fashion Industry

Historically, fashion marketing based on traditional advertising methods such as print ads in magazines, TV commercials, and billboard campaigns. These channels, while effective in their time, were limited in their ability to offer real-time interaction and engagement with consumers. Over the past decade, digital communication has undergone a significant transformation, particularly in the fashion industry. As digital platforms evolved, fashion brands began to shift their focus toward online marketing strategies, enabling them to reach wider audiences with greater precision.

The relevance of this shift is particularly evident in the ability of digital communication to democratize the fashion industry. Both established and emerging brands can compete in the same space applying the available digital tools making the market contest more equally. For new brands, digital platforms offer an affordable way to build awareness and establish a strong online presence without the need for extensive budgets typically required for traditional marketing. Established brands, meanwhile, use digital communication to maintain relevance, connect with younger, tech-savvy audiences, and adapt to the rapidly changing consumer preferences in the digital age. Analysing the role of digital communication in fashion industry is crucial for understanding how brands grow and succeed in this highly competitive and dynamic marketplace.

According to a 2022 survey of fashion company executives revealed that nearly seven in ten fashion brands were using social media in order to engage with their consumers, while 56 percent were using email marketing, followed by 36 percent using paid search, like Google advertisements as the Figure 2 briefly summarised.

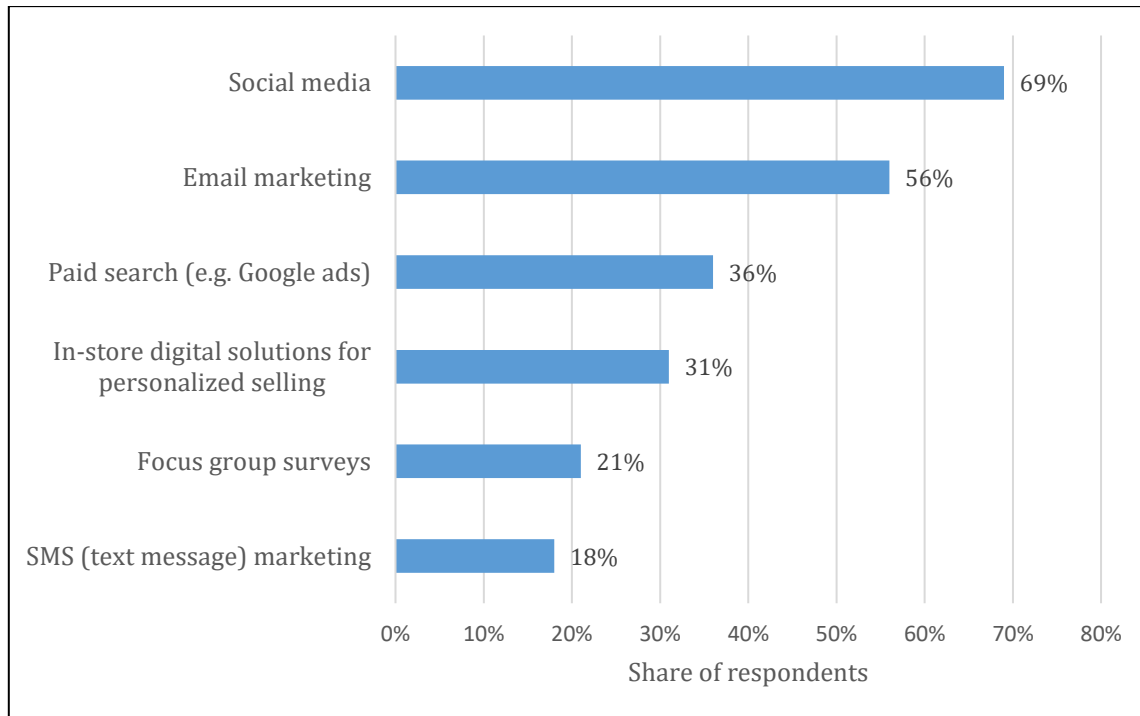


Figure 2. Digital tools used to engage with customers by fashion companies worldwide in 2022

