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The evolution of Digital Marketing in sportswear brands

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To all the fools. The loners. The rebels. Those who don't
fit. Those who don't fit. Those that
they always seem out of place. Those who see
things differently. Those who don't
fit the rules. And they have no respect for it
status quo. You can agree with them or not
agree. You can glorify or defame them.
The only thing you cannot do is ignore them. Because
things change. They push the human race in
come on. And while some consider them crazy, we do
we consider them geniuses. Why do people who
they are crazy enough to think they can change
the world are the ones who really change it.

Steve Jobs

Summary

INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed at investigating the development of digital marketing with particular reference to the field of sportswear.

For these purposes, in chapter I, the structure of digital marketing will be analyzed, with particular reference to its mainstreams, i.e. segmentation, targeting and positioning, product management, communication and advertising, sales and channel strategy and, finally, CRM.

Given these basic prerequisites for the subsequent analysis, the topic of sportswear will be introduced, with particular reference to the peculiarities of the sector and a global overview of the market. Therefore, the consumer of this sector will be analyzed, and the related marketing strategies related to the competitiveness in the sector. An empirical analysis will then be carried out on some business cases concerning the development of digital marketing in the sportswear sector. In particular, the Adidas case will be examined, with reference to the related corporate strategies and competitive positioning, strategic positioning and Porter's model with reference to corporate competitiveness. The Nike case will also be exposed, with particular regard to communication strategy and customer conquest. Moreover, space will be given to the competitiveness between the two companies. Finally, the GymShark case will be analyzed, with particular regard to the marketing strategy, the use of social media and the approach with the customer.

In chapter III the implications of technological evolution on digital marketing will be analyzed. In particular, after having explained the topic of blockchain and NFTs, the application methods of these new technologies will be exposed to the digital marketing field, with particular reference also to some companies even not part of the sportswear sector. Finally, gamification as an innovative tool applied to digital marketing will be exhibited.

CHAPTER I.
DIGITAL MARKETING

1. Digital marketing: the new digital scenario

Over the last decade, both academically and practically, there has been a continuous change in traditional marketing paradigms.

The constant development of digital, social media and mobile marketing (DSMM) and at the same time the growing penetration of the internet and objects connected to the network, have determined an important step forward, to the point of being defined by scholars as one of the strengths driving forces for the future[1].

Digital marketing is the set of activities that, through the use of digital tools, allow the development of integrated marketing and communication campaigns, targeted and capable of generating measurable results, which help the organization to identify and constantly monitor the needs of demand and facilitate exchanges in an innovative way, building an interactive relationship with it that will generate value over time.

The doctrine[2] defines digital marketing as "The application of the Internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives". The development of these technologies, in fact, has significantly influenced consumer behavior, providing him with new

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[1]Lamberton C., Stephen AT, A Thematic exploration of digital, social media, and mobile marketing: research evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an agenda for the future inquiry, in Journal of marketing 80, November 2016, 145 - 172.
[2]Chaffey D., Ellis- Chadwick E., Digital marketing, Edinburgh gate, Pearson, 2016.

tools and means to efficiently satisfy his needs, revolutionizing the previous business model in some respects.

Businesses, in response to this change, have created new strategies to inform, reach and conquer the new digital consumer.

Guided by the objective of gaining an advantage over their competitors, companies that actively use e-commerce and digital marketing create a bilateral connection between consumers and the company[3]. According to some scholars, the continuous interactions between an organization's web platform and the consumer evolve into positive experiences that lead to the establishment of a long-term relationship[4]. Thanks to digital technology, consumers can easily and quickly find out about any goods and services existing on the net, and have the possibility to make comparisons between substitute products and therefore facilitate and accelerate the purchasing decision-making process.

Part of the doctrine[5] underline the main benefits of digital marketing:

- Identification of prospects: thanks to the internet, digital platforms can be used in marketing research, to identify and thoroughly analyze the needs of consumers;

- Brand Awareness: the company's digital platforms represent a channel through which users can obtain detailed information on a product or service and simultaneously decide whether to purchase or leave the site. This increases, both in the event that the purchase process ends and in the event that the purchase process is interrupted, a greater awareness and gratitude towards the brand on the part of customers.

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[3]Durmaz Y., Travel from traditional to digital marketing, in Global journal of management and business research, 16, 2016, 36 - 37-

[4]Rose S., Hair N., Clark M., Online Customer Experience: A Rewiew of the Business-to-Consumer Online Purchase Context. International Journal of Management Review 13 (2011): 24-29.

[5]Chaffey D., Smith PR, Emarketing Excellence. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013.

- Brand Loyalty: the key factor in the use of digital channels is to fully satisfy the expectations of customers, supporting them in their purchase decision-making process, through the use of different tools (for example order support systems).

In addition to this first cataloging of the objectives, mainly linked to the internet resource, the traditional marketing goals that can be identified thanks to the Ansoff matrix (fig. 1) which can be implemented through the online presence should not be forgotten.[6]:

- Product Development: New digital products and services can be distributed worldwide, directly to the buyer's address;
- Market penetration: digital marketing can be used to sell well-known products and services in known markets, trying to increase its exposure to the public as much as possible;
- Diversification: Digital supports the sale of new products in new markets, increasing the visibility of the product on online marketing channels • Market expansion: the new online marketing channels allow the company to sell products and services already marketed elsewhere, succeeding to obtain economies of scale and cost reduction.
- Market expansion: the new online marketing channels allow the company to sell products and services already marketed elsewhere, managing to obtain economies of scale and cost reduction.

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[6]Ibid.

Products

	Present	New
Present	Market Penetration	Product Development
New	Market Development	Diversification
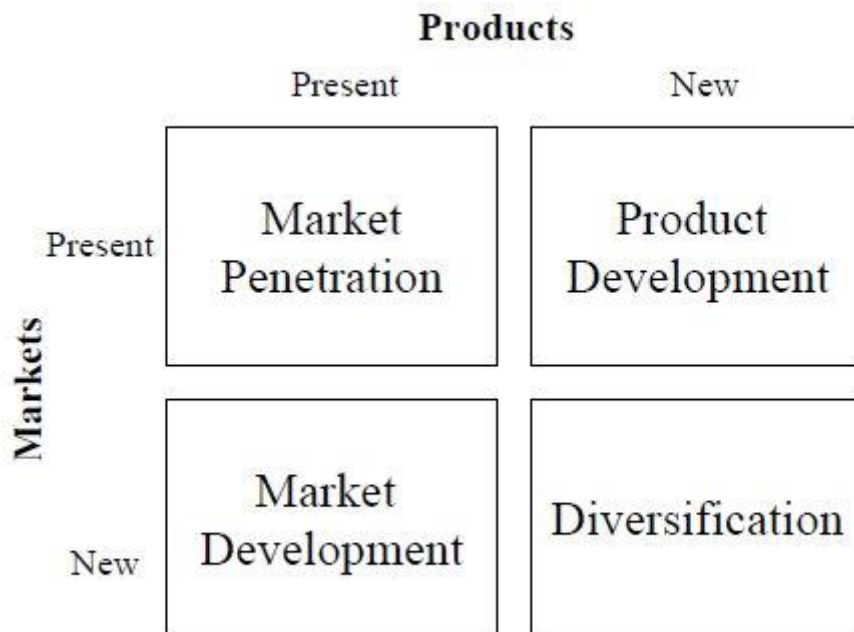
Fig. 1: Ansoff's matrix applied to marketing. Source Wikipedia.

Although more than 25 years have passed since the total opening of the internet, the online population continues to increase from year to year, reporting the most significant growth rates in the period between January 2016 and 2017 (fig. 2):

- The number of internet users grew by 10% for a total of 354 million new users;

- The number of active users on social channels increased by 482 million users, an increase of 21%;

- The number of people using mobile devices grew by 5%, an increase of 222 million new users;

- The fastest growing figure concerns the number of people accessing social media from mobile devices: + 20%, an increase of 581 million people.

Fig. 2: Internet users annual growth rates. Source: Digital Report, We Are Social.

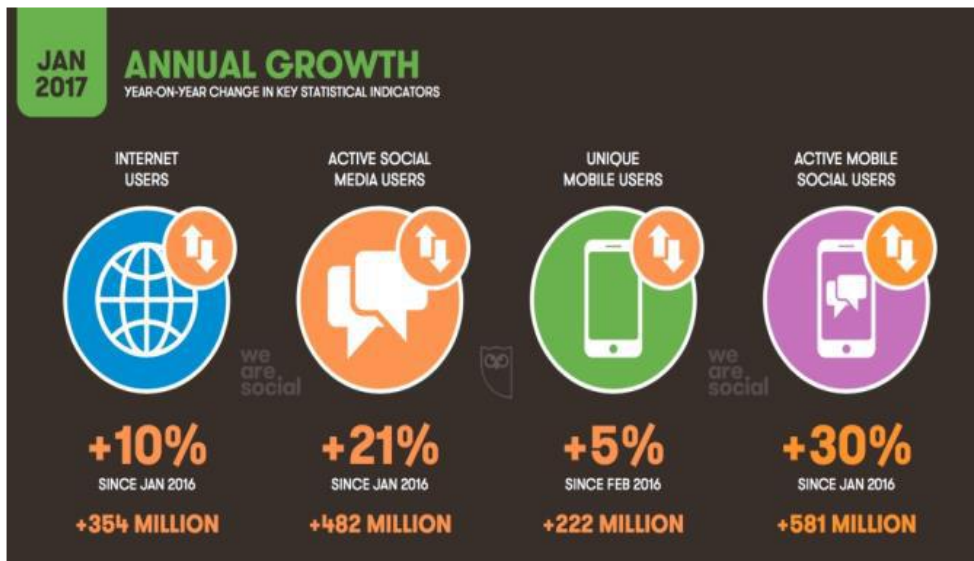As regards the growth rate from the beginning of the millennium until March 2017, the growth rate of the internet is equal to 933.8%, with a global penetration rate of nearly 50% (Fig. 3).

