



Universidad
Zaragoza

Trabajo Fin de Grado

The ROLE of DIGITAL COMMUNICATION in GLOBAL FASHION BUSINESS: ZARA'S BRANDING STRATEGY

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Año 2025

ABSTRACT

This study dives into the analysis of how Zara, the flagship brand of the Inditex Group, uses digital communication and marketing strategies to build a strong global brand identity and differentiate itself from competitors in the fast fashion industry. The research focuses on understanding how Zara integrates digital tools, social media platforms and online shopping experiences to engage consumers and reinforce its market leadership.

The theoretical framework explores key concepts such as communication, digital marketing, consumer behavior and shopping experience, examining how these things shape the relationship between brands and consumers in the digital era. The study also discusses the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) model, emphasizing the importance of personalization, interactivity and data-driven decision-making in contemporary marketing.

A comparative analysis with competitors like Mango, Massimo Dutti and Laagam highlights Zara's competitive advantages, including its speed-to-market, minimalist branding and effective use of omnichannel strategies. However, the study also acknowledges growing concerns about sustainability and ethical practices within the fast fashion model, suggesting that future success will depend on Zara's ability to balance innovation with environmental and social responsibility.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Zara's strategic use of digital communication has been essential in maintaining its influence and adaptability within a rapidly changing industry, where technology, consumer expectations and ethical considerations increasingly define competitive advantage.

Keywords: Zara, Inditex, digital communication, social media marketing, consumer behavior, shopping experience, fast fashion, sustainability, branding.

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1. Introduction

Zara, the flagship brand of the Inditex Group, has truly transformed the fast fashion landscape with its incredible speed, keen sense of trends and innovative focus on customers.

Renowned for its ability to turn runway styles into affordable pieces in just a matter of weeks, Zara combines a rapid supply chain with stylish retail design, smart data-driven choices and a clean digital presence. By prioritizing a smooth shopping experience, whether online or in-store, Zara has built a loyal following of trendy shoppers around the globe.

This study delves into Zara's marketing strategy, digital platforms, customer behaviors, competitive stance and the wider context of fast fashion, showcasing the brand's distinctive approach in an ever-changing industry.

1.1. Objectives

The main objective of this project is to analyze how Zara uses digital communication to build its brand identity and differentiate itself from its competitors in the global fashion industry. This objective seeks to understand how the company's online communications strategies (social media, website content and digital campaigns) contribute to reinforcing Zara's brand image as a leader in fast fashion.

In order to achieve this overarching goal, I have been defined several specific objectives:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of Zara's social media strategies compared to its competitors.

This objective involves analyzing how Zara employs platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok to engage this audience, communicate brand values and promote products. The comparison with competitors such as Mango, Massimo Dutti and Laagam, will help to identify distinctive features in Zara's approach and determine whether its digital strategies generate higher engagement or stronger connections with consumers.

- To analyze the impact of the digital shopping experience on customer loyalty.

This focuses on examining how Zara's online platforms, in particular its website and mobile application, shape the customer experience and influence post-purchase

behaviors. Understanding how these factors contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty will provide insight into the role of digitalization in maintaining long-term relationships with consumers.

- To study the relationship between Zara's digital strategy and changes in consumer behavior.

This one seeks to explore how Zara adapts its digital communication and marketing strategies in response to evolving consumer preferences.

Together, these objectives provide a comprehensive framework to understand Zara's use of digital communication as a strategic tool for differentiation, customer engagement and brand consolidation in the highly competitive fashion industry.

1.2. Structure of the study

It is organized into eight main sections. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of Inditex and Zara, outlining their origins, business models and global relevance. Then, Chapter 3 sets up the theoretical framework, defining communication and tracing its evolution, with a particular focus on its role in the fashion industry. After that, Chapter 4 analyzes the use of social media for branding, exploring how platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook contribute to Zara's digital identity.

Chapter 5 discusses digital marketing and the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) model, examining how Zara integrates online tools, data-driven strategies and omnichannel experiences. Also, Chapter 6 focuses on consumer behavior and the shopping experience, comparing in-store and online interactions to know how Zara enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. Chapter 7 talks about the fast fashion concept, reflecting on its ethical and environmental implications. Finally, Chapter 8 presents a comparative analysis between Zara and its competitors such as Mango, Massimo Dutti and Laagam, followed by the conclusion, references and annexes.

2. Inditex group and Zara description

2.1. Inditex (Industria de diseño textil, S.A.)

Inditex is one of the world's largest fashion retail groups, headquartered in Arteixo, Spain. It was founded in 1985 by Amancio Ortega. The company owns well-known fashion brands like Zara, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Pull & Bear, Stradivarius, Oysho and Zara Home.

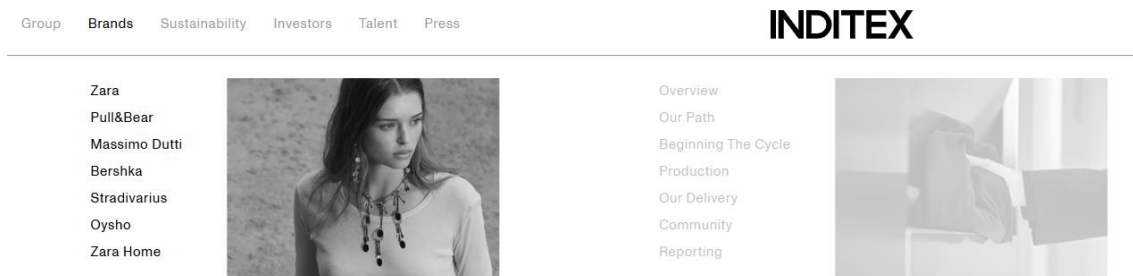


Figure 3.1: Zara website's home page. Brands Source: [INDITEX | Home](https://www.inditex.com/)

It is known for its fast-fashion business model, which focuses on fast production cycles, minimal inventory and quick adaptation to trends. They have thousands of stores in more than 90 countries and a strong e-commerce presence.

Inditex is a leader in the global fashion industry if we consider sustainability, technology and customer experience.



Figure 3.2: Zara's sewing workshop Source: [INDITEX | Nuestro Modelo](https://www.inditex.com/es/nuestro-modelo)

2.2. Zara

Zara was founded in 1974 in Spain. It is the most famous brand of Inditex and one of the most influential fashion retailers worldwide. Zara revolutionized the fashion

industry with its fast-fashion model, allowing it to design, to produce and to deliver new collections in just a few weeks or in a short period of time.

The brand is known for its trendy and aesthetic designs and high-quality clothes with affordable prices, although they are increasing today. Zara has physical stores and a strong online presence where they focus on visual storytelling, limited-edition drops and it is customer focused.

Unlike other competitors, Zara invests very little in traditional advertising, relying on word of mouth, store experience and digital marketing strategies to maintain its brand's image.

As they say on their website:

“Zara is one of the largest international fashion companies. It belongs to Inditex, one of the world's largest distribution groups.

The customer is at the heart of our unique business model, which includes design, production, distribution and sales through our extensive retail network.”



Figure 3.3: Zara's employees working Source: [INDITEX | Nuestro Modelo](#)

3. Communication as a concept

3.1. Definition

Communication can be defined as the process through which individuals or organizations exchange information and ideas to achieve mutual understanding. According to Shannon and Weaver (1949), communication is a linear process consisting of a sender, a message, a channel and a receiver, with potential interference or “noise”

that may distort the transmission. Over time, this mechanistic perspective evolved into more interactive and contextual models that highlight feedback, interpretation and the influence of culture and relationships (Schramm, 1954; Hall, 1976).

In business context, communication is not merely about transmitting information but about building relationships, fostering trust and aligning organizational goals. As Argenti (2018) notes, effective communication is a strategic tool that shapes corporate identity, reputation and stakeholder engagement.

3.2. Evolution

Historically, the study of communication has evolved from one-way models of information delivery to two-way and networked models emphasizing interaction and co-creation. The classical models focused on clarity and efficiency, assuming the receiver was a passive recipient. However, with the rise of digital media, communication became dialogic; a continuous exchange between organizations and their audiences (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The emergence of the internet and web technologies marked a turning point in the evolution of communication. Instead of being top-down and controlled by organizations, communication became participatory and decentralized, enabling consumers to generate, share and comment on content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This transformation has forced organizations to adapt their strategies to a more dynamic and transparent environment.

