

Behind Zara's success: An analysis of brand marketing and management in fast fashion

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Abstract. This paper focuses on an in-depth analysis of the fashion retail brand Zara, starting with a detailed introduction of its brand background, history, and main features. Zara, a brand of the Inditex Group, is known for its quick response to market trends and for offering high-quality and fashionable clothing products. This article explores how Zara has had a significant impact on the global fashion industry with its unique brand positioning. In addition, the thesis delves into its market positioning and its strategies to stand out in the global fashion market through its fast fashion model. It focuses on Zara's supply chain management, design innovation, marketing strategy, etc., as well as an in-depth study of its target consumer groups and market environment. In addition, it analyses how Zara has increased its brand awareness and influence in the digital age through brand communication, social media marketing, and online-offline integration. Taking Zara, one of the world's most famous fast fashion brands, as an example, this article analyses Zara's successful experience in brand management and marketing strategy, which provides a useful reference and inspiration for the development of fashion retail brands.

1 Introduction

Zara has experienced a rapid rise in the fast fashion sector, characterised by its "speed, decisiveness and precision" [1]. Zara has become a model for the fast fashion industry by resisting the widespread trend in the sector to move fast fashion production to low-cost countries. Since its founding in Spain in 1975, Zara has grown rapidly to become the flagship shop chain of Spanish tycoon Amancio Ortega's Inditex Group, and the largest and most international brands under the Inditex umbrella and has now become one of the world's leading fashion retailers [2]. Zara's success cannot be separated from its unique Zara's success cannot be attributed to its unique business model and effective supply chain management, which allows the brand to respond quickly to market demand and take its place in the highly competitive fashion market.

The aim of this article is to take an in-depth look at the secret of Zara's brand success, analysing in detail its unique business model, its marketing strategies, and the huge impact these strategies have had on the brand's value and market position. First, this paper will review Zara's brand background and development history, explore its unique business model and marketing strategies, and compare it to other fast fashion brands to reveal what makes Zara unique in the market. This paper will then analyse the current challenges facing the Zara brand and explore its future direction. Finally, based on the in-depth research and analysis of the Zara brand, this paper will provide valuable insights and suggestions to other fashion brands to help them stand out in the competitive market.

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2 Brand positioning as fast fashion

Zara is inseparable from Inditex's vision, which is to give customers beautiful and inspirational apparel while taking responsibility for the future of the world and people. Inditex's mission is to develop bold and original fashion based on innovation, creativity, and risk-taking. Zara's goal is to provide inspiring, always stylish, and responsible fashion for everyone, no matter where they are [3].

Zara's positioning is mainly fast fashion. Fast fashion brands are characterised by fast product updates, designs that follow international brands, and affordable prices. Its product line includes womenswear, menswear, childrenswear and accessories, shoes, and hats in each branch. This brand emphasises the combination of popular fashion and affordable prices, responding quickly to market demand and keenly capturing current fashion trends, with rapidly updated fashion styles, reasonable prices, and high-quality products. This responsiveness to the market enables ZARA to always remain at the forefront of fashion. At the same time, Zara also focuses on product diversity and product quality, providing a variety of products, not only allowing consumers to choose according to their own needs and preferences to showcase their own style but also to ensure that consumers enjoy a high-quality consumer experience when shopping.

As brands play a distinctive and important role in today's marketplace, the importance of branding and positioning strategies for different organisations has increased. This is particularly crucial in the fashion industry because, according to Tungate, clothing and accessories convey a person's feelings, self-perception, and desired treatment from others [3]. In one interview, fashion photographer Vincent Peters stated, "You buy identity, not clothes." In order for identification to be effective, it is crucial to take into account not just the product but also every component of the brand, such as communication and visual identity. As Tungate says, "The key to the success of a fashion brand is not just the clothes, but the 'universe' that surrounds it". With this in mind, it is natural to be interested in the strategy of one of the biggest fashion brands [3].

3 Effective marketing for brand success

In his book *Fashion*, Georg Simmel gives this interpretation of fashion: fashion can be seen as a way of following and imitating a certain paradigm, which satisfies people's psychological need to seek adaptability and identity in society. When an item is subject to rapid changes in fashion, people tend to have a greater demand for products similar to the fashion trend but at a more affordable price.

3.1 Rapid response to market changes

Zara, the flagship brand of the Inditex Group, stands out in the fashion world for its unique strategy of rapid design and manufacturing. According to Inditex's founder, Amancio Ortega, the aim is to democratise fashion by offering the latest mid-quality fashion at affordable prices [4]. It is able to launch new designer products in a very short time thanks to its sensitivity and responsiveness to market trends. Zara's team of designers closely follows global fashion trends, incorporates the latest design elements into its products, and markets them quickly through an efficient supply chain system.