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS
MARCH 25, 2017 - Update

World Regions	Population (2017 Est.)	Population % of World	Internet Users 31 Mar 2017	Penetration Rate (% Pop.)	Growth 2000-2017	Users % Table
Africa	1,246,504,865	16.6 %	345,676,501	27.7 %	7,557.2%	9.3 %
Asia	4,148,177,672	55.2 %	1,873,856,654	45.2 %	1,539.4%	50.2 %
Europe	822,710,362	10.9 %	636,971,824	77.4 %	506.1%	17.1 %
Latin America / Caribbean	647,604,645	8.6 %	385,919,382	59.6 %	2,035.8%	10.3 %
Middle East	250,327,574	3.3 %	141,931,765	56.7 %	4,220.9%	3.8 %
North America	363,224,006	4.8 %	320,068,243	88.1 %	196.1%	8.6 %
Oceania / Australia	40,479,846	0.5 %	27,549,054	68.1 %	261.5%	0.7 %
WORLD TOTAL	7,519,028,970	100.0 %	3,731,973,423	49.6 %	933.8%	100.0 %

Fig. 3: World Internet Usage and Population Statistics. Source: Internet World Stats, 2017.

It's not just the internet that's spreading so quickly; in fact, a series of evidences are identified capable of representing how every year it is increasingly important to know the way in which people interact with each other, with institutions and with brands.

Here are some of them[7]:

- more than half of the world's population uses a smartphone;

- nearly two-thirds of the world's population owns a mobile phone;

- more than half of internet traffic is generated by mobile devices;

- more than half of mobile connections are now on broadband;

- more than one in five of the world's population has made at least one online purchase in the past 30 days.

Considering the reported growth rates, it is of fundamental importance for companies to know and analyze the online behavior of consumers, so as to be able to develop an effective and personalized communication strategy, capable of intensifying the relationship established with the user, thus creating an intangible resource of considerable importance for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in the long term.

Jack Welch, Chief Executive Officer of General Electric (2001) reiterates the point:

"We have only two sources of competitive advantage: the ability to learn more about our customers faster than the competition; the ability to turn that learning into action faster than the competition. "

The availability of large amounts of data on the web, especially in social media, offers companies the possibility of obtaining strategic and highly profiled information on different scenarios[8]:

- Consumer preference analysis;

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[7]See Wearesocial.com.
[8]Chaffey D., Smith PR, Emarketing Excellence, cit.

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- Identification of the most profitable market segments;

- Personalization of the offer, so that it is more consistent with specific consumer profiles;

- Opportunity to increase Customer Lifetime Value;

- Building lasting relationships;

- Investigate the popularity of a brand;

- Data warehouse and data mining activities;

- Anticipation of future trends;

User profiling on the web is a continuous and always evolving activity. Acquiring the greatest number of insights and information, analyzing them and using them to effectively segment and target the market, has become a common and necessary practice for any company wishing to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage in the long term.

Obviously, collecting profiled information on consumers is not relevant, if it is not possible to extrapolate the real value they contain and transform it accordingly, into added value for the company.

Regardless of the size, form and sector of expertise, organizations today agree that information about consumers is the most important intangible asset for businesses.

Ironically, it also appears to be one of the least understood areas in academic literature.

2. The five marketing mainstreams

2.1. Segmentation, targeting and positioning

The research and practical application of the market segmentation process has a long history, but its effectiveness continues to be undisputed.

New methods of segmentation and consumer profiling are developed by companies, going beyond the limits within which traditional marketing was concentrated[9].

The segmentation process consists in the subdivision of the demand into distinct subsets of consumers-customers, homogeneous within them but inhomogeneous with each other, where each segment can be chosen as the goal to be achieved with a particular configuration of value, through the variables of the marketing mix[10]. A market segment is made up of a group of consumers who share a certain set of needs and desires, that is, they seek the same set of benefits.

The fundamental assumptions of micro-segmentation and targeting are

- the heterogeneity of demand, which results in a different elasticity of response to marketing stimuli (prices, products, distribution services and communication);
- the ability of the company to differentiate its offer, in order to make its offer preferable and customizable with respect to that of its competitors (managerial actionability of segmentation).

An effective segmentation process has numerous advantages for the company:

- Optimization of the Results / Resources ratio, thus leading to greater efficiency in budget allocation;

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[9]Quinn, Lee, Sally Dibb, Evalueting market-segmentation research priorities: Targeting re-emancipation. Journal of Marketing Management 26 (2010): 13-14, 1241-1242.
[10]P. Kotler, K. Keller, F. Ancarani, M. Costabile, (2017), Marketing Management, 15th Edition, Pearson Italia.

- The company's sensitivity to changes in demand increases by favoring the systematic adaptation of the offer (reactivity and personalization of the offer).

By developing dynamic skills internally, the company is able to compete effectively in its reference competitive environment;

- It allows you to make comparisons with the competition, differentiating the offer and effectively seeking competitive advantages;
- It forces the company to accurately define the market and consumer needs, thus stimulating proactive behaviors;
- It allows for a comparative assessment of specialization / differentiation alternatives.

There are two approaches in the literature that adopt different segmentation criteria:

- Correlation criterion: this criterion has the advantages of having reduced production times and costs, but the segments, immersed in the dynamic environment, can exhibit different consumption behaviors. The segmentation variables taken into consideration are:
  - I. Geographic segmentation;
  - II. Socio-demographic segmentation;
  - III. Behavioral Segmentation;
  - IV. Psychographic Segmentation.
- Criterion of instrumentality: this method has as its main advantage an in-depth knowledge of the attributes and benefits that determine the preferences of individuals belonging to the reference segment, which are therefore characterized by a high degree of internal homogeneity and by a high variability towards other segments.

Using the instrumentality criterion, an attempt is made to identify the causal links that regulate consumer behavior.

	CORRELATION	INSTRUMENTALITY
Choice of the number of segments	First	In the aftermath
Type of data sources	Seconded	Primary
Search type	Desk	Fiedl
Base variables	Independent	Employees
Descriptor variables	Employees	Independent

Fig. 4: Segmentation criteria. Source: P. KOTLER, K. KELLER, F. ANCARANI, M. COSTABILE, (2017), Marketing Management.

Furthermore, the instrumentality criterion identifies the functional relationship between attitudes (thought) and behaviors (action). The segments are defined according to the benefits and attributes sought in the product and only subsequently described on the basis of their psychographic, behavioral but also demographic and geographical characteristics.

As regards the behavior of online users, the literature identifies a series of variables relating to the profile of consumers that strongly influence the

probability with which a subject belonging to a market segment, during his online experience, purchases a good or service.

In particular, two macro-categories are identified[11]:

- Demographic Variables: Any personal trait likely to remain static or to evolve slowly during the personal life cycle can be defined as a demographic variable and used to identify and segment the market. The main personal characteristics that influence online shopping behavior are race, age, gender, culture and lifestyle.

- Psychographic and Behavioral Variables: Any aspect that has to do with the perception of value, attitude and preferences of online consumers can be called a psychographic and behavioral variable. This set includes behavioral characteristics, attitudes, the degree of innovation, risk aversion, personal culture and other variables that significantly influence the consumer's purchase intention. Furthermore, the psychographic-behavioral variables are not static, but tend to evolve continuously, therefore requiring continuous monitoring.

According to the literature, both the categories listed above play a decisive role in predicting online shopping behavior.

Demographic variables such as age, gender, income, race do not strongly differentiate the online behavior from the offline behavior of the consumer (the variance between online and offline behavior is very limited).

Instead, it is possible to distinguish the most enthusiastic and profitable online shoppers from the crowd, basing the segmentation process on their individual perceptions, their beliefs and especially on their purchasing behavior.

In fact, it has recently been discovered that the internet is the preferred channel for compulsive shoppers, as they can proceed with the purchase

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[11]Doherty, Neil F., Ellis-Chadwick, Fiona, Internet retailing: the past, the present and the future. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management 38, (2010): 14-15.

unnoticed without interference from others and thus living a highly positive experience during their purchase process.

The growing rate of internet penetration on a global level and the development of new technologies capable of profiling and tracking the user during his online experience, have led to the birth of new and interesting methods of segmentation and targeting. Behavioral targeting is an internet-based strategy that uses various elements and algorithms in order to profile and analyze the consumer's online behavior. This technology is based on the use of HTPP cookies, more commonly called cookies, lines of text contained in small files sent from a web server (typically, a website) to a web client, typically a web browser used for navigation. online from a fixed or mobile location. The use of profiling cookies, allows to track the user's navigation and determine a profile consistent with his tastes, habits, choices and preferences. Through profiling cookies - highlights the Guarantor for the protection of personal data - it is possible to transmit advertising messages to the user's terminal in line with the preferences already expressed by the user himself while browsing online. This method is highly innovative, in the world of advertising, as the user is no longer shown advertising banners based exclusively on his demographic and psychographic characteristics. On the contrary, being able to analyze the user's online behavior,[12]. For example, a consumer who buys an ecological low-energy light bulb is identified by the algorithm as a subject interested in the sustainability of the planet. Consequently, in order to continue to attract his attention and feed his preferences, various advertising banners, containing offers of products and services relating to the sustainability of the planet, will follow the user along his path, being consistent with his previous purchasing behavior. .

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[12]Summers, Christopher and Robert Smith, An Audience of one: Behaviorally Targeted Ads as - Implied Social Labels. Journal of Consumer Research 43 (2016): 156-158.