3.3. Communication and social media in the business context: a literature review

In recent decades, social media has become one of the most influential platforms for corporate communications. Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram allow companies to interact directly with customers, employees and other stakeholders in real time.

According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), social media has blurred the boundaries between personal and professional communication, turning consumers into active participants in the branding process. Similarly, Kietzmann et al. (2011) highlights that

the architecture of social media, built around sharing, conversations and communities, offers companies new opportunities to listen and engage.

More recent studies (e.g., Kapoor et al., 2018; Arora & Sanni, 2019) have shown that social media supports both external communication (marketing, public relations, customer service) and internal communication (employee engagement, corporate culture). The interactive nature of these platforms facilitates transparency and strengthens corporate reputation, but also represents challenges related to credibility, privacy and the management of online crises (Coombs, 2014).

Social media has transformed business communication into a strategic, relational and continuous process, where success depends on authenticity, responsiveness and value creation for all stakeholders.

3.4. Communication in the fashion industry

The fashion industry has had a huge transformation with the rise of digital communication and marketing.

In the early days, fashion was shared mainly by word of mouth and through fashion magazines. People would talk about new trends in person and wealthy women would read magazines like *Harper's Bazaar* to learn what was in style. These magazines had drawings and later photos of clothing.

As you can see in the *Figure 4.1*, the differences between old and new Harper's Bazaar magazine are not many. Both follow the same aesthetic.



Figure 4.1: December 1953 vs January 2025 Harper's Bazaar magazines Source: [Bazar December 1953](#); [El arte de soñar protagoniza la portada de enero de Harper's Bazaar: ¡bienvenido, 2025!](#))

Fashion shows became more popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Designers like Christian Dior used shows to present their new collections. At the same time, celebrities and actresses became important in fashion. What they wore in public influenced people around the world, as happens nowadays.



Figure 4.2: Christian Dior 1950s fashion show Source: [pat english photos of dior](#)

In the 1960s and 1980s, as television became common, fashion brands started using it for advertising. Commercials and TV programs helped to spread new styles. Big brands like Calvin Klein and Chanel used print ads, billboards and TV to communicate their image.

With the rise of the internet in the 1990s and early 2000s, fashion communication changed a lot. Brands can reach people around the world. Websites, emails and online stores allow more direct communication with customers. This made fashion more global and faster.

From the 2010s to today, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and TikTok changed how fashion is shared. Now, people follow influencers, bloggers and celebrities online, and brands use these platforms to post photos and videos. Communication is now instant and interactive, and everyone can share their own style, not only brands and designers.

Today, brands use artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to connect with people and to attract them. Some fashion shows are virtual, and you can try on clothes using your phone. The fashion industry is also focusing on sustainability, and digital communication helps the impact on the planet.

For example, Stradivarius has created an advertising campaign using AI, as you can see in *Image 6*. This campaign shows “an exaggeration of the true collection and it reflects what fashion would be like if reality did not limit us. The models are not real and some of the clothes do not exist” (marketingdirecto.com, 2023)



Figure 4.3: AI Stradivarius campaign Source: [stradivarius ai campaign - Buscar con Google](#)

In the past, fashion brands relied on print media, TV adverts and runway shows to promote their collections. However, with the digital revolution, brands connect with customers through social media, e-commerce, influencer collaborations and personalized online experiences.

4. Social media for branding

Zara has a single and strategic focus on social media. Unlike many competitors, Zara does not rely on paid adverts or influencer marketing. Instead, it focuses on high-quality visuals, minimalist branding and organic engagement to maintain its position as a trendsetter in the fashion industry.

This paragraph explores how Zara uses Instagram, TikTok and Facebook to strengthen its brand image and to engage with its audience.

4.1. Instagram for branding

Instead of a traditional retail brand page, Zara's Instagram profile (@zara) uses an aesthetic and editorial approach that reflects the style of a high-fashion magazine.

The brand lets its images speak for themselves and prefers a clean presentation. Each post is carefully chosen to maintain a cohesive, modern and minimalist design, which helps to strengthen its sophisticated brand identity. The feed is a mix of editorial photography, product close-ups and campaigns, where they create an overall impression of understated luxury.

In terms of engagement, Zara uses a subtle but effective strategy. Unlike competitors such as H&M, it avoids interactive techniques like comment replies or questions and answers (Q&A) sessions. Instead, the account highlights fresh collections, styling ideas and important runway moments. Integrated shopping options improve the user experience, allowing followers to shop directly through the platform, bridging content and commerce.

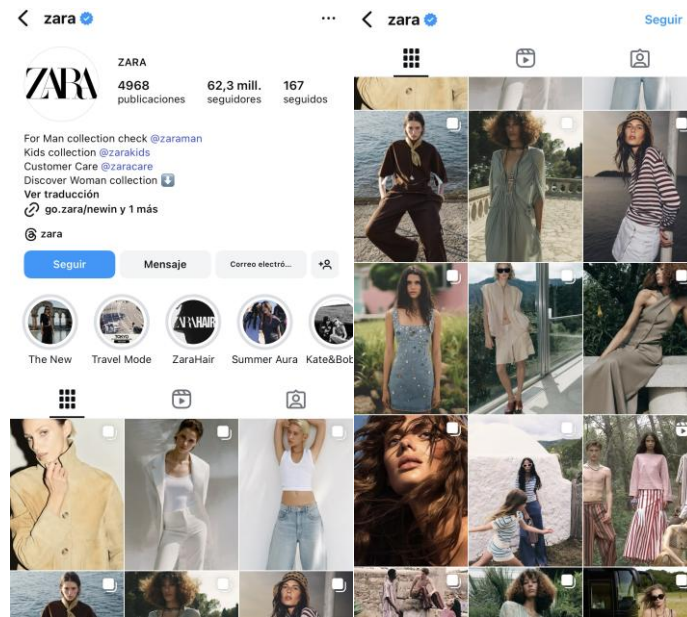


Figure 5.1: Zara's Instagram Source: [ZARA \(@zara\) • Fotos y videos de Instagram](#)

4.2. Tiktok for branding

Zara's TikTok strategy is very different from its approach on Instagram, embracing a more dynamic and trend-focused presence that prioritizes organic engagement over direct brand promotion.

The brand shares “behind the scenes” content such as runway preparations, styling tips and previews of collections in production, offering a more accessible look into the fashion process. Rather than directly leading trends, Zara participates in viral fashion movements, therefore increasing its cultural relevance without weakening its brand identity.

Instead of relying on paid influencer collaborations, Zara gains from organic user-generated content (UGC) since TikTok users often post videos showing their Zara purchases and outfits, usually under popular hashtags like #zarahaul. Although the brand does not start its own hashtag campaigns, this user activity provides extensive visibility and engagement.

Zara sometimes highlights user content and matches its posts with current TikTok trends, ensuring that it remains relevant within the fast-paced, ever-changing environment of the platform. This successful social media mirrors Zara's wider digital strategy of understated influence and consumer driven content.

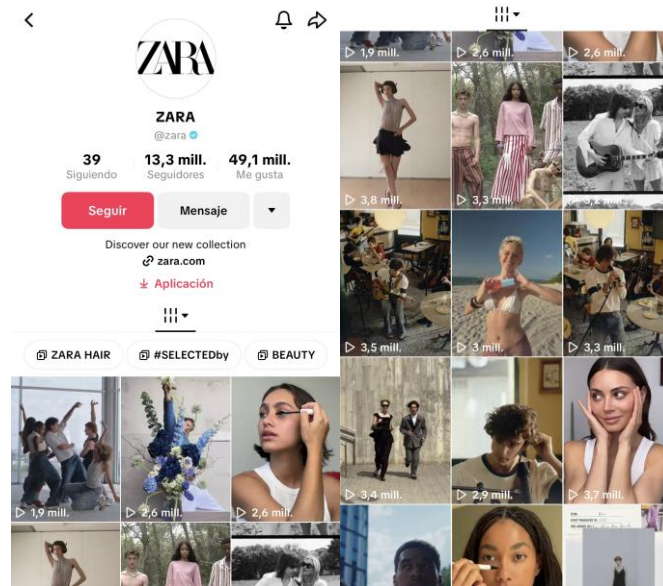


Figure 5.2: Zara's TikTok Source: [ZARA \(@zara\) | TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/@zara)

4.3. Facebook for branding

Zara's presence on Facebook serves a more functional role compared to its activity on other social media platforms. Keeping a balance between professionalism and audience interaction, the brand uses Facebook mostly as a tool for brand recognition and customer service.