Source: Own edition based on [5]

Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become crucial for brand visibility and consumer engagement, becoming essential pillar in the in the fashion industry marketing strategy. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the most meaningful social network in the fashion industry was Instagram due to its impressive visual nature allows brands to showcase their latest collections and engage directly with their audience through likes, comments, and direct messages. This created a place for fans to be inspired and interactions among the consumers resulted wide community. This situation had remarkably changed in the post-COVID era, since TikTok with Chinese origin came into the digital landscape revolutionizing the “know-how”, how can different brands create newly appearing fashion trends by short videos with influencer collaborations and user-generated content. The platform provided new pathways for making customer interactions more effective and empowering brands to gather significantly more accurate and precise data, which can serve as base for their future “tailor-made”, personalized marketing campaigns. The primary target group of TikTok is teenagers and young adults: 40% of its users vary between 10–25 years age cohort. Research highlights how social media facilitates brand storytelling, allowing fashion brands to communicate their identity, values, and unique selling propositions. Furthermore, digital platforms and social networks, which act as spokespersons for engaged citizens, demand that fashion brands make a greater effort to consider different cultures and approaches [6]; [7]. Instagram, with its emphasis on high-quality visuals, has emerged as a powerful tool for fashion brands to engage consumers. Brands can share stunning imagery, behind-the-scenes content, and user-generated content to foster community and loyalty. TikTok, on the other hand, has introduced a new dynamic to fashion marketing through short-form video content, enabling brands to reach younger demographics and create viable trends [8]; [9]. Influencer marketing has also become a critical component of social media strategies. Collaborating with influencers allows brands to leverage their followers' trust and credibility, effectively expanding their reach. Influencers can create authentic

connections with consumers, influencing their purchasing decisions and enhancing brand perception [10].

Several fashion brands have successfully promoted their digital communication and marketing strategies to enhance their visibility and growth. For example, Gucci has effectively utilized social media to create immersive brand experiences, often incorporating innovative storytelling and collaborations with digital artists. Their campaigns not only promote products but also engage audiences with artistic content that resonates with their values [11]. Nike has employed targeted digital advertising and influencer partnerships to build brand loyalty. Through platforms like Instagram, Nike encourages users to share their fitness journeys, creating a community that aligns with the brand's ethos of empowerment and inclusivity [12]. Zara, known for its fast-fashion model, leverages social media to stay ahead of trends, utilizing real-time data to inform its product offerings and marketing strategies. By actively engaging with consumers on social media, Zara can quickly adapt to changing preferences and maintain its competitive edge in the market [13]; [14]. Nordstrom applied data analytics to personalize customer communications, ensuring that marketing messages were relevant to each individual. This level of personalization has been shown to improve customer loyalty and increase conversion rates, reflecting the power of data-driven digital marketing. Data-driven personalization also extends to product offerings. Analysing market trends and consumer data, brands can design and promote products that meet the specific needs of customers. Levi's uses data analytics to understand which styles and fits are most popular among different demographics, allowing the company to focus its marketing efforts on these segments, optimizing inventory and reducing unsold inventory. Augmented reality technology (AR) has significantly improved the online shopping experience by allowing consumers to virtually try on clothes. Gucci has launched an AR feature in its app that allows users to see what shoes will look like on their feet before purchasing. This interactive feature reduces consumers' uncertainty when shopping online and improves their overall experience [15].

2. NUDE project

2.1. About the project in brief

The Spanish NUDE Project is fastest-growing fashion brand based on a simple powerful idea: to create clothing with a story telling and making a statement. It all began when two friends, Bruno Palacios and Alex, decided to turn their passion for art and fashion into a business. When NUDE Project was founded, in 2019, the focus was on appealing to a specific audience that was searching for something fresh and less saturated in the market. The founders understood that many consumers were growing tired of the relentless "sell, sell, sell" approach from traditional fashion brands. Instead of just pushing products, they recognized that customers wanted to know the people behind the brand. They craved transparency, authentic communication, and something more innovative than just the products themselves. This is where NUDE Project found its niche, by focusing on creating a brand that would resonate on a deeper level with its audience [16]; [17].