Online advertising differs strongly from traditional advertising in particular in two respects (fig. 5):

- Mass Customization of advertising: advertisements based on "behavioral targeting" are person specific, ie the advertising banners that appear on a Web page are customized according to the preferences of the user visiting the site. This peculiarity significantly differentiates online channels from traditional communication channels, in which the same advertising banner is shown to online users without having carried out a previous analysis and segmentation of their preferences.
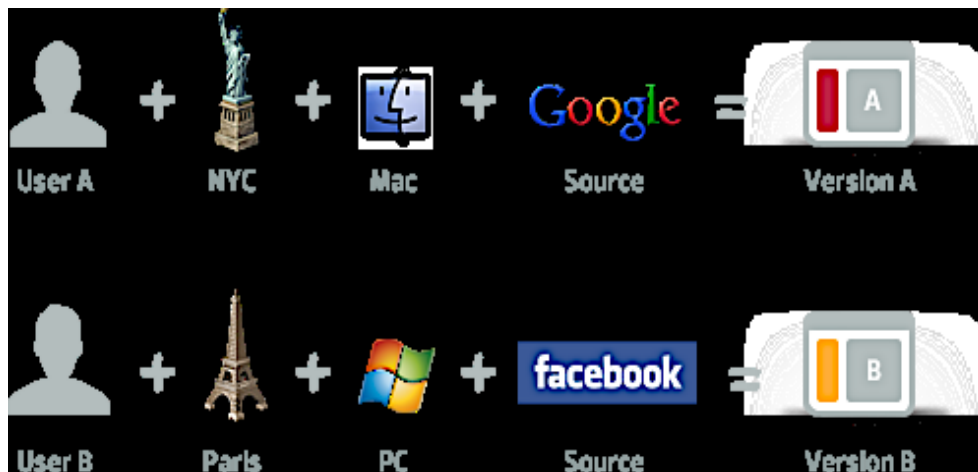
Fig. 5: Mass customization online advertising. Source: Marketo.

User A, being interested in visiting the statue of liberty, will access a search engine, in this specific case Google, by browsing various websites during his online experience. Thanks to the use of profiling cookies, the web server recognizes the user's intentions, making an advertising banner related to the statue of liberty appear on the display.

User B, on the other hand, will be shown an advertising banner containing information related to the Eiffel Tower.

- The advertising banners shown through the use of "behavioral targeting" are based on the consumer's past experience. The companies analyze the user's online behavior by analyzing the information search phase, the purchases made previously and his activity on social networks, in order to create a profile representative of the interests and preferences that the user expresses in the online context.

After having divided the market into groups of consumers with homogeneous expectations and needs, companies will have to evaluate the attractiveness of each segment and understand to whom to allocate their offer. In particular, the financial attractiveness of the various portions of the market is assessed "in terms of demand, costs and competitive advantage" and on the basis of this assessment the target segments must be indicated, in order to orient strategy and corporate objectives accordingly.[13].

Marketing managers, after having assessed the attractiveness of the segments to which their products are potentially oriented, will have to define the type of strategy to be implemented in order to select the target segment. In this regard, they have four marketing strategies: undifferentiated marketing, concentrated marketing, differentiated marketing and personalized marketing (fig. 6)[14].

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[13]Blanchard O., The Crisis: Basic Mechanisms, and Appropriate Policies, IMF working paper, April 2009.
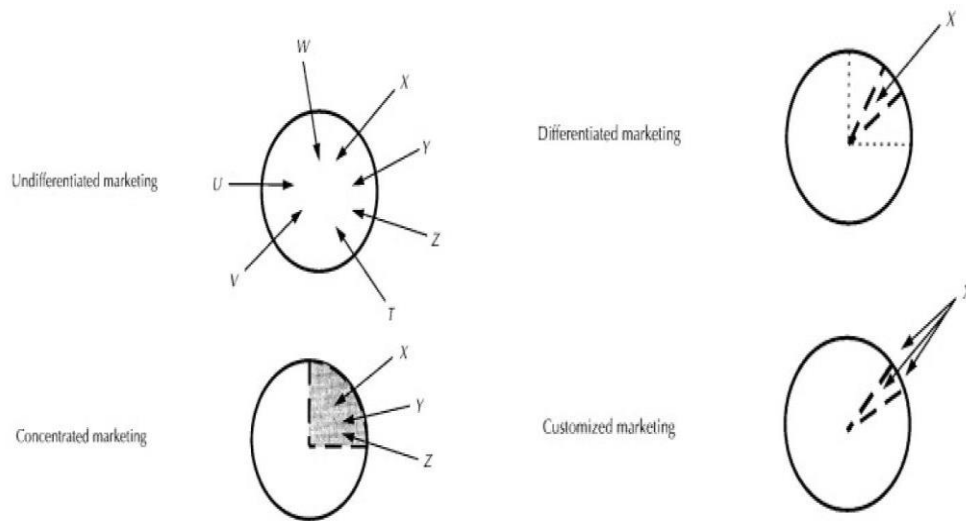[14]Moutinho, L. (2000), Strategic Management in Tourism, CABI Publishing. pp. 122-123.

Fig. 6: Levels of market targeting. Source: Moutinho (2000).

1. Undifferentiated Marketing: this strategy is implemented when market experts determine that there is a subtle difference between the various segments and in this regard a common action plan is formulated for consumer groups.

2. Concentrated Marketing: this strategy is implemented after defining a single segment to which to address your offer. In this case, the organization will direct all of its resources and attention to the selected segment, but concentrated marketing can particularly expose the company to dangers such as misidentification of the segment.

3. Differentiated Marketing: this strategy is implemented when the company decides to direct its offer to more than one market segment and consequently will have to define the marketing mix for each identified segment.

4. Personalized Marketing: this strategy is implemented when market conditions induce the company to meet the needs of individual subjects and this will lead to the implementation of personalized marketing plans.

In accordance with the definition provided by Kotler, the positioning operation can be seen as "The act of designing the offer and the image of the company to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market"[15]. Through this activity of great strategic importance, marketing managers have the clear objective of improving and defining the perception that consumers have of the product or service. To this end, each positioning operation can be defined as valid and effective if it has three fundamental characteristics[16]:

- The product must contain within it the greatest benefits required by consumers;
- Each company must necessarily differentiate its offer plan, clarifying the added value offered by its product / service compared to what is offered by the competition;
- The company must be consistent with the market positioning pursued, in strategic and operational terms.

Ultimately, a positioning operation that can be defined as valid must have "one foot in the present and one foot in the future", so it must be focused on immediate objectives, but must also know how to look far and try to predict those that may be the expected results in the future market[17].

In recent years, most countries of the world have experienced unprecedented growth rates. This expansion was certainly promoted by the globalization process, but above all by the growing technological development. These changes have forced companies to adapt their plans and techniques to the changing market, confronting them with new types of challenges.

Currently, a large part of the world population is accustomed to daily use their phone, tablet or computer with which research is carried out aimed at future,

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[15]Kotler, P. (2003), Marketing Management. 11th ed. Englewoods Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
[16]Camilleri, MA (2017), Travel Marketing, Tourism Economics and the Airline Product, Springer Nature Singapore. pp 69-83.
[17]Ancarani, F., Costabile, M., Keller, K., Kotler, P. (2017), Marketing Management, 15th Edition, Pearson Italia. pp. 280-300, 328-360.

and potential, purchase operations. Every typing made leaves a trace on the web and it is precisely the set of these footprints that can help an organization to reconstruct the profile of a potential buyer, defining the tastes and preferences of the latter and orienting its efforts accordingly.[18].

Consumers increasingly use social networks in which photos and thoughts are shared and often activate the location service which shares data relating to the location of the individual. This data can be collected and selected by companies in order to obtain as much information as possible on current and potential customers.

Subsequently, given the massive use of smartphones and computers, the way in which a company can promote its offer to the public has changed considerably, given that the traditional way of advertising a product with catalogs and posters can be considered (almost) outdated. Businesses need to implement robust digital advertising campaigns, using ads and web pages.

From this a natural question arises: "Are customers aware of making their personal information public?". Hence one of the most discussed concepts of recent years: privacy. Currently, markets and technology are developing much faster than the regulatory system is doing and for this reason there is no set of rules capable of protecting every single case and thus cases of abuse can arise.[19].

2.2. Product management

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[18]Camilleri, MA (2017), Travel Marketing, Tourism Economics and the Airline Product, Springer Nature Singapore. pp 69-83.
[19]Camilleri, MA (2017), Travel Marketing, Tourism Economics and the Airline Product, Springer Nature Singapore. pp 69-83.

As mentioned in part, marketing is a mix of skills and strategies that concern a company on several levels and which aims to satisfy the needs of customers. The four levers of the marketing mix explain how this function is hybrid and therefore involves different figures within the same company.

Product marketing is the set of all those tactics and processes that are used to launch a product on the market. These include the decision on positioning, the introduction of the product to the market, with the guarantee that sellers and buyers understand and appreciate it, as well as its management over time. In fact, the process does not stop once the product is placed on the market, but continues even after launch to ensure that people are aware of the product, that they know how to use it and that their feedback and their needs are listened to throughout the life cycle of the same. In practice, all this is part of the skills of a particular figure, namely the Product Manager, from whom the practice itself takes the name of Product Management.

The role of product management is not a recent concept and was originally created as a brand management position: the first example of brand management was conceived in the United States and dates back almost a century ago, during the Great Depression. In fact, in 1931, the advertising manager Neil McElroy wrote a note to his colleagues at Procter & Gamble (P&G) in which he proposed the idea of a "brand man", or rather a "role with specific responsibilities to manage the entire brand of a product and being responsible for its success "(this concept of" ownership of the product "by the person who manages it, and therefore of responsibility for its success or failure, is still today at the center of product management).

McElroy's note must have obviously struck a nerve, given that from that year onwards the management of the product began a path of continuous evolution, and, instead of decreasing in number and importance, as had been foreseen in numerous articles and studies of the time, has prevailed, including within it also the management of the customer and the analysis of the value chain. In this way, the general responsibility of a Product Manager has become over

time that of integrating the various segments of a business into a strategically focused whole, maximizing the value of a product and "coordinating the production" of an offer that represents the full understanding the needs of the market.

To do this, those involved in product management need a broad understanding of almost all aspects of the company they work for, the target market, the product and their customers. Since this is an important, or rather vital, organizational role to create innovations and guide the growth of a structured company, production companies are increasingly forced to take on young, dynamic profiles with similar transversal skills in these positions. to those of an entrepreneur (the Product Manager can in fact be assimilated to the manager of a small business within a larger company).

Among these skills are:

- Communication skills;
- Technical skills;
- Research skills;
- Analytical skills;
- Interpersonal skills;
- Marketing knowledge;
- Strategic thinking;
- Ability to define priorities.

Product management and product marketing are therefore different but complementary efforts, with the aim of maximizing sales revenues, market share and profit margins. The Product Manager has several roles covering many activities, and the issues handled by the product management team vary depending on the type of organization and where the function is located in the organization hierarchy: product management can therefore be a function. separate or part of the marketing or engineering functions.