Posts usually include collection announcements, lookbooks and updates on Zara's sustainability initiatives, offering followers early access to new styles and reinforcing the brand's commitment to eco-conscious values.

The content shared on Facebook tends to be more educational in nature, therefore distinguishing itself from the artistic focus of Instagram and the trend-driven style of TikTok.

An important aspect to consider is that Facebook is also a customer service hub where Zara actively answers consumer questions in the comments section, which is a method we cannot see on its other channels.

Separate pages for different countries allow Zara to provide region-specific content and localized promotions. Additionally, Zara occasionally uses Facebook to advertise in-store events or special discounts.

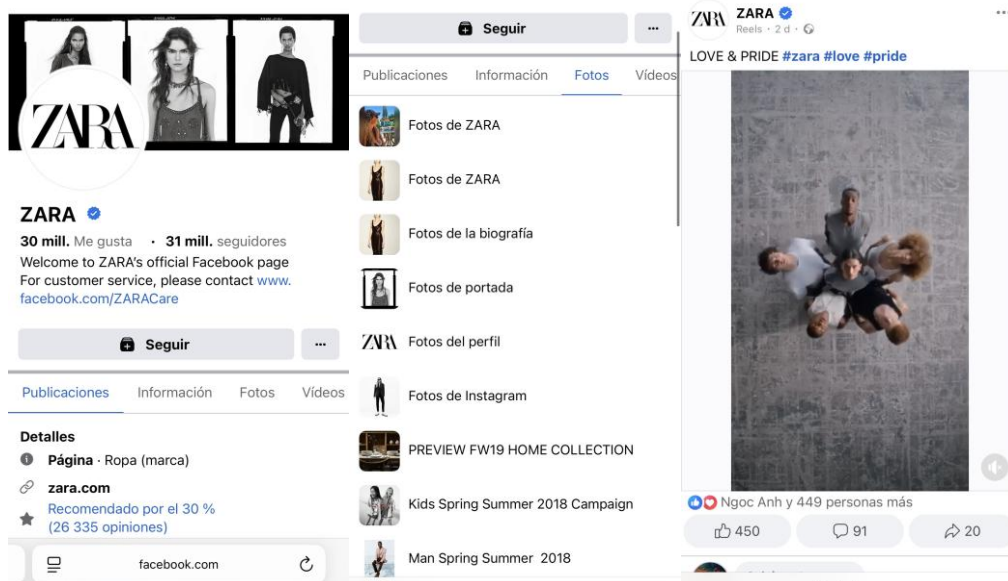


Figure 5.3: Zara's Facebook Source: [ZARA | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ZARA)

To summarize, Zara’s social media presence is different from those of other fashion companies because it avoids traditional advertising strategies. Rather than that, Zara prioritizes brand aesthetics, natural interaction and trend-driven content across platforms. This strategy has helped Zara to preserve an exclusive but highly desirable brand image, demonstrating that “less is more” in digital branding.

4.4. Strengths and weaknesses

Zara’s use of social media for branding presents several strengths and weaknesses that fit with its business model.

Its powerful visual identity is one of its primary advantages. On social media like Instagram, Zara reinforces its minimalist and trend-oriented brand image with high quality and editorial photography. This strategy helps the brand to share efficiently fashion trends, therefore supporting its fast fashion plan.

Moreover, Zara keeps global visibility through social media while spending relatively little on conventional advertising, making it a cost-effective branding tool.

Unlike many competitors, Zara avoids relying on influencers, allowing the brand to maintain a sense of exclusivity and control over its image. However, this strategy also brings limitations. Zara’s social media presence is notably impersonal, as it rarely

interacts with followers or responds to comments, resulting in weak customer engagement.

Additionally, its refusal to participate in viral content or collaborate with influencers may cause the brand to miss opportunities to connect with younger, trend-sensitive audiences, particularly on platforms like TikTok. Furthermore, the lack of interactive features, such as polls or behind-the-scenes content, limits Zara's ability to collect customer feedback through its social channels.

Overall, while Zara's social media strategy is visually effective and brand-consistent, it lacks the interactive and community-building elements seen in other fashion retailers.

4.5. Advertising

Zara's overall communication strategy includes a distinct digital marketing approach.

Unlike many fashion brands, Zara relies on organic digital communication rather than conventional paid advertising, using its website, mobile apps and social media platforms to promote its collections. The brand rarely uses paid promotions, influencer marketing or sponsored content because they prefer maintaining a controlled and minimalist image.

Emphasizing visual storytelling, Zara's digital communication uses high-quality photos, lookbooks and videos to present complete outfits and seasonal campaigns. These materials are shared mainly through Zara's owned digital channels, such as its homepage and Instagram feed, allowing the brand to maintain the full creative control and deliver a consistent message. This strategy creates exclusivity and inspires users to visit Zara's platforms regularly to discover new content.

Although this little application of direct advertising could somewhat limit reach in contrast to more assertive campaigns, it helps Zaras establish itself as a premium and stylish fast fashion brand.

As a result, Zara's digital advertising approach supports its branding through subtle yet effective communication that aligns with its fast-paced product cycle and sophisticated image.

4.6. Influencers

Zara has historically been steered clear depending on influencers for online communication. Focusing on premium visual content distributed on its own channels like its website, app and social media accounts, the company has cultivated its image: minimalist and editorial style. This approach helps the brand to keep complete control over its branding and strengthens its sense of exclusivity.

But Zara has started to work strategically with influencers, particularly on sites like Instagram and TikTok, in recent years to engage younger and more digitally active consumers. Avoiding overpromotion material, these partnerships are understated and often fit the brand's aesthetic.

Rather than collaborating with celebrities or big-budget influencer initiatives, Zara usually picks micro influencers or fashion-forward designers who match its clean and modern image.

While influencer marketing is not a core part of Zara's digital strategy, its limited and curated use of influencers reflects a shift toward more flexible and targeted communication in the digital space.

5. Digital marketing

The concept of digital marketing refers to the set of marketing practices that use digital technologies to promote products, services or brands, engage with customers and measure results in real time.

“Digital marketing involves various techniques for marketing products, primarily using the Internet. It also includes using mobile phones and traditional media like TV or radio” (Techopedia, 2024)

Moreover, Gartner defines digital marketing as “a set of integrated techniques, technologies and information that enables marketing to create new products and services, enter new markets, improve the processes needed to engage in a dynamic conversation with people who are influencers and buyers, and ultimately target, acquire and retain customers”.

In easier terms, digital marketing moves beyond traditional marketing by leveraging digital channels, such as websites, social media, search engines, email or mobile apps, to reach audiences, personalize communications, track user behavior and obtain better return-on-investment (ROI). (*What Is Digital Marketing? Benefits, Types & Examples*, s. f.-b; *What Is Digital Marketing?*, s. f.)

The evolution of digital marketing is tied to technological change, the rise of the internet, mobile devices, social media platforms and data analytics. Digital marketing “has become an essential lever for any growth strategy” because companies must reinvent the way they communicate and engage in the digital era.

In summary, by defining digital marketing I am framing how organizations (or companies like Zara) use digital communication, platforms and data-driven strategies to build their brand, engage consumers, differentiate themselves and drive competitive advantage.

5.1. The Business-To-Consumer (B2C) model

This term refers to the model of commerce and marketing in which a company sells products or services directly to individual buyers or end users, rather than to other businesses (such as the B2B model).

This model has some key features such as a large target audience, shorter decision-making process, omnichannel presence to reach consumers, and better marketing tactics like brand experience, price and design.

By defining this model, I am setting up the environment in which Zara is operating targeting end consumers selling both in-store and online and using marketing and communication strategies to know clients’ preferences, behaviors, emotions and loyalty.