NUDE Project set itself apart by emphasizing not only the quality of its clothing but also the story and ethos behind each piece. The founders aimed to connect with consumers who were looking for more than just another brand, they wanted a community, a shared set of values, and a brand that

communicated openly with its audience. However, the brand now faces several challenges as it continues to grow. One of them is, that despite its success, NUDE Project operates in an industry that is strongly competitive, with other brands offering similar products like sweaters and T-shirts.

The main competitors of the NUDE project, who make actions focusing on similar products (streetwear clothing) applying the same brand approach (creating relevant social, loyal community, whose members are ready to identify with the brand) and same digital marketing strategies (extending their brands beyond just basic pieces, creating complete wardrobe by using social media surfaces getting involved influencers as well, and organising sweepstake raising their followers number) [18]:

- 1) Blue Banana Brand established by Juan Fernández-Estrada and Nacho Rivera in Spain in 2016. Similarly to the Nude Project, its target group is also the Z generation, however, they are using different management philosophy. This brand mission is providing the complete satisfaction for adventurous people as the founders themselves point out "sunset hunters". The brand's annual turnover reached twelve million euros in FY 2022. After the European cities, currently the company is preparing for the market entrance in the United States of America and Latin America.
- 2) Fake Good as startup was set up by two famous youtubers (Buyer brothers) who have decided to launch their own brand of streetwear clothing with excellent design and outstanding quality. They have been focusing primarily on YouTube channel and Instagram gaining significant visibility.
- 3) EME Studios was created by Garbiel Morón, Conra Martínez and three more friends in 2018. The brand annual revenue was 1,2 million euros in FY 2022 applying story-telling techniques and social media tools. According to their future strategic plan, they are intending to widen the product portfolio introducing more design solutions at the same time.

In addition, the real challenge for NUDE Project is to give customers a reason to choose their products over others. NUDE Project primarily targets young, fashion-conscious consumers aged 18 to 35 who value sustainability and ethical production being aware about environmental and social impacts of their purchasing decisions. They seek brands that align with their values of inclusivity and authenticity. The brand has successfully captured the attention of millennials and Gen Z, who appreciate not only the quality and design of the clothing but also the narrative behind the brand. NUDE Project's marketing strategies, including collaborations with diverse influencers and a strong social media presence, have effectively engaged this audience, fostering a community that celebrates diversity and self-expression. What the brand offers to its community is a lifestyle, thus its motto is "By artists for Artists". Fashion is no longer confined by the realms of stitches and fabric. A brand is nothing without its lifestyle. It has to "be cool" to wear NUDE Project [19].

2.2. Digital marketing strategies

The sales strategy used by the brand is the so-called "drops". These are based on restricting production, thus making the products limited and therefore more exclusive. Not only this, but they also use the "hype" ("To make something seem more exciting or important than it is") strategy. This strategy basically seeks to get the brand's consumers to create such high expectations about the new product they are going to release. That is, as consumers know that Nude works with "drops" they know that the products are limited and specials. The content creators get the responsibility of creating expectations

several days before in order to cause that on the day and time of the product launch, there are thousands of people in the virtual queue waiting to purchase the new garment [19]; [20]. The biggest reason for using this strategy is to deliver something new every month. Most brands launch fall, winter and summer collections, which leads them to share the same content throughout the entire season. NUDE Project's brand started on a small scale, focusing on acquaintances, people from the university, family members [21].

To complete the strategy that the brand used with the drops and the hype, NUDE Project also bet on the so-called storytelling. The brand realized that having created a community with which it shared values, a lifestyle, etc., it had to offer something more. The company decided to provide people not only a product, but also a story. Nude started to create content, especially videos, to engage its followers even more. It wasn't just selling a product; it was making it even more attractive thanks to the supporting narrative. A very clear example is seen in the Trap House Collection, where they decided to sell the products through Kanye West's story. Through this storytelling, the brand managed to identify their product with motivation, hope and the excitement of fighting for your dreams [22].