The Product Manager's job is to oversee all aspects of a product or service line to create and deliver superior customer satisfaction while simultaneously delivering long-term value for the business. Ideally, the job of the Product Manager is divided between daily activities (which usually take up 40-50% of his time), short-term activities (20-30% of the time) and long-term tasks (about 10-20% of the time). of the dedicated time). These at least are the target percentages: the reality is that many Product Managers spend most of their time "putting out fires" that rage in other company functions, compared to that dedicated to pursuing their strategic objectives.

On a daily basis, the Product Manager may have different responsibilities, which may be more or less directly related to the product (or product line) of his competence:

- Maintain and update a product register, i.e. create a collection of the technical information of the different versions of each product it manages, also attaching any kind of photo or video material that can be used for marketing or training purposes;

- Motivate the sales force and distributors, sometimes also by actively participating in their training;

- Collect marketing information, including competitor benchmarks, market trends and opportunities, customer expectations;

- Act as a link between sales, production, research and development, design and in some cases also with the General Management;

- Control the budget related to its product line and achieve sales objectives, through coordination with sales managers and communication managers.

Also on the basis of the time dedicated to daily activities, which, as I have already said, strongly depends on how much the Product Manager can take care of his duties without worrying about solving the problems that arise in his office by the other functions, his responsibilities in the short term they are:

- Participate in the annual marketing plan and in the development of forecasts, with the help, for example, of a business analyst;

- Work together with communication or rely on external agencies to implement new promotional strategies;

- Coordinate the activity at the fair, as well as participate in the organization of the stand and in the choice of products to be exhibited;

- Participate in new product development teams, for example by following the design step by step or helping in design choices;

- Predict and manage the actions of competitors, which implies that, in addition to a detailed knowledge of the competitors' products, there is a continuous updating and study of their strategies in order to adapt quickly;

- Modify the product and / or reduce costs to increase its value, as well as participate in the decisions to eliminate one or to extend the line.

As for the long-term goals, we can refer to more strategic activities, such as:

- Identify opportunities for new products, following the trends and technological innovations of the competition;

- Create a long-term competitive strategy for the product, in order to guarantee lasting success over time even in the face of what may be the changes in the market;

- Recommend changes, improvements and product introductions, as well as suggest diversification strategies based on your industry or product knowledge.

Obviously, it is not certain that in all companies there is the same need to have a reference figure for the management of a product, just as it is not certain that there is a product marketing function that deals exclusively with the activities mentioned above.

Determining whether product management through the supervision of a Product Manager is the optimal structure for a particular company is a choice based on a number of considerations, which include considerations about the company culture, the amount of technical knowledge required to design, launch and support specific products and whether or not the company's products require distinctly different approaches to their market launch. In any case, once a structure has been established that requires its use, it is important to clarify the roles of the company personnel with whom the Product Managers usually interact: the Product Manager is in fact a "generalist" who must rely on numerous functional specialists to develop and market its product line, and has the role of bridging the various functional departments within the company, as well as between the company, sales force and customers, for all product-related matters. Consequently, some understanding of each other's expectations is needed, so as to plan current and future product activities for the benefit of the entire company.

Moving from a functional organizational structure to any of those variety of organizational forms based on teams rather than on matrices (including, therefore, also product management) requires careful planning.

Job descriptions must be written and made clear, in order to help Product Managers fully understand their role and also allow other departments to understand what to expect from them. As I said previously, Product Managers must rely on the support and performance of many other organs of the organization to achieve the product performance objectives, even and especially when they do not have control over those functions.

The clarification of the objectives is therefore imperative for the successful introduction of a product management structure in an organization, which must also be justified by the various factors that generally require its use (see, above all, the technical complexity of the product).

Unfortunately, however, many companies still introduce the role of "Product Manager" just because their competitors have such a position but lack

understanding of what the position entails. The steps involved in starting the management of the product are different, and sometimes they are not even done all (or rather, it can happen that they are not done all together).

Surely this depends both on the organization and on the investment, both in economic terms and in terms of time, that the company is able to bear in the short and medium-long term. First, the company must assess whether product management is an appropriate organizational form and, if so, decide what reporting structure (i.e. what kind of hierarchy) it will have.

Second, the company must clearly specify the responsibilities of Product Managers and other members of the system, so that it can, in a third step, identify the characteristics of successful managers and recruit suitable personnel in that role and, in a fourth step , plan to create a system to develop and evaluate their Product Managers.

Product management can be an appropriate organizational structure when a company's product line is large enough not to allow a functional structure to fit. This may be a far greater number of products than a single Marketing Manager can manage, or the company's products may be so different from each other in terms of competition and customer groups that need to be managed differently. Or again, some technical knowledge of the product may be required for market-related needs. In these cases, the Product Manager may be involved in the development and marketing of a product line across different divisions or markets.

However, there is an exception: in the case of different products, but similar in the eyes of the customers, the choice to assign each product to different Product Managers could create different problems, because it would put the entire marketing function under pressure for those that essentially they would be customers in common, or belonging to the same market. In these cases, we should speak of Market Manager rather than Product Manager. Another important consideration relating to the organizational structure is related to the development of new products. While most Product Managers spend a

significant portion of their time developing new products, some companies choose to have a separate position to manage the specifications and design of new products.

A final interesting aspect is that relating to the hierarchy. Typically, Product Managers report to Marketing Managers or Sales Managers, and have no one to report to them. However, in larger companies, they may have assistants and collaborators to help them collect data rather than organize an agenda. In these cases, there is some risk of creating a hierarchy within the hierarchy.

It is true that hierarchies are designed to prevent errors, but on the flip side, individual responsibility, creativity and opportunities to take risks also decrease, and should therefore be reduced as much as possible. To minimize the risk of miscommunication or misunderstanding, as well as to increase the chances of building a successful product management structure, top management must thoroughly explain not only what the exact roles of Product Managers are, but also those of the individuals with whom they commonly interact.

Generally, Product Managers recommend and establish strategic guidelines for their products (together with Marketing Managers), obtain market information on their customer and product segments (in collaboration, for example, with Business Analysts) and play a role important in the development, as well as in the modifications or eliminations, of products from the range (acting as a bridge between designers and management).

The figures with which one has to compare daily are different, and logically they must be very clear in the head of those who find themselves covering this position. Furthermore, many Product Managers are hired for their technical competence with respect to a specific product (or service), and consequently it is necessary that all the functions involved in the product management system identify in them a fixed point of reference for matters concerning the product. same.

As for the third step of introducing a product management structure, i.e. the identification of the characteristics and qualities that the sought-after resource must have, one must start from an assumption: there is no ideal profile for a Product Manager. successfull. Nevertheless, there are certainly different characteristics, abilities

and experiences that are frequently identified as being related to the success of Product Management, and which I have already mentioned very quickly even above. Among these, the most commonly cited traits include an entrepreneurial attitude, leadership, and some self-confidence. The skills acquired should instead include organizational, time management and communication skills, possibly in more than one language (fluent English is now almost always required, but knowledge of a second language is increasingly becoming a preferred criterion). Sales skills, rather than good technical competence, are also important characteristics in many industries.

In general, this technical knowledge may come from previous work experience rather than from some training, but the relative importance to this aspect is not always the same and depends on the particular needs of the position. If highly technical and technology-oriented knowledge is required, in fact, an engineering background is to be considered the most appropriate. If you want a better understanding of customers, then an industry sales experience will be more suitable. Finally, if knowledge of the trends of large markets and competitive positioning is more important, an experience in marketing rather than advertising will be more desirable.

Product Managers need a variety of skills, including knowledge of the reference product / industry and good business knowledge, as well as being capable from an interpersonal / managerial point of view.

As novice Product Managers, such as I might be for the next few years, typically spend most of their time gathering and organizing product, customer, and competitor information, it is assumed that product and market knowledge is key. . As experience is gained, the focus will then shift to a more

complete understanding of the business, including finance, marketing and strategic planning. At the same time, teambuilding, negotiation, communication and leadership skills will be developed. All following rather defined deadlines: many companies believe that the time needed to train an effective Product Manager, able to work independently, is from three to five years.

Coming to the last step of the introduction of a Product Management structure, and concluding this section, the evaluation criteria used depend on different factors, but are mainly based on management's typical financial performance measures. Of these, sales or profit targets are the most common and are perhaps also the most easily quantifiable. However, in addition to financial measures, Product Managers can also be evaluated based on a combination of other factors, such as defense or market share growth, customer satisfaction or even success in introducing new products. . These factors, as well as their associated results, are not, on the other hand, easy to interpret.

After the decision on whether or not to introduce a product management structure, the role and activities of the Product Managers must be defined in detail.

A Product Manager, by definition, is a generalist who must rely on numerous functional specialists to bring the product (or service) to the customer. These specialists can be internal or external to the company. The presence of internal support groups may mean that Product Managers may be less technically qualified in those areas covered by specialists, focusing more on management.

It could be said that the Product Manager plays, depending on the company and the situation, different roles in terms of support activities. With regards to field sales, for example, he answers questions from the field, assists in sales calls as needed, provides product information to streamline the sales process, suggests various incentives for new products, or develops the literature to help

promote sales. Regarding distribution, the Product Manager could, for example, work with distributors or agents, suggest alternative channels, or push to speed up shipments. However, the real risk is that all these functions, with which it must interface as a support, they may begin to think of turning to him as "the one who has the answer", assuming that they can receive effective and quick help for any problem. Also for this reason the definition of roles is of fundamental importance.

The groups with which the Product Manager of a company has the most to do are:

- R&D - designers.

Product Managers depend on operations to create the right product at the right price and deliver it at the right time to customers. These can refer to design, production and in some cases also logistics. The activities that are carried out in collaboration with the operations are:

- Development of new products.
  Perhaps the most visible interaction. The research and development department will have to evaluate the technical feasibility; production will have to evaluate its efficiency and future productivity; procurement may need to be involved in make-or-buy decisions. The role of the Product Manager will instead be to represent the voice of the customer by balancing the company return on investment (ROI), customer satisfaction and the product cost, in a complementary way.