5.2. Fashion digital marketing

Fashion digital marketing refers to the strategic use of digital technologies and online platforms to promote fashion brands, products and services. It encompasses a range of tactics such as email campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click

advertising, influencer collaborations, e-commerce strategies and content creation tailored for digital consumption.

At its core, fashion digital marketing aims to engage consumers, build brand awareness and drive sales in an increasingly virtual environment. This field has evolved significantly with the rise of digital transformation in retail, where fashion brands must not only maintain aesthetic and creative appeal but also leverage data-driven tools to connect with tech-savvy and socially aware consumers.

The quick change of the fashion business to digital environments emphasizes how important it is to combine marketing plans with user behavior across apps and websites.

5.2.1. Social media marketing in global fashion business

Social media marketing plays a crucial role in the global fashion business by providing a dynamic platform for brands to interact with audiences in real time and on a global scale.

Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Pinterest serve as visual-first channels ideal for showcasing fashion collections, promoting seasonal campaigns and amplifying brand narratives.

In a worldwide context, social media enables fashion companies to transcend geographical barriers, allowing even emerging designers to reach international audiences without the need for a physical retail presence.

Additionally, the interactive nature of social media allows for user-generated content, influencer marketing and community building, which contribute to brand authenticity and customer loyalty.

Companies that are successful on social media create lifestyle identities that connect with their consumers in addition to advertising their goods, therefore changing consumer behavior and determining worldwide fashion trends.

5.2.2. Zara's social media marketing

Maintaining its leadership in quick fashion, Zara has successfully used digital and social media marketing. It places more emphasis on digital presence and customer experience rather than traditional marketing.

Through its highly responsive e-commerce platform, Zara offers a seamless online shopping journey complemented by features like real-time inventory updates and mobile optimization.

On social media, Zara uses a minimalist aesthetic and simple style on platforms like Instagram, letting the clothing and styling to speak for themselves, therefore strengthening its brand identity.

Although Zara does not depend on influencers, it still gains organic exposure from fashion bloggers and trendsetters who share and post Zara outfits.

Furthermore, Zara integrates data analytics and artificial intelligence into its digital strategy to understand customer preferences and optimize product availability both online and in physical stores. This hybrid approach, mixing technology with brand-focused visual storytelling, is an example of how Zara uses digital tools to maintain relevance and drive global fashion influence.

6. Consumer behavior and shopping experience

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), **consumer behavior** is “the behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs.”

In the same way, Kotler and Keller (2016) define it as “the study of how individuals, groups and organizations select, buy, use and dispose of goods, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants.”

Understanding consumer buying behavior is essential for Zara because it helps them to design more effective marketing strategies, develop products that reach customer expectations and communicate their value propositions more successfully. This

knowledge allows Zara to anticipate market trends and to build stronger relationships with their target audience.

Consumer behavior is influenced by a wide range of factors that can be classified into cultural, social, personal and psychological categories (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

- Cultural factors such as values, beliefs, customs and traditions that shape the way individuals perceive products and make decisions. Culture determines what is considered desirable, appropriate or prestigious to consume.
- Social factors refer to the influence that other people exert on individual's decisions. Consumers are a part of a broader social environment that affects their choices. Key components of the social factor include family, roles and status or reference groups.
- Personal factors which include age, occupation, lifestyle and economic situation. For instance, a young professional's buying behavior may differ significantly from that of a retired individual, even if they have the same culture.
- Psychological factors like motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes. They can also determine how consumers interpret marketing messages and make purchasing decisions.

The social factor, especially the role of reference groups, is increasingly relevant in today's consumer environment. In an era dominated by digital communication and social networking, people are usually exposed to others' consumption behaviors and opinions. This can shape their perception of brands.

To conclude, understanding consumer buying behavior is crucial for Zara. Recognizing these dynamics enables it to craft communication strategies that can emotion their target consumers.

In marketing terms, the **shopping experience** is defined as the sum of all interactions between a consumer and a brand, across multiple touchpoints that shape the customer's perception of value and satisfaction (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). These touchpoints might include advertising exposure, website navigation, interaction with staff, the purchasing process, packaging, delivery and post-purchase communication.

A positive shopping experience increases customer satisfaction and encourages them to repeat purchases. It helps to increase brand loyalty and recommendations. In turn, a negative experience can badly affect brand image.

The shopping experience is influenced by some interrelated aspects. It often identifies four main components:

1. Functional dimension: efficiency, convenience and ease with which a consumer can complete a purchase, such as website usability, store layout or payment options.
2. Emotional dimension: feelings and emotions evoked during the buying process. “Experiences that create positive emotions—such as joy, excitement, or a sense of belonging—tend to strengthen the connection between the customer and the brand” (Schmitt, 1999).
3. Sensory dimensions: visuals, sounds, scents, textures, etc. play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and memories. In physical stores, design, lighting and music contribute to the sensory experience. In digital environments, visual design, interface aesthetics and audiovisual content perform a similar role.
4. Social dimension: consumers often value experiences that involve interaction with sales staff, other customers or digital communities. Social connection fosters trust and emotional attachment to the brand. The rise of social media has increased this, allowing consumers to share experiences and influence others’ purchase decisions.

Nowadays, building **shopping experiences in the digital environment** are crucial for brands. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), the customer journey in digital contexts involves multiple stages and platforms—such as websites, mobile applications, social networks and email communication—requiring a coherent and integrated brand experience across all channels (known as omnichannel marketing).

For brands such as Zara, this means integrating online and in-store experiences seamlessly, allowing customers to browse online, check stock in nearby stores, order from mobile devices and return items in-store. This omnichannel strategy reinforces the brand’s image.

Zara is known for offering a fast, trendy and smooth shopping experience, both in stores and online.

6.1. In-store shopping experience

Zara's in-store experience is designed to reflect the brand's clean, modern and fashion-forward identity while remaining accessible to a wide audience. The physical stores typically feature minimalist interiors with white walls, bright lighting and a carefully organized layout, creating a luxurious atmosphere that allows the clothing to stand out despite the brand's affordable pricing.

Rather than organizing items by category, Zara uses "fashion stories" to display coordinated outfits placing tops, pants, shoes, and accessories together, which helps customers visualize complete looks and encourages impulse buying.

With fresh arrivals appearing regularly, consumers are motivated to visit often sneaking the newest styles, a main component of Zara's retail approach. Zara's limited stock for each item, encouraging a "buy now" attitude because popular pieces may not be restocked, adds to the urgency of this feeling.

Additionally, Zara emphasizes efficiency in the shopping experience through quick checkout processes, easy returns and self-checkout stations in some locations, all of which contribute to a seamless and customer-friendly retail environment.



Figure 7.1: Zara's in-store Source: [Así es por dentro la nueva macrotienda de Zara en Valencia](#)

6.2. Online shopping experience

Zara's digital shopping platforms, including its website and mobile app, are designed to reflect the brand's sleek aesthetic while offering a seamless user experience. Both platforms are clean, visually appealing and intuitive, allowing customers to easily browse new arrivals, curated collections and lookbooks.

In line with its fast-fashion model, Zara also provides efficient delivery services in many countries, with orders often arriving within just a few days. In select cities, the brand has introduced innovative features such as virtual try-on tools and "try at home" services, enabling customers to order items, test them in the comfort of their homes and return anything that doesn't suit their preferences.

The return process is streamlined and customer-friendly, with options to initiate returns directly through the app or by visiting a physical store, ensuring convenience across all stages of the digital shopping journey.