3.2 Effective supply chain management

Rapid change, adaptability and responsiveness, and an agile supply chain are the cornerstones of the fast fashion business [5].

Zara's supply chain management focuses on responding quickly to market changes. It is unique in the industry for its exceptional fast fashion strategy, thanks to its team of more than 200 professional designers with an average age of just 25 years. These designers are based in fashion capitals around the world, such as Paris, Milan, New York, and Tokyo, and are always on top of the latest fashion trends to ensure that Zara is always on the cutting edge. Zara's three main product lines - womenswear, menswear, and childrenswear - are formed by a "trinity" of designers, sourcing specialists, and

product developers. The "trinity" of designers, sourcing specialists, and product developers is the creative team [6]. In this team, designers are responsible for capturing fashion trends and designing new products, sourcing specialists are responsible for finding quality raw materials and suppliers worldwide, and marketing specialists are responsible for analysing market demand and sales data. The creative team focuses on carefully interpreting fashion show trends for the mass market. This efficient and collaborative team ensures that the entire process, from design inspiration to product sourcing, is closely interlinked, greatly increasing product development speed and marketing efficiency.

Zara's designers attend ready-to-wear trade fairs and fashion shows in Paris, New York, London, and Milan, consult luxury brands' collection catalogues, and work with shop managers to create the initial sketches of a collection, which begin almost nine months before the start of the season [6]. Merchandisers plan manufacturing needs and timelines to guarantee that the first batch of merchandise reaches stores at the beginning of the selling season. Product developers are essential mediators between retailers and designers. The role of Zara's design team goes beyond strictly defined design. This rapid design and production model gives Zara a strong competitive edge in the market. Compared to traditional fashion brands, Zara can adapt more quickly to market changes and meet consumers' immediate needs. At the same time, this strategy also reduces the risk of stock accumulation, making Zara more flexible and efficient in inventory management. Through constant innovation, Zara has succeeded in attracting a large number of fashion-conscious and quality-conscious consumers and has become a leader in the global fashion retail market.

The core of Inditex's business model is vertical integration [7]. With the help of sourcing offices in Barcelona and Hong Kong, as well as buyers at headquarters, it purchases fabrics, other inputs, and finished products from external suppliers, puts all production, logistics, distribution, and retail activities under its own control, and establishes stable, long-term relationships with suppliers worldwide, thus ensuring a stable supply of high-quality raw materials, fabrics, and other inputs. In addition, Zara has adopted decentralised inventory management and global sourcing strategies to optimise its supply chain management. Through an advanced logistics system, products are transported quickly from distribution centres in each region to shops around the world. It can respond quickly to orders from different regions and reduce costs and delays caused by transportation, achieving efficient inventory management [7]. At the same time, the company also adopts the "direct delivery" model, delivering products directly from the factory to the shops, avoiding the intermediate links of stock accumulation and cost wastage. This global sourcing strategy not only improves the stability of the supply chain but also allows Zara to take advantage of price differences in different regions to reduce costs.

3.3 Consumer service

Interaction and feedback with consumers are crucial parts of Zara's brand marketing strategy. Consumer opinions and suggestions are collected through various channels to better understand market needs and consumer preferences. As Georg Simmel said, consumers tend to prefer products that are in line with current trends and offer them more choices in terms of price.

Zara, as a world-renowned fast fashion brand, has built its success on this deep consumer insight. Its unique business model not only strengthens consumer brand loyalty but also captures market trends more accurately, optimises product design and production processes, and improves product competitiveness in the marketplace.

4 New developments under digitalisation

4.1 Omni-channel

In today's digital age, brand management strategies and communication methods are undergoing unprecedented changes. For fast fashion to connect and reach consumers, digital brand management

is crucial. Fast fashion firms may effectively convey their brand value and keep consumers informed about their constantly evolving goods by utilizing digital brand communication. By creating a fully functional online mall and actively utilising social media platforms, Zara's online and offline integration not only provides consumers with a convenient shopping experience but also increases the brand's exposure and influence through interaction with consumers.

4.2 Digital media marketing

As the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated digital transformation, the world's entry into the digital space has also changed the way fast fashion brands communicate [8]. In 2021, fast-fashion brands are also harnessing new information and communication technologies to conquer high-potential markets, in many cases by deploying online stores. During the COVID-19 crisis, Zara has strengthened its digital presence, demonstrating vision and innovation in creating digital channels. Zara now offers online ordering, in-store pickup, and online shopping.