- Comparisons related to strategy.
  The Product Manager may also be involved in actual "strategy sessions" with the operational function, separate from the

development of new products. During these sessions, the Product Manager will present market problems, or for example competitor moves, that could trigger new product ideas or highlight future capacity needs. This is also the moment in which the parties become aware of those technologies that the market requires and in which we think about how to find a solution that safeguards the interests of customers without penalizing the costs related to production or development (in short, a competitive advantage is sought).

- Sales.

The Product Manager plays an important role in helping sales or area managers achieve the company's sales objectives. The nature of the relationship varies according to the corporate culture and the positioning of Product Management. The main activities include:

☐ Market data collection.

Sales managers represent a critical link with the customer, and Product Managers need their knowledge of the different territorial areas and the different segments they deal with. Consequently, it is advisable to find an easy and efficient way to share this knowledge with the Product Managers, and above all a certain motivation to do it frequently, so as to be able to make forecasts and always be updated on market changes. Indeed, the development of sales forecasts is generally the domain of product marketing, but often these cannot be completed without input from the sales force.

☐ Training of sales staff.

Sales force training can cover several issues: sales skills, company data, technical knowledge of the product or market, and competitor comparisons. The effectiveness of training is critical: for example, this can be a significant factor in the success of a new product commercial launch. While teaching sales skills and "tricks of the trade" per se are not typically part of the responsibilities of a Product Manager, product-related training must definitely fit into the sales process, and so does market and competition information must also be presented to support this process.

☐ Planning.

Sales reps need to know who is most likely to buy the product. Instead of describing primary and secondary target markets, the Product Manager's job would be to draw the "ideal" profile, suggesting specific customers if possible. For this, both product managers and the sales force should understand the differences between so-called key accounts, target accounts and maintenance accounts. In this regard, the key accounts consist of 20% of customers representing 80% of gross profitability. Target accounts, on the other hand, are those customers who represent the key accounts of competitors, or who have significant prospects for a new product.

- Marketing communication.

Whether dealing with an internal marketing communications department or an external advertising agency, a Product Manager needs a general understanding of the different promotional alternatives so that they can effectively establish their recommendations. Usually, Product Managers determine the

positioning they would like for their products, and the communication of this positioning will then be left to the functional specialists. What is required of them is therefore to describe the target market they want to reach as precisely as possible, so that the different advertising groups, internal or external, can use this information to select the most appropriate media vehicles. Obviously,

In general, an outside agency may be preferable for the Product Manager who needs an outside point of view, or who faces internal resource constraints that make it difficult to meet deadlines or promote the product appropriately. On the other hand, an internal department could be the right decision if the Product Manager needed to capitalize on the experience deriving from the knowledge of a very specialized market (the telehandler market is an example), had the necessary skill already "At home" and wanted more control over the total process.

- Customers.

Contact with customers is important to almost all Product Managers. While customers in a consumer goods company usually reach each other through focus groups and other survey-based research techniques, B2B product managers are more likely to contact customers during calls with sellers, even if research of marketing is growing in importance also for this group. The critical point in meeting customers is to be open both to the shortcomings of existing products (accepting any form of criticism) and to future needs (to be planned in the long term). As difficult as it is, in fact, Product Managers must find innovations that anticipate and satisfy customers' needs, and be able to effectively bring them back into the product that will be sold to them.

2.3. Communication and advertising

The online advertising market in Italy continues to grow.

The data confirm this growth registering a + 13.5% compared to 2020[20].

Analyzing 2021, on the basis of estimates made by Nielsen, the collection of the entire universe of web advertising in 2021 archives the year with € 3.777 billion of collections, an increase of + 15.1%. The web is thus the most important media on the market with a share of 42.5%, since television does not go beyond 3.718 billion euros (share of 41.9%).

Italian companies are investing more and more in advertising. Advertising is, in fact, the best channel to make yourself known and increase your clientele. This is also stated by the Global Ad Spend Forecasts report carried out by the company dentsu international. The document shows that Italy is in fifth place in the world for the growth of advertising expected in 2021. To dominate are TV, radio and digital, which also and above all rely on small and medium-sized enterprises with important results. The research allows us to understand how 2021 will evolve - again according to forecasts - and which are the most interesting channels and activities for the online business world[21].

Digital transformation is a priority of Italian companies and it is also a priority for top management, who now consider it fundamental for the growth and efficiency of the business. More and more companies have already defined a digital transformation plan, which identifies implementation times and lines, as well as significant impacts on the business. The pillars of the plans are represented by the adoption of platforms for Web management, by the

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[20]Mosciatti L., Nielsen, Ad Investments Up 13.5% In 2021. Internet Is The Most Collecting Media, Engage, May 10, 2022, in*https://www.engage.it/dati-e-ricerche/nielsen-investimenti-pubblicitari-in-crescita-del-135-nel-2021-internet-e-il-media-che-raccoglie-di-piu. aspx #: ~: text = The% 20investments% 20advertising% 20in% 20Italy, December% 20 (% 2B0% 2C3% 25).*

[21]   *https://www.italiaonline.it/risorse/digital-advertising-2021-trend-e-previsioni-per-l-italia-3342.*

migration towards the Mobile, IoT, Big Data, Cloud paradigms and by the use of security solutions, which are the areas of the fastest growing Italian digital sector. . Ten-year projections indicate that Digital will overtake the Automotive and Energy sectors, approaching the size of the Hospitality sector. The growing development of online media, both in terms of user traffic and in terms of available information, it requires companies to design and implement online marketing strategies consistent with the business objectives pursued. The development of these strategies is divided into three main phases:

- The choice of channels to be used: identification of the marketing channels to be used;
- Execution of the campaigns: development of the campaign through the structuring of the settings and the choice of the target audience;
- Results analysis: through the use of the main marketing metrics, the effectiveness of the campaign is analyzed, relating the results obtained to a reference benchmark. The metrics are monitored both during the campaign and once the campaign has finished.

The speed of receiving campaign results typical of digital marketing makes it easier (compared to traditional media) to modify, reorganize and optimize campaigns. But what are the main channels used by marketers in the world of online advertising and how do they differ from each other? It is possible to make a first distinction between the online communication channels, analyzing the way in which the message is communicated. There are two ways in which a message can reach recipients:

1. Push strategy: the message is "pushed" towards the recipient, who behaves reactively or passively.

2. Pull strategy: the message is received by the recipient who proactively "pulls" it towards him, requesting or researching information on the content that is shown in the message.

By channels we mean the means used to achieve the intended objectives. These can be synchronous (in real time) or asynchronous (in "deferred"). In digital marketing, both categories of channels are used to reach users during their online experience. In particular, the following channels are mostly used:

- Company website: hypertext with description, purpose and contacts of the activity. It can be a showcase site or an e-commerce site for the online sale of products and services. Asynchronous tool, through which various objectives can be achieved, including the increase of contacts, estimates, contracts, sales, brand promotion (Brand image), acquisition of email addresses, user profiling, reception of opinions and opinions on products / services.

- Search Engine Marketing (SEM): Visibility on search engines. It consists in being visible at the best moment, that is when a potential customer manifests a specific need (for example by typing a keyword that he uses for research). It represents an innovative marketing technique, which manages to accurately profile users and show them relevant content that is consistent with their preferences, basing the classification on previous searches.

- Search Engine Marketing (SEO): SEO is the set of techniques and strategies that allow a website to be found by users on search engines (among the unpaid results) when the user is looking for information about certain content, products, or services. SEO includes all those activities that allow the contents of a website to be visible in the organic results of search engines for certain keywords, and to be found easily. This strategy is widely used as it allows optimization of the results, for search engines and for the users who use them.

- Forum: sections of a site or a real whole website divided into thematic areas. Each subscriber can create a new discussion (thread) to which the others can reply with messages (posts). Asynchronous tool, as the posts are published at different moments from the threads, thus giving life to an interaction not in real time. Objectives that can be achieved: monitoring of issues; customer satisfaction; customer service; creation of a community; brand promotion; acquisition of email addresses; user profiling; receiving opinions and opinions on products / services. Applicable web techniques: SEO optimization, link popularity, link purchase / exchange, link building, display banner campaigns.

- Blog: website structured as a "diary". The author writes texts (posts) that can be freely commented by other surfers in an almost anonymous form. Various advertising tools can be used, such as banners, texts, videos, RSS and ads to increase the visibility of the product / service offered. Objectives that can be achieved: monitoring of issues; customer service; creation of a community; brand promotion; receiving opinions and opinions on products / services. Applicable web techniques: SEO optimization, link building, link exchange / purchase, banner campaigns, affiliations, buzz marketing, web viral marketing, online promotion marketing.

- Chat: virtual place where a group of people exchange messages in real time. Synchronous tool, which allows the monitoring of relevant topics online. The web technique applicable in this case is buz marketing, a marketing technique based on word of mouth on the internet, in order to reach in the shortest possible time a group of users interested in the topic, product or service to be spread.

- Newsletter: sending messages to a list of contacts who have expressed their consent to receive advertising e-mails. Represents an

asynchronous tool. Objectives that can be achieved: increase in contacts, visits to the site and sales, promotion of the brand or of a product / service, communication of events and promotions.

Digital marketing offers a considerable advantage over traditional advertising, namely the ability to monitor and measure the results achieved at any time. In fact, the company has at its disposal a series of metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the advertising campaign and make, if necessary, the necessary changes.

The main metrics used in the industry are:

- Sessions: represent the number of visits to a specific site / page;
- Users: the number of users who viewed the site / page. (Sessions> Users)
- Bounce Rate: The bounce rate is the bounce rate (from English bounce = bounce) and is the percentage of users who leave a site after a few seconds (index of quality and appropriateness of the site / campaign). A very high bounce rate indicates that visitors to the site are not really interested. A high bounce rate suggests that changes must be made to the site to improve the quality index, and that the content shown is not relevant for the purpose of searching for user information;
- Session duration: average duration of a user's visit to the platform;
- Pages visited: average number of pages visited during a user's online journey.