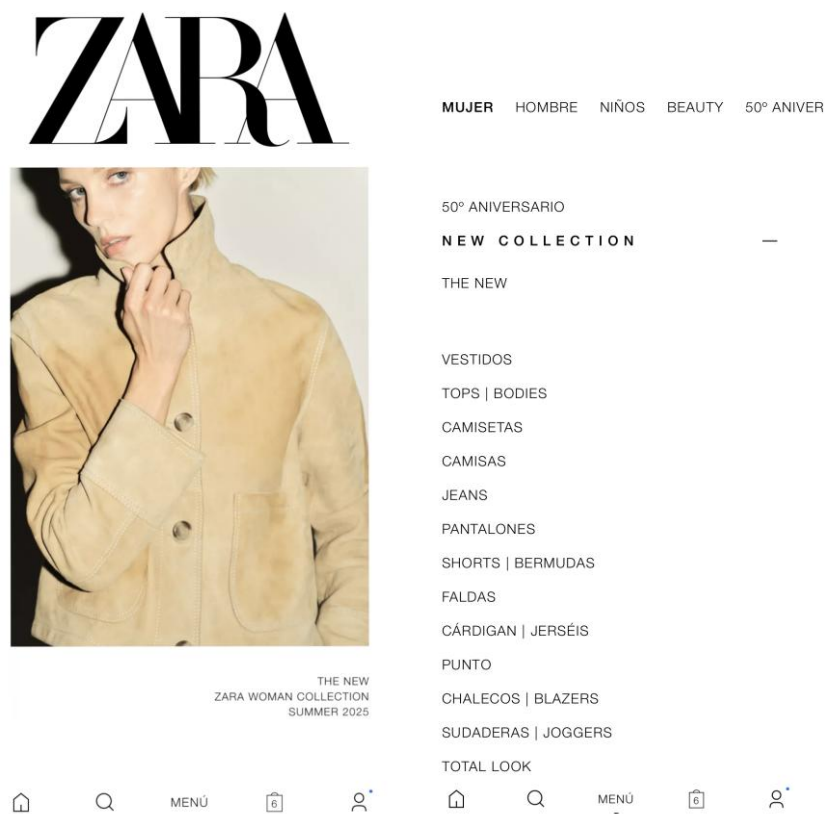


Figure 7.2: Zara's mobile application Source: own

According to the survey carried out (**Annex I. Survey**), consumers positively highlighted the website's good design and layout, which helped them to decide if they would buy again.

6.3. Zara's website and app

Offering a clean, user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing buying experience, Zara's website and mobile app are vital in sustaining its fast fashion model.

Both platforms have a minimalistic design meant to match the brand's contemporary image by emphasizing well shot images and styled clothing over simple product photographs.

Navigation is simple and intuitive, with clear categories and fast loading pages, which encourage quick browsing and impulse buying.

The mobile app is optimized for on-the-go users, featuring swipe-based navigation, mobile payments and store integration tools such as "click and collect" and in-store availability checks. Zara also uses basic personalization tools, like product recommendations and saved favorites to engage customers and increase conversion.

Additionally, through features like the "Join Life" section, the brand communicates its efforts in sustainability, giving customers access to information about eco-friendly materials and responsible production.

Overall, Zara's digital platforms enhance customer experience and reinforce its identity as a fast, fashionable, and forward-thinking brand.

7. Fast fashion

Fast fashion is a retail strategy whereby clothes are quickly and cheaply produced and sold so that inexpensive clothes may be created from the newest runway or celebrity fashions within a few weeks.

Unlike conventional fashion cycles that debut fresh lines periodically, fast fashion companies present new designs every few days, therefore motivating customers to buy frequently because of the ongoing arrival of new products. This quick production method, however, causes considerable questions.

Often depending on low-quality materials, underpaid labor in underdeveloped nations and environmentally harmful methods that consume excessive water and energy to create enormous quantities of textile waste.

One of the pioneers and most major companies in the fast fashion sector is Zara. Renowned for its capacity to create, produce and deliver fresh designs in as little as two to three weeks, it changed the face of fashion. The brand generates a sense of urgency among customers by producing limited amounts of each product, hence encouraging quick purchases. Zara also restocks stores twice a week and makes numerous items close to its European headquarters, hence enabling more flexibility and speed.

Inspiring other top companies including H&M, Forever 21 and Shein to follow comparable models, this novel approach transformed the worldwide fashion scene.

Fast fashion has enabled widespread access to fashionable clothes, but it has also caused increasing criticism for its adverse social and environmental effects.

Growing knowledge of these problems is driving more customers toward slower fashion solutions emphasizing sustainability, ethical manufacture and long-term value.

8. Zara vs competitors

“Competitor analysis is a strategic research method companies use to identify, evaluate, and understand their current and potential competitors within the market. It’s an essential business strategy component and instrumental in understanding the industry landscape.” (The Strategy Story. 2023, 31st May)

8.1. Zara vs Inditex brands

8.1.1. Zara vs Mango

Zara and Mango are two of the most well-known in the fast fashion industry, both operating on a business model based around delivering trendy and affordable clothing at high speed.

While both brands share this basic approach, Zara is especially known for its unmatched speed in translating runway trends into retail-ready pieces, often achieving this in only a

few weeks. This agility gives Zara a competitive advantage by always offering new styles that appeal to current fashion movements.

In terms of product range, both appeal to men, women and children, offering a wide range of clothing and accessories. However, Zara's collection is especially large and often updated, providing customers more variety of choices and access to the latest fashion. Mango, although also trend-focused, usually arranges smaller seasonal collections that emphasize coherence and timelessness.

Pricing strategies also vary between the two. On the one hand, Zara's more diverse price range includes both inexpensive products and higher-priced goods that reflect more sophisticated designs or materials. On the other hand, Mango's pricing approach stays steady and is generally somewhat more expensive, therefore highlighting quality and a more elegant design.



Figure 9.1: Mango's in-store Source: [Mango releva a Habitat en la Diagonal de Barcelona con la apertura de un nuevo 'flagship' | Modaes](#)

This difference is also reflected in their target audiences. Although both companies appeal to fashion-conscious buyers looking for affordability, Mango often attracts a slightly older age group favoring sophisticated, traditional looks. Compared to Zara, which appeals across several age groups and fashion tastes.

Each brand's stylistic identity separates them even more. Often striking and ever-changing to mirror both understated and lavish aspects, Zaras collections are runway-inspired and trend-driven. On the other hand, Mango gravitates toward a classic, Mediterranean-inspired look highlighting stylish, sophisticated designs that fit with a timeless sense of fashion.

A critical component of Zara's success lies in its supply chain management. As part of the Inditex group, Zara benefits from being one of the most responsive and integrated supply chains in the fashion industry, enabling it to move from design to retail in just a few weeks. Though Mango also operates a fast supply chain, it generally lacks the same level of speed and flexibility that distinguishes Zara's operational model.

With flagship stores in the best cities and an important e-commerce presence, both companies have a sizable worldwide retail footprint. Acknowledging the increasing significance of digital retail, Zara and Mango have invested mostly in online channels to improve customer access and convenience.

In terms of sustainability, both companies have started programs meant at solving the moral and environmental problems linked with quick fashion. Mango has also acted in this direction, unveiling its Mango Committed line, which highlights environmentally friendly materials and ethical manufacturing methods. Inditex, the parent business of Zara, has pledged to use 100% sustainable fabrics by 2025 and to lessen the environmental effect of its activities. Although both companies are progressing, sustainability is still an area of continual growth as they react to rising consumer knowledge and industry pressure.

8.1.2. Zara vs Massimo Dutti

Both, owned by the Inditex Group, Zara and Massimo Dutti, serve quite different market segments by means of their business models, brand identities, and customer experiences under the umbrella of fast fashion.

Massimo Dutti takes a more refined and deliberate approach, concentrating on classic elegance, superior materials and sophisticated design, while Zara is noted for its unequalled speed in bringing the newest runway and street-style trends into stores within weeks.

Constant collection updates keep Zara abreast of the ever-shifting tastes of a broad population. It thrives on fast product turnover and trend-driven clothing. Massimo Dutti stresses craftsmanship, subtle detailing and a slower paced, curated seasonal collection strategy, placing itself closer to inexpensive luxury.

Though Zara also has a children's line, both brands provide a wide range of men's and women's clothing and accessories. Zara's large and always changing clothing guarantees that consumers find anything new with every visit. Though trend-aware too, Massimo Dutti has a smaller, more unified product line targeting wardrobe basics and traditional shapes that draw to consumers looking for timeless elegance above fleeting trends.

Regarding pricing, Zara offers a range including inexpensive essentials and more costly statement items showing design or material complexity. But Massimo Dutti positions itself at a consistently higher price point, mirroring its emphasis on quality, premium fabrics and an affluent shopping experience. This pricing difference fits their intended audiences: Zara appeals to a broad age group from teenagers to adults, all looking for stylish clothing at affordable costs; and Massimo Dutti targets a more mature, professional audience, usually people in their late 20s and older, who place quality, elegance and a more traditional wardrobe top importance.