2.2.1. E-mail marketing and Podcast

NUDE PROJECT's email marketing stands out by being engaging and non-intrusive, unlike many brands that cause consumers to disable notifications. Their strategy focuses on personalization, creative subject lines, and visually appealing designs. Rather than overwhelming subscribers with constant sales offers, they share exclusive content, behind-the-scenes looks, and personalized recommendations. This keeps their emails relevant and exciting, making customers look forward to them rather than ignoring or unsubscribing. These emails take a very direct approach and clearly reflect an understanding of their young audience. They incorporate elements such as references to Snapchat to describe images, the use of memes, like one featuring the famous actor Will Smith, or simply humorous texts that feel more like receiving an email from a friend rather than a company as you can see in the below illustrative photo.

Perhaps their most outside-the-box branded content feat is the NUDE Project Podcast. Each Sunday, NUDE Project founders Bruno and Alex sit with Spanish influencers, artists, and businesspeople for half-hour chats. They merch these guests up in the latest Nude gear, and talk about life, business, and fashion. It's a 30-minute ad, but it never attempts to sell you anything. Something characteristic of each interview is that the guests always wear a brand garment. The NUDE Project community is weekly seeing interviews of very famous people wearing the brand's garments, which causes those "fans" of the interviewees to also desire to be able to wear the products worn by their idol. The founders themselves still can't believe they have had so much success and impact, especially among such famous people. The podcast averages 100K views each week and in just 11 months, has cashed in 145K subscribers.

2.2.2. Website and social media

NUDE Project has always embraced a "think outside the box" mentality. This philosophy extends to all departments and is what enables them to make everything unique, excellent, and a true reflection of what the brand aspires to be. This includes web design. They treat it like a physical store; if it's the coolest on the street, it's more likely to attract people and convert them into customers and part of your brand.

In the beginning, NUDE Project started with just an Instagram account and a website built on Shopify. The Shopify platform empowered them to launch a website with a completely new model, where they could easily edit everything in a simple and intuitive way. Shopify also allowed them to ship their products almost worldwide. According to the co-founders, the majority of their customers were acquired through social media.

In the past, brands used to spend their entire marketing budget on a single video, which would be, for example, aired on TV, concentrating all their advertising efforts there. Nowadays, people demand more content at a faster pace, almost daily. Despite this, NUDE Project is careful about the number of posts they make to avoid overwhelming their audience. However, they use Instagram stories more frequently and consistently to maintain public attention.

The young people who truly connect with the brand and the stories it tells, almost become voluntary brand ambassadors, which boosts word-of-mouth marketing. Influencers also play a crucial role in the brand's marketing strategy. Collaborations, such as with Rauw Alejandro, who wore the brand's clothing during concerts, have brought significant legitimacy to NUDE Project.

They have worked with several Spanish influencers who capture the attention of their target audience but rather than idolizing the artist, NUDE Project aims to "bring them down to earth," positioning them closer to consumers by showing that, despite their fame, they are regular people who also wear or could wear NUDE Project. This approach helps create a stronger connection between the brand and its audience.

When they launched their first collection, the company turned over 600,000 euros, a staggering achievement for its first year. The following year, their revenue increased to 2.2 million euros. This continued growth led NUDE Project to close its 2022 turnover at 11.5 million euros. In 2023, that turnover increased by 130%, jumping to 30 million euros as you can see it in the Figure 3.