Through constant monitoring of the actions carried out by users, of the most visited pages, at the duration of each individual visit, the conversion rate obtained by the channels used, it is possible to evaluate which are the most effective tools in relation to the budget and the objectives set. Measure the performance of each single channel used, in order to make a weighted and justified budget allocation based on the results achieved. To analyze in detail

the process of forming user preferences in the online context, other metrics are used, which, if used in conjunction with the previous ones, allow you to fully monitor the effectiveness of the campaign:

- Acquisition cost: unit cost required to achieve a conversion goal. An acquisition cost monitor allows you to analyze the conversion funnel. To calculate the cost of acquiring new customers, simply take the sum of all marketing and sales expenses (including personnel costs and departmental overheads) over a given time period and divide it by the number of customers acquired in the reference time period. A reduction in the cost of acquisition could be the result of efficient marketing.

- Click Throught Rate (CTR): indicates the percentage of clicks generated by an advertising campaign in relation to the total impressions (views) obtained. It represents an index of the ad's "attractiveness". Click-through rate (CTR) can be used to measure keyword performance and ad exposure. A high click-through rate is a great indicator of the usefulness and relevance of your ads to users.

- Impressions: represents the number of times a web page or banner is viewed online by users. Most of the advertising campaigns on the web are paid based on the impressions obtained from banners or a website, i.e. based on how many times a certain banner or page is viewed by users, without however taking into account how many users have subsequently clicked. really about the content.

- Clicks: the number of times the banner is clicked;

- Conversion: number of conversions (purchases or goal achievement);

- Conversion Rate: Conversion / Impression ratio index of attractiveness and quality of the landing page.

Website access statistics represent a fundamental element for the planning, implementation and optimization of online marketing activities. The ability

to intervene in itinere in carrying out online campaigns allows for continuous optimization of results and efficient allocation of the marketing budget. It is necessary to take into account the type of website and the type of service that is offered to the user and have a good amount of data on which to perform the analysis of the metrics. The main and possible outlets of an analysis on the web traffic generated tend to establish:

- ➢ Changes to the marketing plan;
- ➢ Analysis of the user target;
- ➢ User Experience Analysis;
- ➢ Satisfaction analysis;
- ➢ Conversion improvement;
- ➢ Changes or developments in the structure of the analyzed site;
- ➢ Planning of a possible job of curation and / or creation of new contents;

Web Analytics therefore allows the measurement and control of results, through the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the monitoring data. The main areas of analysis taken into consideration are:

- Customer behavior (unique, new or returning visitors; Loyalty and recency; engagement);
- Contents (recipient pages, exit pages, in-page data analysis, site search);
- Traffic sources (search engines, paid traffic, referrals, direct traffic, social channels);
- Goals and conversions (funnels, conversion path, indirect conversions).

The literature defines personalization as that customer oriented marketing strategy that aims to deliver the right content to the right person at the right time, in order to maximize the effectiveness of the message communicated.

The strength of this strategy is that it requires minimal effort on the part of the client, who rather focuses on the content exposed to him.

This central aspect of personalization strongly differentiates it from customization, which occurs when the customer specifies in detail the elements of his marketing mix.[22]. Developers set up the system to identify users and provide them with content, functionality, and experiences consistent with their online behavior. Personalization can be done on an individual level, for example Amazon ads based on previous buying behavior, or on a collective level[23]. Retargeting is an extremely effective Ad personalization strategy. In particular, this strategy can be analyzed by taking into consideration two variables that jointly determine its effectiveness:

- Personalization depth: This variable describes the degree of consistency of the banner ad with respect to the interests the user has shown during their online experience. An advertising banner containing information about a product / service in which the consumer is interested could have a greater influence on the purchase process than a banner that contains content that is not consistent with the interests previously demonstrated by the user.

- Personalization breadth: this dimension describes the completeness and completeness with which an advertising banner communicated to the user reflects his interests. A banner with a large degree of personalization breadth includes, for example, all the products that the user, in his online purchase path, has placed in the virtual cart. Consistently, an advertising banner characterized by greater

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[22]Aguiree, Elizabeth, Dominik Mahr, Dhruv Grewal, and Martin Wetzels, Unraveling the Personalization Paradox: The Effect of Information Collection an Trust- Building Strategies on Online Advertisement Effectiveness. Journal of Retailing 91, (2015): 34-49
[23]Nielsen Normal Gropu, Customizations vs. Personalization in the User Experience.*https://www.nngroup.com/articles/customization-personalization/*.

exhaustiveness shows subsets including products in which the user has shown greater interest.[24].

Some scholars have shown that an advertising banner showing generic information about a particular product is more effective when the consumer is not yet clear what his preferences are and for this reason such tools can trigger the engagement process, when the consumer has not yet clearly structured his preferences. In contrast, a banner that focuses on a certain characteristic is more efficient in the case of a more informed consumer, and with a well-defined set of preferences.[25].

Retargeting, also known as remarketing, is an online advertising technique that tries to redirect the user who, after visiting it, abandoned it without completing the purchase or conversion action on the company website. Simplifying, while marketing has the function of leading the potential customer to visit the company website, in an attempt to induce him to buy, retargeting aims to bring the same user back to the company website, once he has abandoned it without carrying out a purchase. But what differentiates Retargeting from Remarketing? Remarketing refers to the tracking of users who have passed through a specific site and to whom you intend to redirect a highly targeted advertising message, so that they can return to the same site and complete the desired action. Retargeting, on the other hand, refers to the tracking of users who have passed through sites that investigate certain issues, in order to create a list based on their attitudes and behaviors. However academically, the two terms are considered synonymous. According to Forrester Research, only 3% of those who have embarked on a buying process actually buy; of the remaining 97%, 71% put an item in the cart and then

[24]Bleier, Alexander and Maik Eisenbeiss, The Importance of Trust for Personalized Online Advertising, Journal of Retailing 91, (2015): 391
[25]Lambrecht, Anja, and Catherine Tucker. When Does Retargeting Work? Information Specificity in Online Advertising. Journal of Marketing Research Vol. L (October 2013): 561-576.

eventually abandon it. Cart abandonment is a recurring behavior, related to the online shopping activity of consumers. Today's customers all have almost common characteristics. Indeed, whether it is a traditional store rather than an e-commerce platform, the new customer, demanding and attentive, he can just take a look without intending to buy, choose and then buy at a later time and go in search of the best price in the name of convenience. All these behaviors that do not lead to the final purchase translate into e-commerce matters in what is called cart abandonment, currently considered an effective indicator of the validity or weakness of an online store. In fact, it happens more and more often that the visitor adds an article to their virtual cart and fills in all the fields necessary for the purchase and then leaves the site, not completing their purchase decision-making process. Some scholars define this phenomenon as: "Consumers' placement of item (s) in their online shopping cart without making a purchase of any item (s) during that online shopping session". Those who abandon the online cart are a sub-group of unconverted visitors in the acquisition phase and a sub-group of current consumers in the retention phase, thus making this phenomenon closely related to both the acquisition process and consumer retention activity. According to a study released by Bronto Software, a leading US company in the field of e-commerce and email marketing, the cart abandonment rate would recently be around 72%. Those who abandon the online cart are a sub-group of unconverted visitors in the acquisition phase and a sub-group of current consumers in the retention phase, thus making this phenomenon closely related to both the acquisition process and consumer retention activity. According to a study released by Bronto Software, a leading US company in the field of e-commerce and email marketing, the cart abandonment rate would recently be around 72%. Those who abandon the online cart are a sub-group of unconverted visitors in the acquisition phase and a sub-group of current consumers in the retention phase, thus making this phenomenon closely related to both the acquisition process and consumer retention

activity. According to a study released by Bronto Software, a leading US company in the field of e-commerce and email marketing, the cart abandonment rate would recently be around 72%.[26]. To combat this phenomenon, it is important to analyze the shopping experience and step into the shoes of those who are making the purchase, thus managing to determine the factors of abandonment and remedy them through planned strategies that can lead to the conversion of these " orphans ”of the web in successful purchases. The factor that inhibits online shopping in particular is indecision. Alongside the so-called Windows Shoppers who limit themselves to looking and the price-conscious users (Cost Conscious), there are emotional customers (Vague Shoppers). According to a research carried out by Amaze, a company expert in marketing and technologies, the so-called Vague Shoppers make up 42.6% of the catchment area and are the customers with the highest propensity to buy. However, this segment is the most fickle and insecure: potential buyers are susceptible to discounts and promotions, and often seek reassurance from other customers or experts, despite being deeply attached to the brand. Often these users fill their carts with carefully selected products, but are not ready to complete the purchase. But what are the main barriers to completing the online purchase?

The main causes of cart abandonment are[27]:

- 58% of users abandon due to the fact that shipping costs make the total higher than expected;

- 57% want to get an idea, a quote compared to other sites;

- 55% are not ready to buy, but use the cart as a “wishlist”, or rather as a wish list.

- 50% do not buy because they have not reached the threshold that they can have free shipping;

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[26]Seewhy.com; Fireclick.com.
[27]Webmarketing.accademy.

- 37% discover shipping costs only at the end;
- 28% believe that shipping times are too long;
- another 28% do not want to register;
- a last 25% do not find their preferred payment methods.

Based on these statistics, it is clear how the abandoned cart phenomenon includes both the user acquisition process and the retention process, i.e. the practice through which a company ensures that its customers do not abandon it, keeping with them constant relationships. Customer retention is the other side of customer defection or churn. A high retention is equivalent to a low level of defection. Customer retention is a challenge for all modern businesses. Retaining customers is generally more profitable than acquiring new ones. Businesses need to focus on retaining customers who contribute to value creation. The doctrine[28]on the contrary, they argue that the cart abandonment process is not a sign of consumer dissatisfaction but rather a new method used by consumers to track and keep an eye on the prices of the products they had previously placed in the virtual cart. Retargeting is a tool designed to help companies reach 97% of users who have not immediately taken the desired action (purchase, contact, subscription). Retargeting is a technology based on profiling cookies, a simple anonymous Javascript text file inserted in the client server to "follow" the user during his entire experience on the web. This code, sometimes referred to as a "pixel" is generated when a campaign is activated, and is imperceptible to site visitors. When a visitor accesses the page, a profiling cookie is released that traces his path. Once the user leaves the company website without having purchased, the cookie allows the retargeting provider to publish advertisements that refer to the company's product / service on subsequent sites visited by the user.