Stylistically, Massimo Dutti is distinguished by a more understated and elegant aesthetic, frequently described as modern-classic or urban chic, which imitates runway trends and reflects both minimalist and opulent styles. Zara is known for its daring, fashionable designs that emphasize wearability and elegance above trendiness, its collections feature neutral color schemes, elegant tailoring and classic clothing.

Inditex gives them shared strength in supply chain management, but Zara stands out with its leading agility. From design to shelf in as little as two to three weeks, Zara's logistics let the brand swiftly respond to consumer need and shifting fads by means of extremely quick turnaround. Though Massimo Dutti also benefits from Inditex's effective infrastructure, its production cycle is more traditional and calculated, fitting its brand philosophy of quality above speed.



Figure 9.2: Massimo Dutti outside in-store Source: [MASSIMO DUTTI | Gran Via 2](#)

With flagship stores in important fashion centers and a progressively aggressive e-commerce plan, Zara and Massimo Dutti have a significant worldwide footprint. Both brands have invested in smooth internet shopping experiences, mobile applications and integration of internet and in-store services to improve customer convenience as they see the increasing relevance of digital retail.

Regarding sustainability, both companies are moving toward more ethical apparel. Through Inditex, Zara has pledged to use 100% sustainable textiles by 2025 and lower the environmental impact of its manufacturing operations. Massimo Dutti also takes part in Inditex's environmental strategy by including eco-efficient stores and more ethical sourcing methods. Still, as consumer expectations on ethical manufacturing and environmental responsibility keep increasing, sustainability is still a rising field for both companies.

Together, Zara and Massimo Dutti present two different perspectives on contemporary fashion under the same business umbrella. One quick, daring and trend-driven, and the other sophisticated, traditional and quality-driven; thereby providing customers with a wide range of styles, price and experience inside the fast fashion market worldwide.

According to the survey (**Annex I. Survey**), people think that Mango, Stradivarius and H&M have similar digital communication, and they do not notice a lot of differences

between them. This happens because they are all competing in similar range of prices and quality.

8.2. Zara vs Spanish brands

Nowadays, driven by a mix of cultural pride, rising awareness about sustainability and the distinctive aesthetic values Spanish fashion companies provide consumer interest in them has recently increased significantly.

Many consumers are becoming drawn to Spanish brands since they represent a balance between ethics, quality and fashion. Spanish brands stand out for their authenticity, craftsmanship and distinctive identity in a worldwide fashion environment defined by mass manufacturing and homogenization.

The increasing consumer demand for honesty and responsibility in fashion is one of the main drivers of this change. Many Spanish companies, particularly young ones, give local production, ethical working conditions and sustainable materials priority.

For instance, companies like Laagam, Bimani and Paloma Wool support regional businesses and cut their carbon footprint by advertising limited collections produced in Spain or in European nations. This makes a younger generation of customers more aware of the source and manufacturing of their clothing.

Moreover, Spanish fashion provides a distinctive mix of traditional Mediterranean design and contemporary creativity. Consumers are more and more drawn to the refined but simple designs usually found on Spanish labels, which often stress quality above quantity. Many modern customers' lifestyles reflect the minimalist elegance, warm color palettes and easy shapes linked with Spanish clothing, particularly those looking for alternatives to the rapid trends of worldwide fast fashion.

Furthermore, the emergence of online tools has enabled Spanish businesses to connect with more people free from depending only on conventional retail. Social media has been crucial in presenting the values, aesthetics and narratives behind these companies.

Spanish fashion is growing more appealing in the worldwide market of today because of this cultural link together with ethical consciousness and distinctive design.

8.2.1. Zara vs Laagam

LAAGAM is a Spanish fashion brand, which symbolizes a fresh wave of slow, ethical and digital-first clothing. It is based on the philosophy of aware consumption as opposed to Zaras quick fashion model, which emphasizes speed, volume and trend duplication.

Emphasizing quality, transparency and sustainability over mass manufacture, the brand creates limited-edition collections in little batches, typically produced locally in Spain and Portugal. Designed for women who want to express their individuality while making ethical fashion choices, Laagam's aesthetic is daring, uplifting and modern. While Zara provides to a wide audience with always changing, trend-driven collections at reasonable costs, Laagam seeks a small market mostly millennial and Gen Z women who value ethical behavior, inventiveness and brand storytelling.

Mostly operating online, it draws consumers by means of vivid social media narrative and influencer partnerships, therefore building a sense of belonging and purpose around its brand principles.

Laagam emphasizes creating a loyal, engaged audience via openness, slow fashion concepts and relevant digital material, in contrast to Zara's global retail presence and mass-market strategy.

Its model demonstrates that style, ethics and sustainability can coexist, thereby questioning the fast fashion sector.

Conclusion

Zara, as the flagship brand of the Inditex Group, uses digital communication as a strategic tool to build its brand identity and strengthen its position in the global fashion industry. Throughout the study, it has become evident that Zara's success lies in its ability to combine innovation, speed and customer-centered strategies within both physical and digital environments.

The theoretical framework established the foundations for understanding key concepts such as communication, digital marketing and consumer behavior. Communication is defined not only as the exchange of information but as a relational and strategic process that creates value and trust between the brand and its audience. The evolution from traditional to digital communication marked a turning point for the fashion industry, allowing Zara to engage directly with global consumers through interactive and real-time platforms.

The analysis of social media for branding demonstrated that Zara maintains a distinctive and minimalist online presence. On platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook, its content reflects its sophisticated and modern aesthetic, prioritizing visual storytelling over advertising. While this approach reinforces brand exclusivity, it also limits interaction and consumer engagement when compared to more dynamic competitors.

The section on digital marketing highlighted the company's use of data-driven strategies, personalization and seamless user experiences. Zara's marketing practices fit within the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) model, focusing on direct engagement with individual customers through omnichannel platforms. The integration of online and offline touchpoints, from its website and mobile app to its in-store experience, illustrates Zara's commitment to innovation and convenience in a highly competitive market.

The study also analyzed consumer behavior and the shopping experience, emphasizing the emotional, sensory and social dimensions that influence purchasing decisions. Zara effectively creates both physical and digital environments that reflect its brand identity (minimalist, elegant and trend-oriented) encouraging impulse purchases and loyalty through limited collections and fast product turnover. Its digital shopping experience stands out for its intuitive design, mobile optimization and alignment with contemporary consumer expectations.

However, Zara's success in the fast fashion model also raises questions about sustainability and ethics. Although Inditex has introduced initiatives such as the "Join Life" collection and commitments to using sustainable fabrics, the company continues to face scrutiny regarding environmental impact and labor practices. This reflects the broader tension between profitability and responsibility that defines the fast fashion industry today.

The comparison with competitors such as Mango, Massimo Dutti and Laagam revealed how Zara differentiates itself through speed, scale and design consistency. While Mango emphasizes timeless elegance and Massimo Dutti targets a more mature, luxury-oriented audience, Zara's competitive advantage lies in its agility, accessibility and ability to interpret global trends quickly. Contrariwise, new Spanish brands like Laagam represent an emerging alternative, prioritizing sustainability and ethical production over massive consumption, a direction that may shape the future of fashion retail.

In conclusion, this research has shown that Zara's strength lies in its capacity to adapt, integrating digital innovation, consumer insights and global reach while maintaining a coherent and recognizable identity. Yet, the brand's future success will depend on its ability to evolve toward more sustainable and transparent practices without losing the speed and creativity that have defined its global influence.

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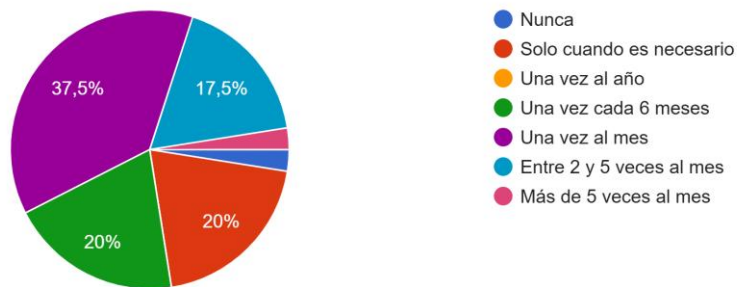
Annexes

Annex I. Survey

This appendix shows the survey that was conducted in order to draw conclusions and complement the theoretical concepts mentioned above. The survey is in Spanish because, given the nationality of the respondents, it was essential for them to be able to answer it.