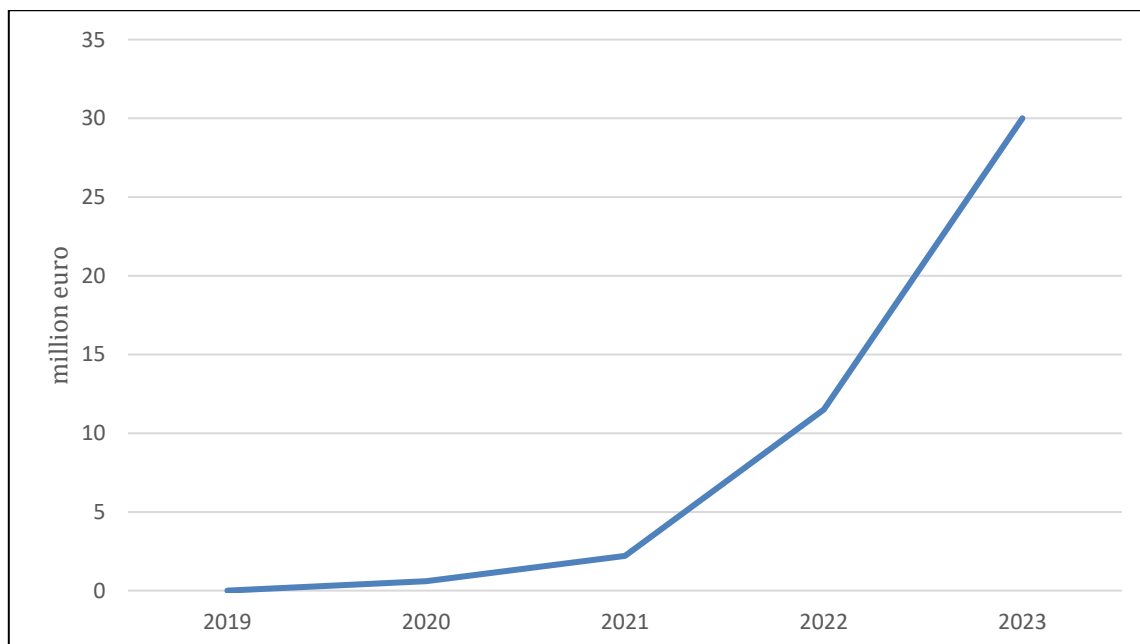


Figure 3. Sales revenue of the NUDE Project (in million euro)

Source: Own edition based on [23]

As explained by both co-CEOs, this growth has been driven by three factors: the increase in product categories, the growth in retail and the increase in sales through its e-Commerce. They also revealed that they have sold more than 400,000 items and that the online channel has accounted for 62% of its turnover, being the main source of sales for the brand. For its part, Spain continues to be its main market, representing 60% of its total sales. The men's and women's streetwear brand full-time staff of 130 operates seven stores and one pop-up across Spain, Italy and Portugal. Products sell online to 200 countries. The clothing brand is thus ending 2022 breaking yet another record after closing the year with a total of 900,000 followers, 250 million visits and 35 million likes between its Instagram, TikTok and YouTube accounts [23]; [24].

3. Main research findings

The research on NUDE Project highlights the brand's rapid growth, driven by its effective use of digital communication strategies. From humble beginnings with just an Instagram account and a Shopify-based website, NUDE Project quickly gained traction among a young, fashion-conscious audience. Their use of limited-edition "drops" and influencer marketing campaigns have proven to be key drivers of engagement and sales. The brand's decision to focus on social media content, especially on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, has resulted in significant customer acquisition and brand visibility. For instance, within their first year, NUDE Project generated over €600,000 in revenue, which later rapidly increased to €26 million in 2023.

The below Table 1. makes comparison between NUDE project and its main rivalry from different aspects.

	NUDE project	Blue Banana Brand	Fake Goods	EME Studios
Applying social media platforms	YES	YES	YES	YES
Getting involved influencers	YES	YES	YES	YES
Story-telling	YES	YES	YES	YES
Physical stores	YES	YES	NO	NO
Organising events	YES	YES	YES	NO
Consumer loyalty	YES	YES	YES	YES
Internationalisation	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 1. The main marketing strategic elements of the different fashion brands

Source: Own edition based on [18]

The comparison of engagement across different digital channels shows that wide range of social media platforms - Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, webpages, blogs – creating social network fidelity, played a crucial role in their growth. Influencers such as Rauw Alejandro wearing NUDE Project clothing during concerts not only boosted the brand's legitimacy but also significantly expanded its reach, particularly in Spain and among Gen Z audiences. The impact of these collaborations was further reinforced by the

growth of the brand's community, who acted as voluntary ambassadors, spreading the word through personal networks.