First, Zara has adopted a strategy of personalised recommendations and targeted advertising in its digital marketing. Its official website and mobile apps not only showcase the latest fashion collections but also personalise product recommendations by using advanced data analytics to collect and deeply analyse consumers' shopping data to meet their unique preferences and needs. This personalised shopping experience not only increases consumer satisfaction but also builds Zara's loyalty in the marketplace. For example, Zara's minimalist web design creates a unique shopping atmosphere. The clear and concise textual information on the site provides users with detailed product information. At the same time, the fully functional and user-friendly online shop further underlines Zara's customer-centric approach and offers consumers a positive and enjoyable digital brand experience. Secondly, Zara actively uses social media platforms to increase brand exposure and user engagement by regularly posting high-quality visual content and collaborations with fashion influencers. User-generated content on these platforms also contributes significantly to Zara's brand communication. With 61.78 million followers, Zara's official Instagram account has posted 4620 times since it was created. Posts are published with strong colors that convey a contemporary feel, brand-values and mission-focused headlines, and visual content that highlights the personality, style, and branded goods of the brand [8]. In addition, Zara focuses on improving the customer experience. It focuses on combining physical offline shops and online sales channels and adopts a rapid response production model that tightly integrates product design, production, and sales. Consumers can browse products online, place purchase orders, try them on, and pick them up in physical shops. At the same time, Zara attaches great importance to online customer service and establishes a multi-channel customer service system. It ensures that problems encountered by customers in the purchasing process can be resolved in a timely manner, and offers consumers advice, after-sales service, and other support.

5 Comparative analysis with other fashion brands

In contrast, other brands, such as HM, emphasise "the best combination of fashion and quality", and position themselves as more mainstream by offering fashionable products at affordable prices. Focused on developing basics and classics, the brand appeals to a wide range of consumers. As "green awareness" and concepts of modern environmentally friendly living take hold, people are more conscious of what they buy. People are more conscious and aware of what they buy and are increasingly concerned about how their purchases affect the planet [9]. H&M is relatively more active in terms of sustainability. HM is committed to promoting sustainable industrial development and green supply chains. Among the sustainability initiatives in its supply chain in China, it pays special attention to green fashion initiatives. It has also launched several eco-friendly projects, such as the Conscious collection, which uses organic and recycled materials such as recycled viscose fibre, and is committed to achieving 100% use of sustainable materials by 2030. HM and Zara are committed to addressing common social issues related to the environment by developing and using organic or

recycled materials and showcasing and launching eco-friendly product lines [10]. Although Zara is also progressively advancing its green agenda, it has done so relatively slowly.

Zara's digital brand management communication strategy focuses on digitisation and consumer-centric digital management. By creating robust digital channels, implementing digital marketing, optimising digital supply chain management, and improving the customer experience, Zara has achieved close interaction and effective communication between the brand and consumers, ensuring consumer satisfaction in the purchase process and greatly increasing the brand's word of mouth.

6 Conclusion

Zara has succeeded in becoming a leader in the global fashion retail market thanks to its unique brand positioning, its precise market positioning strategy, and its effective influencing strategy. In terms of brand positioning, Zara has been able to leverage its ability to respond quickly to the market and capture fashion trends, while focusing on the combination of high fashion and low cost. By optimising supply chain management and improving production efficiency, Zara enables consumers to enjoy high-quality fashion garments at more affordable prices.

In terms of marketing strategy, due to the continuous development of technology, digitalisation, and intelligence have become an important trend in the retail industry. Zara will further strengthen its digitalisation and intelligence transformation to improve supply chain efficiency and optimise inventory management. It will continue to expand its brand influence and brand awareness through diversified marketing means, such as online and offline advertising, social media marketing, and brand cooperation. Focusing on interaction and communication with consumers, the company has strengthened its online sales platform and analysed consumer behaviour and needs more precisely using big data and artificial intelligence technologies to offer personalised services that reinforce consumers' sense of identity and loyalty to the brand. At the same time, Zara focuses on sustainable development, through the development and use of organic or recycled materials, as well as the popularisation and dissemination of environmental protection concepts, to reduce environmental pollution and the waste of resources in the production process. It realises a closed-loop supply chain and promotes a circular economy model. This emphasis on environmental protection and sustainable development makes Zara a good example of social responsibility.

Through continuous innovation and fashion leadership, enhanced digital and smart transformation, focus on sustainability and environmental protection, globalisation, brand diversification and focus on consumer experience, Zara is expected to maintain its leadership position and achieve even greater success in the future.

In summary, the Zara brand study not only helps to gain an in-depth understanding of the fast fashion model and supply chain management but also provides insights and lessons for the brand to formulate effective marketing strategies, drive innovation and development in the industry, as well as providing insights and lessons for other start-up brands. It also helps to improve the brand's global competitiveness and influence.

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