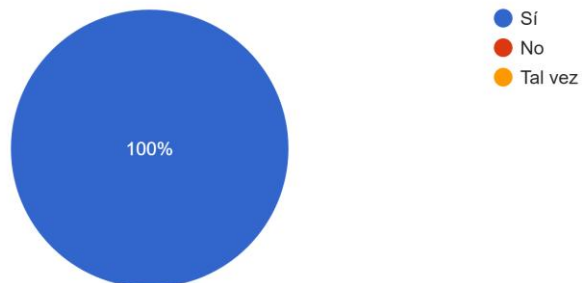
¿Con qué frecuencia compras en tiendas de moda (online y/o físicas)?

80 respuestas



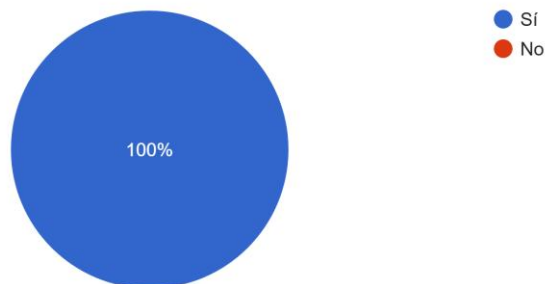
¿Conoces la marca de Zara?

80 respuestas



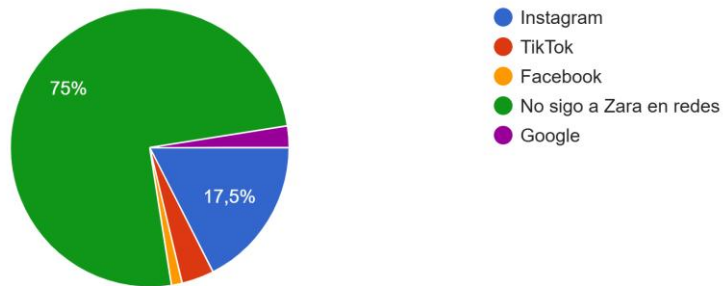
¿Consumes redes sociales?

80 respuestas

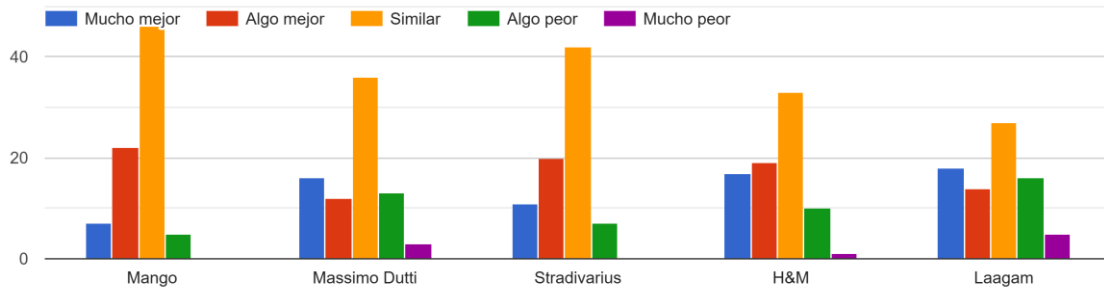


¿En qué redes sociales sigues a Zara?

80 respuestas

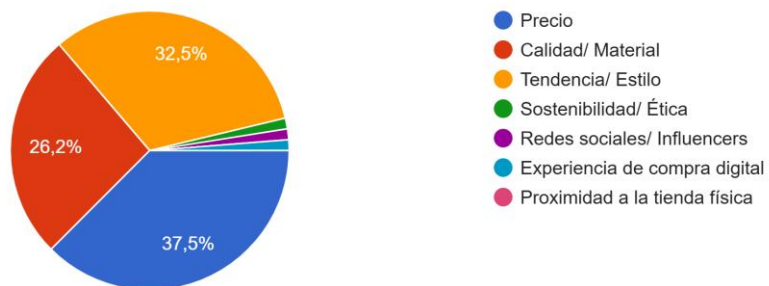


¿Cómo percibes la comunicación digital de Zara comparando con...? [La comunicación digital de Zara en comparación con la de Mango es "Mucho mejor"]



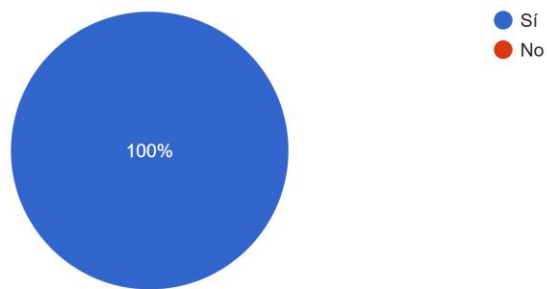
Factor que más te influye a la hora de comprar en una tienda de moda

80 respuestas



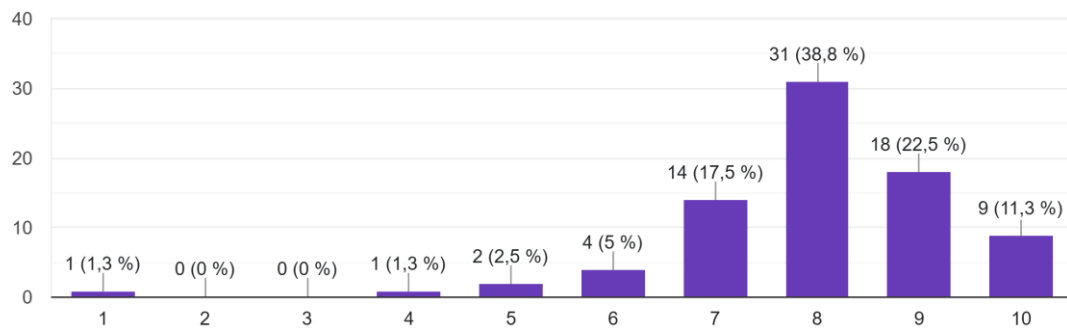
¿Has comprado alguna vez en Zara?

80 respuestas



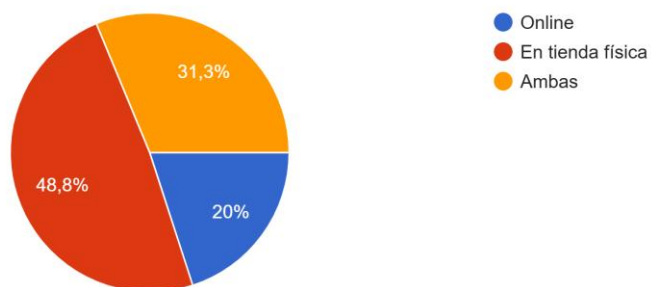
Del 1 al 10, ¿Cuánto recomendarías comprar en Zara?

80 respuestas



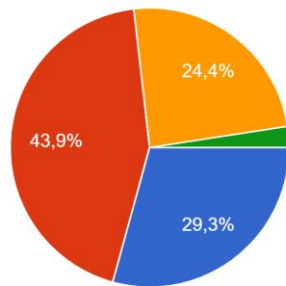
Generalmente en Zara compro ...

80 respuestas



¿Qué aspecto destacarías positivamente de la compra online de Zara?

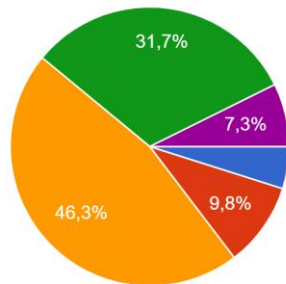
41 respuestas



- Rapidez en el envío
- Buen diseño y disposición de la web o aplicación
- Proceso de devolución sencillo
- Calidad de las fotos

¿Con qué frecuencia realizas compras online en Zara?

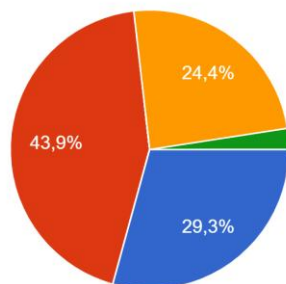
41 respuestas



- Nunca
- Casi nunca
- A veces
- Frecuentemente
- Muy frecuentemente

¿Qué aspecto destacarías positivamente de la compra online de Zara?