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[28]Kinney, Monika Kukar, and Nancy M. Ridgway, The relantionship between Customers' Tendencies to Buy Compulsively and Their Motivations to Shop and Buy on the Internet. Journal of retailing (2009).

This allows you to follow the user throughout his experience, proposing the products and services in which he had previously shown interest, in order to induce him to return to the company website and consequently complete the purchase decision-making process.[29].

But what are the advantages and how does retargeting differ from traditional online advertising campaigns?

- First of all, it is possible to show the ads only to interested users by increasing their conversion rate, thus obtaining positive performances;

- You can also plan on the Google display network, through AdWords, where retargeting is called remarketing;

- Payments are made on the basis of each click received (Pay per click) or for each sale made (Pay per Action) regardless of the impressions developed. This represents an advantage as it allows for general cost savings;

- Management flexibility: It is possible to accelerate and optimize the campaign at any time based on the daily objectives to be achieved;

- Allows you to select the sites where to display the ads.

The first step in implementing retargeting is the prospecting campaign, which aims to capture the user's attention, convincing him to visit the reference site for the first time.

The prospecting campaign also presupposes the achievement of the following objectives:

- Inform: communicate the existence of the products on sale, display advertising;

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[29]Lambrecht, Anja, and Catherine Tucker. When Does Retargeting Work? Information Specificity in Online Advertising. Journal of Marketing Research Vol. L (October 2013): 561-576.

- Intrigue: increase the user's awareness (brand awareness) and make him curious about the characteristics of the product / service offered;
- Interesting: to stimulate users to click and visit the site (Click Adverstising).

A prospecting campaign must initially generate interest through the display of the ad content and then push the interested user to visit the e-commerce site by clicking on the ad (Call to Action). Once a user has shown interest in a particular product or service, but has not proceeded to the final transaction, abounding the site, the retargeting strategy comes into play, with the aim of returning the user to the site and inducing him to complete your purchase process.

Depending on the objectives of the retargeting campaign and the behavior demonstrated by the user during his experience, different retargeting methods are used:

- Standard: reports to the e-commerce site users who have visited generic pages of the e-commerce site, such as the home page, the contact page;
- Category: reports on the site users who have visited a specific category of products / services for sale;
- Search: reports to the site users who have typed specific keywords in the search engine within the site. This technique is mainly used in internet search engines, such as Google;
- Product: reports on the site users who have visited a specific product sheet for sale. This technique uses dynamic banners to show the user the images of the product / service he is interested in;
- Chart: also defined as an abandoned cart. Returns to the site users who have placed one or more products in their cart and have not completed the purchase process. Also in this case dynamic banners are used.

- Sales: retargeting intended only for users who have purchased a product on the site. Typically this technique is used to show any products related to the one purchased, as complementary products or accessories.

In a recent study, the Digital Information World[30], has shown how retargeting is considered, both academically and practically, a particularly effective strategy especially for the process of "re-enganging users":

- 70% of users subject to retargeting are more likely to complete the purchase decision-making process;
- On average, the classic display ads report a click-through rate of 0.07%; on the other hand, retargeted ads have an average click-through of 0.7%, ten times higher.
- Retargeted ads have the ability to increase the brand's online exposure by 1000%;
- 46% of marketers believe retargeting is vastly underutilized;
- 49% of the most famous brands and 68% of advertising agencies have planned to increase their investments in retargeting.

2.4. Sales and channel strategy

Marketing is a relatively young discipline and, as it is deeply linked to the economic and social changes that impact the market, it is subject to the need to adapt and evolve to identify and satisfy human needs. The channel strategies adopted by companies throughout history reflect this continuous

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[30]Digital Information Word
http://www.digitalinformationworld.com/2014/09/infographic-retargeting-advertising-statistics.html.

need for adaptation and to offer more and more value, leading to the gradual transition from a single-channel strategy to a multichannel, to reach omnichannel marketing.

The single-channel (or single-channel) marketing strategy involves the exclusive use of a channel to reach customers: the choice to operate in a physical channel, therefore, excludes the virtual one, and vice versa.

The overall shopping experience takes place through a single touch point, from which it follows that the forms of business that operate in this way can be reduced to two types: brick-and-mortar and pureclick.

Brick-and-mortar (literally "bricks and mortar") is a term that identifies companies characterized by the use of a physical store where customers go for a first impact with the product, to find sensory and technical information through the help of the sales force, and finally for the possible completion of the purchase: the whole cycle takes place within the store, which must be suitably organized to allow the customer to identify the solution to their needs in the products displayed .

On the other hand, pure-click companies are those that only operate online[31]: since the 2000s, electronic commerce has undergone an exponential increase, thanks to technological advancement and the gradual build-up of trust in the virtual world. The direct advantages of the online channel are linked to the reduction of the costs of the physical store and the possibility of overcoming geographical barriers in an attempt to reach customers; on the other hand, different needs emerge with respect to the brick-and-mortar channel: the virtual interface must be organized in such a way as to be able to communicate product information successfully and with ease of use, and delivery and delivery issues become central. of return policy, given the unavailability of a physical structure to easily interact with customers.

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[31]Ancarani, F., Costabile, M., Keller, K., Kotler, P. (2017), Marketing Management, 15th Edition, Pearson Italia. pp. 280-300, 328-360.

From a study[32]It emerges that a single-channel strategy, whether based on physical store sales or e-commerce, has advantages in terms of:

- coordination of marketing efforts;
- quality and reliability of customer service;
- focus of managerial activities in cultivating channel relationships and rationalizing costs.

The weaknesses of this strategy lie mainly in the limits of relying on a single channel: first of all, the company renounces part of the potential customers who do not come into contact with the single touch point, consequently preventing the growth of sales; moreover, having only one source of revenue creates a potentially dangerous financial imbalance in the event that a channel suffers a drastic drop in consumer appeal, or worse, cannibalization by other channels.

To date, the single-channel strategy represents a model in some cases marginal and obsolete, as the adoption of multiple channels brings undoubted benefits: this is why it is more correct to speak of multi-channel and omnichannel.

As previously stated, the evolution of marketing practices has progressively led companies to seek interaction with the customer through a plurality of contact points, thanks to the exploitation of new technologies (internet, mobile devices, e-mail ...) . The proliferation of interaction methods pushes companies to use multiple channels at the same time, giving life to a multi-channel strategy: multichannel customer management is defined as the "design, deployment, coordination and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention and

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[32]Coelho, F., Easingwood, C., Coelho, A. (2003). Exploratory evidence of channel performance in single vs multiple channel strategies. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, pp. 561-573.

development "[33]. The element that differentiates multichannel marketing from single-channel marketing is the use of multiple channels, with a particular focus on the customer: the goal, in fact, is to make the shopping experience more pleasant, accessible and complete, putting a plurality of tools at the service of customers so that they can choose the most functional alternative. In other words, the point of view on the channel is no longer that of the company that chooses how to get to the market, but becomes that of the consumer who decides how to satisfy their needs. Analyzing the definition given above, the mutuality of the benefits of multichannel marketing emerges: the value for the consumer increases and the company manages to acquire and retain customers, developing more solid relationships. In support of this argument,[34]report an analysis, conducted on one million shoppers, that the value of a multichannel customer on average exceeds that of a customer who relies exclusively on the offline or online channels, by $ 467 and $ 791 respectively. The benefits for businesses are not limited to the increased profitability of multi-channel customers, they go further and also concern the customer relationship management (CRM) area.

Other doctrine[35]proposes a scheme (fig. 7) that highlights the relationships between elements of multi-channel adopted and benefits for the consumer, which are reflected in better customer management in terms of acquisition, expansion and maintenance of the relationship over time. In particular, in the "consumer benefits" column the following are relevant for purchasing behavior:

- the increase in trust in the seller, a very important issue due to the growing virtualization of social relationships and also of economic

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[33]Neslin, S. et al. (2006). Challenges and Opportunities in Multichannel Customer Management. Journal of Service Research, pp. 95-112.

[34]Neslin, S., Shankar, V. (2009). Key Issues in Multichannel Customer Management: Current Knowledge and Future Directions. Journal of Interactive Marketing, pp. 70-81.

[35]Goersch, D. (2002). Multi-Channel Integration and Its Implications for Retail Web Sites. European Conference on Information Systems, pp. 748-758.

transactions: the amount of personal data that the customer must share opens up the issue of privacy and the ethical use of information. Gaining consumer confidence by offering a clear and coherent image of the company positively influences the propensity to buy;

- the increase in convenience, understood as the ability to find a product easily and receive it in a short time, with the ability to request a refund or a return and with a low expenditure of energy and costs. From the business side, guaranteeing such a level of service is expensive in terms of logistical complexity, but it also brings great advantages from a CRM perspective;

- widespread personalization: having information available from multiple channels allows companies to better understand each individual consumer and to guarantee them a higher level of offer from the point of view of the product but also of complementary services; moreover, mapping the preferences of already acquired customers makes it possible to better target efforts to reach possible new buyers (customer acquisition).
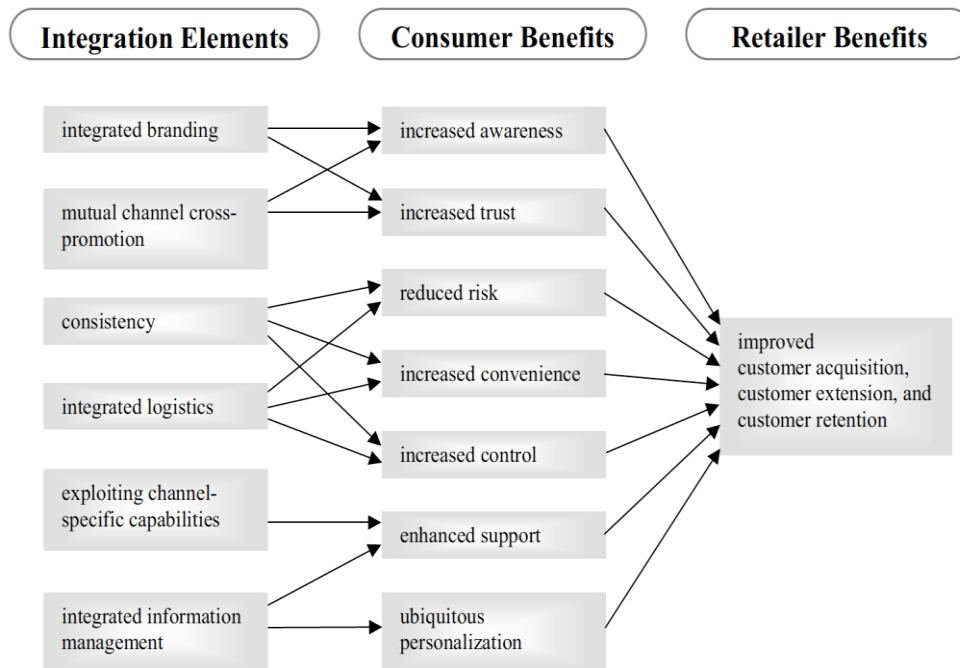
Fig. 7: Relationships between adopted multichannel elements and consumer benefits Source: Goersch, D., (2002). Multi-Channel Integration and Its Implications for Retail Web Sites. European Conference on Information Systems, pp. 748-758.