Additionally, NUDE Project's use of email marketing has helped maintain consistent engagement with their audience. Their emails, which are more personalized and informal, keep customers intrigued and excited, in contrast to the more sales-driven emails typically sent by other brands. This innovative approach, along with weekly podcasts that feature influential figures wearing their clothing, has created a more holistic brand experience that goes beyond the products themselves.

The results indicate that digital communication has been the cornerstone of NUDE Project's success. Unlike traditional marketing strategies, which focus heavily on one-off campaigns (such as TV ads), NUDE Project has embraced a continuous flow of content that keeps its audience engaged on a daily basis. This reflects the shift in consumer behavior, where younger generations demand more frequent and authentic interactions with brands. Through their use of Instagram and TikTok, NUDE Project has successfully built a narrative that resonates with their audience, positioning themselves as more than just a fashion brand, but as a lifestyle choice.

This digital-first approach contrasts with the traditional "push" marketing strategies that focused on selling a product in isolation. NUDE Project has instead focused on building a community around its brand, using transparency and storytelling to connect with customers on a deeper level.

Furthermore, the success of their limited-edition "drop" strategy illustrates how scarcity and exclusivity can drive consumer demand in the digital age. The anticipation created by these limited releases, amplified through social media and influencers, has become a powerful tool for boosting sales and maintaining interest in the brand. However, as they expand their product line beyond t-shirts and hoodies, they face the challenge of maintaining the same level of consumer excitement and ensuring that their products remain desirable amidst a highly competitive fashion market.

The analysis shows that digital communication strategies—particularly social media, influencer marketing, and email campaigns - have been instrumental in the growth of NUDE Project. The brand's ability to combine storytelling with innovative digital tools has allowed them to differentiate themselves from other fashion brands, ensuring both visibility and consumer loyalty in an increasingly saturated market.

Summary and Conclusions

The authors demonstrated the critical role that digital communication plays in the growth and success of fashion brands in today's competitive market. Fashion brands that embrace this transformation and leverage digital technologies to enhance the customer experience, optimize their value chains, and address societal challenges will thrive in the digital age. The future of fashion is digital with unlimited possibilities.

The case study revealed how social media, influencer marketing, and innovative digital tools such as "drops" and personalized email marketing have contributed to the brand's rapid rise. NUDE Project's ability to engage its audience through storytelling and community-building has set it apart from more

traditional brands, illustrating how digital-first strategies can drive significant consumer engagement and sales growth.

The findings of this research have several practical implications for professionals in the fashion industry. First, brands should prioritize digital communication strategies, particularly through social media and influencer partnerships, to connect with younger, tech-savvy consumers. NUDE Project's success shows that brands can differentiate themselves by focusing on transparency, storytelling, and community engagement rather than just pushing products. Additionally, the "drop" model used by NUDE Project, which creates excitement through limited-edition releases, is an effective way to maintain consumer interest and drive sales. Fashion brands looking to increase customer loyalty and long-term engagement should also consider leveraging personalized email marketing, as NUDE Project has done, to offer exclusive content and foster a deeper connection with customers.

Recommendations for further research directions

Since effective digital communication can contribute to brand growth, it is worth focusing your attention for the below possible future research directions.

- Exploring is the long-term sustainability of the "drop" model and whether it can maintain consumer interest as brands expand their product lines.
- Role of other digital platforms, such as emerging social networks or messaging apps, in fashion marketing.
- Impacts of digital communication strategies on consumer behaviors in different markets, comparing their effectiveness across various demographics, economic and cultural contexts.
- Lastly, further studies could explore how fashion brands can balance between maintaining exclusivity and scaling their operations without losing their brand identity.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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