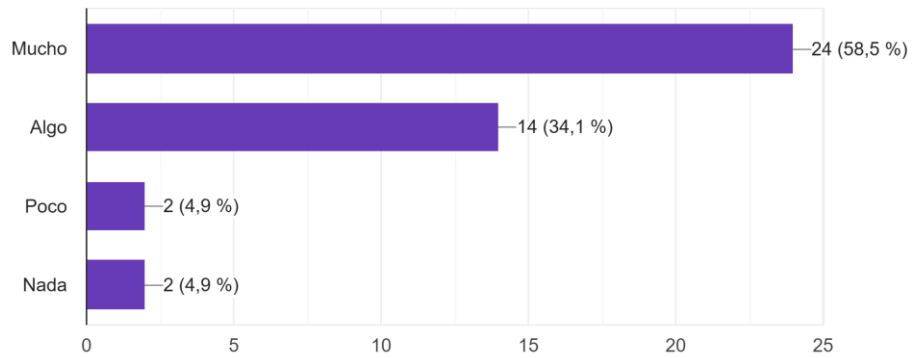
41 respuestas



- Rapidez en el envío
- Buen diseño y disposición de la web o aplicación
- Proceso de devolución sencillo
- Calidad de las fotos

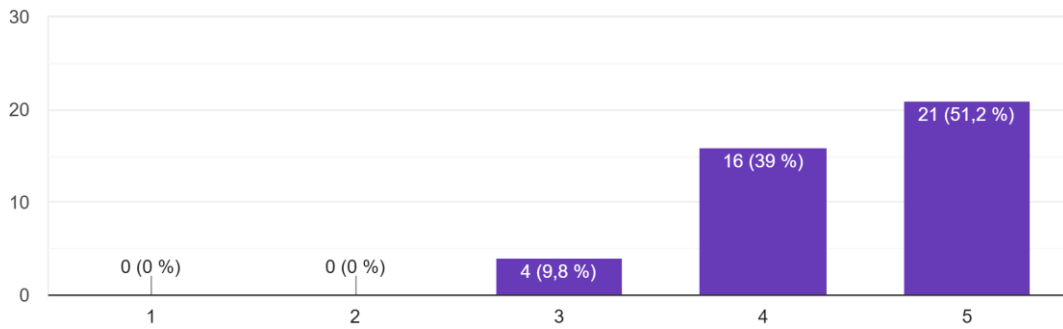
¿Esta experiencia, positiva o negativa, influye en tu decisión de volver a comprar online en Zara?

41 respuestas



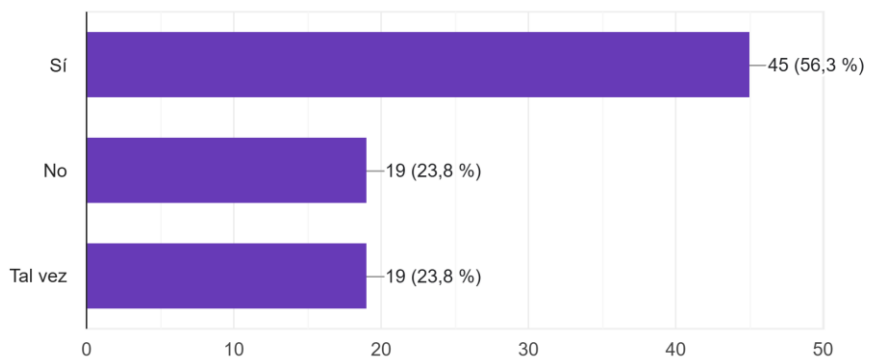
¿Cómo valorarías la facilidad de uso de la web o app de Zara?

41 respuestas



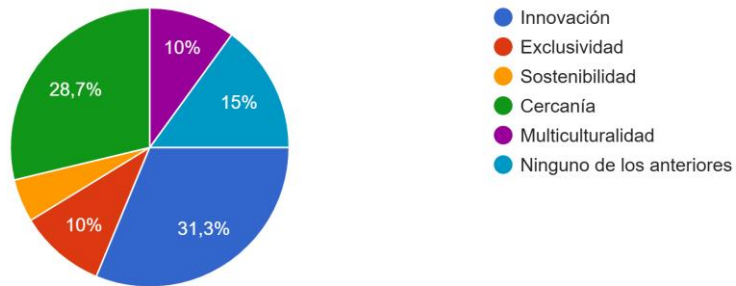
¿Crees que la presencia digital de Zara (web, redes sociales, app) mejora tu percepción de la marca?

80 respuestas



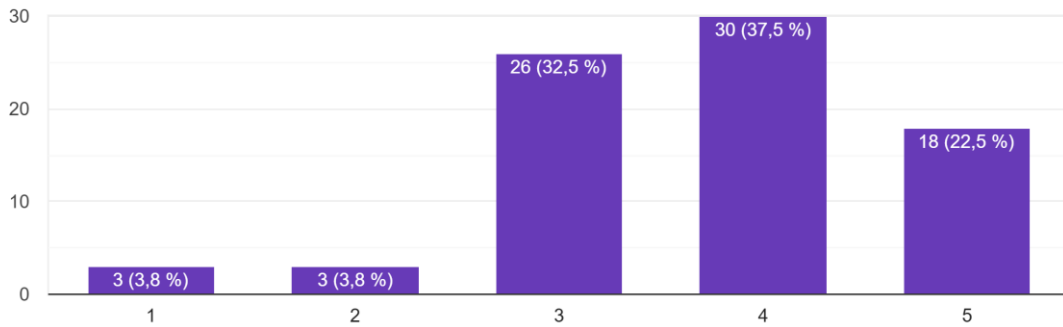
¿Qué valor asocias a Zara gracias a su comunicación digital?

80 respuestas



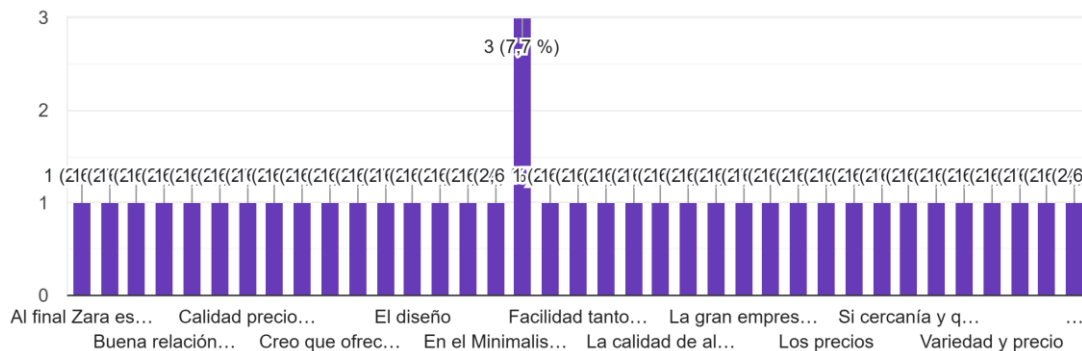
¿Crees que la comunicación digital de Zara (redes sociales, web, campañas) refuerza su identidad de marca (minimalista, moderna, exclusiva)?

80 respuestas



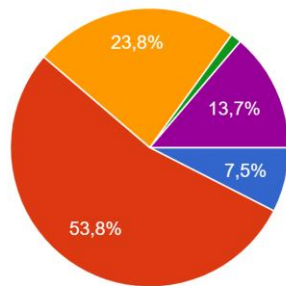
¿Qué diferencia a Zara de sus competidores, en tu opinión?

39 respuestas



Edad

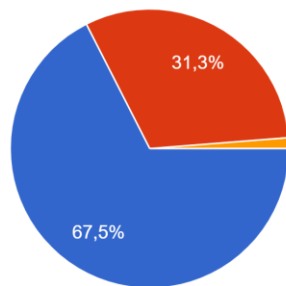
80 respuestas



- Menor de 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 o más

Género

80 respuestas



- Mujer
- Hombre
- Prefiero no decirlo