At the basis of obtaining benefits, given doctrine identifies elements of integration that companies must make their own; on the same line of thinking as the previously cited studies[36], which identifies five key challenges that must be addressed.

The first challenge concerns the degree of data integration between the different channels used, in order to determine how the interaction with the customer will take place at each stage of the purchasing process: however, the difficulty in making trace the consumer's choices especially in the pre-purchase and information search phase.

The second issue is consumer behavior in a multichannel environment: first of all, companies must understand the factors underlying the choice of

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[36]Neslin, S. et al. (2006). Challenges and Opportunities in Multichannel Customer Management. Journal of Service Research, pp. 95-112.

channel (channel attributes, individual preferences, social influence, situational factors ...), and then ask themselves about the impact of multi-channel approach on sales growth and customer loyalty: studies[37]have demonstrated the positive impact of multichannel marketing on sales, while the debate is more uncertain regarding consumer loyalty, given the contrast between the positive improvement of the service and the negative erosion of human contact in virtual channels.

Channel evaluation represents the third challenge, and is understood as determining the contribution of each existing channel, or the additional contribution of introducing a new channel; the topic also extends to the synergistic relationship that is established between the channels, also taking into account possible conflicts and cannibalizations, that is, a decline in the performance of one channel to the advantage of another that absorbs customers and profits.

The fourth important element is the allocation of resources through the different channels, and in this case a more objective choice can be made through quantitative methods that take into consideration parameters such as efficiency, the number of customers, the amount of money spent. in transactions, the degree of expansion expected for each channel[38].

Finally, the coordination of channel strategies represents the last and perhaps most important challenge, as it highlights the main weakness of a multichannel strategy: according to some scholars[39], channel management costs can account for up to about forty percent of total business costs. By integrating and sharing technologies and processes of the different channels, it is possible to obtain an improvement in the cost structure and at the same

[37]Neslin, S., Shankar, V. (2009). Key Issues in Multichannel Customer Management: Current Knowledge and Future Directions. Journal of Interactive Marketing, pp. 70-81.
[38]Neslin, S. et al. (2006). Challenges and Opportunities in Multichannel Customer Management. Journal of Service Research, pp. 95-112.
[39]Stone, M. et al. (2002). Multichannel customer management: The benefits and challenges. Journal of Database Marketing, pp. 39-52.

time a more advanced understanding of the consumer, thanks to the numerous and diversified information that each channel receives.

The main issues, therefore, become to leave the channels independent or integrate them, which channels to work in synergy and to what degree of integration. The inability of multichannel strategies to create value by unifying the shopping experience across all channels is mainly due to the choice of organizing the management of channels according to a structure that can be well identified through a similarity: the doctrine[40], in this regard, they affirm that "Channels tend to be managed and maintained in silos with multiple infrastructures, management teams, technology and, possibly, different marketing strategies".

The similarity in question is that with the silos, that is the large cylindrical containers used for the storage of raw materials: the silos are placed side by side, but the material inside each never comes into contact with the contents of the others; in the same way, each multichannel marketing channel receives information, exploits technologies and adopts strategies independently from the others. At an overall company level, this can easily lead to imbalances between one channel and another but above all potential conflicts: it can frequently happen that the information available online and offline, as well as the prices charged.

To create added value for the consumer, it is necessary to ensure a consistent experience across all channels, allowing them to switch from one to the other indifferently: this goal is pursued by an omnichannel marketing strategy.

Assuming an omnichannel perspective, the limit of managing channels for silos disappears: some scholars[41]they define omnichannel management as the synergistic management of available channels and touchpoints, in such a way

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[40]Ibid.

[41]Verhoef, P., Kannan, PK, Inman, J. (2015). From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omni-Channel Retailing Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing. Journal of Retailing, pp. 174-181.

that the experience for the consumer and the performance across channels are optimized. A further point is offered by the doctrine[42], who insist that an omnichannel strategy offers the customer a "seamless shopping experience", that is a coherent and uninterrupted experience across all channels: according to the authors, this type of relationship with the consumer is a source of differentiation and potential competitive advantage.

Compared to the multichannel strategy, therefore, omnichannel represents an evolution under various aspects, and is able to better satisfy an increasingly demanding consumer: the individual differences that are naturally found among customers make each one appreciate and value different aspects of the customer experience, and for this reason companies must ensure maximum integration of all the elements that make up the purchasing process; a doctrine[43], in this regard, he speaks of "perfect integration of the digital and the physical".

The physical, understood as the set of physical interaction modes that typically take place inside the store, brings with it the following advantages:

- assortment that allows immediate access to the product;
- purchasing process seen as an event and an experience;
- rewarding sensory experience and the opportunity to test the product;
- help and assistance from experienced sales staff.

Alongside the physical, the digital world is made up of all the innovations available thanks to advances in technology in the electronic and IT fields, and greatly enriches the shopping experience thanks to the following properties:

- rich and immediate availability of information;

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[42]Sopadjieva, E., Dholakia, U., Benjamin, B. (2017). A Study of 46,000 Shoppers Shows That Omnichannel Retailing Works. Harvard Business Review, pp. 2-4.
[43]Rigby, D. (2011). The future of shopping. Harvard Business Review, pp. 65-76.

- convenience in terms of time saved and the possibility of instant access;

- price transparency, possibility of making comparisons, promotional offers;

- sharing the experience on a social level, through advice, reviews and communication with other customers.

In the analysis of part of the doctrine[44], the concept that is decisive for differentiating omnichannel from multichannel is the integration of all points of contact: it is precisely by pursuing the complete interconnection of every moment that characterizes the shopping experience that it is possible to overcome the concept of silos, looking at all channels as parts of a coordinated whole.

The main elements, starting from the previously discussed degree of integration through all channels, concern (fig. 8)[45]:

- the objectives of the strategy, which are distinct (sales by channel, experience in the channel) in multichannel marketing, while they come together in omnichannel in order to focus efforts to create a holistic shopping experience;

- channel management, aimed at optimizing the single touch point in the first case, synergistic in the second case;

- the perception of the degree of interaction, which in the case of multichannel takes place at the channel level, while in an omnichannel strategy every type of contact occurs at the company level with the brand, which confers a unique and shared identity in each touch point.

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[44]Ibid.

[45]Juaneda-Ayensa, E., Mosquera, A., Sierra Murillo, Y. (2016). Omnichannel Customer Behavior: Key Drivers of Technology Acceptance and Use and Their Effects on Purchase Intention. Frontiers in Psychology, pp. 1-11.

	Multichannel strategy	Omnichannel strategy
Concept	Division between the channels	Integration of all widespread channels
Degree of integration	Partial	Total
Channel scope	Retail channels: store, website, and mobile channel	Retail channels: store, website, mobile channel, social media, customer touchpoints
Customer relationship focus: brand vs. channel	Customer-retail channel focus	Customer-retail channel-brand focus
Objectives	Channel objectives (sales per channel, experience per channel)	All channels work together to offer a holistic customer experience
Channel management	Per channel	Cross-channel
	Management of channels and customer touchpoints geared toward optimizing the experience with each one	Synergetic management of the channels and customer touchpoints geared toward optimizing the holistic experience
	Perceived interaction with the channel	Perceived interaction with the brand
Customers	No possibility of triggering interaction	Can trigger full interaction
	Use channels in parallel	Use channels simultaneously
Retailers	No possibility of controlling integration of all channels	Control full integration of all channels
Sales people	Do not adapt selling behavior	Adapt selling behavior using different arguments depending on each customer's needs and knowledge of the product

Fig. 8: Multichannel - omnichannel strategy comparison. Source: Juaneda-Ayensa et al. (2016).

Furthermore, the point of view of part of the doctrine is interesting[46], which highlights the difference between multichannel and omnichannel speaking, respectively, of a tactical and strategic approach: while in the first case the focus is directly on channels, seen as tools through which the company can reach customers (inside-out approach), in the second case it is crucial to take the customer's perspective to create a profitable and lasting relationship in the long term (outside-in approach).

The direct consequence of the progressive transition to omnichannel marketing is the disappearance of the distinction between physical and virtual: in the past, physical retailers focused on the advantage offered by the possibility of experimenting the product through sensory contact and the

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[46]Pophal, L. (2015). Multichannel vs. Omnichannel Marketing: Is There a Difference, and What Does It Mean to You ?. EcontentMag.com, pp. 15-20.

relationship with the sales force; on the other hand, online sellers attempted to capture customers with a wide selection of products and affordable prices. Today we are seeing an industry transformation towards a model aimed at helping the consumer rather than focusing on transactions[47].

The fundamental driver of the change is technology, as happened with the progressive introduction of online channels: in particular, according to this orientation, mobile technologies can help all companies to expand their market and attract new consumers.

Mobile phones (today commonly defined smartphones), in fact, have unique characteristics compared to all the other tools that can be used to create interactions: first of all, their small size means that everyone always has their smartphone with them; secondly, the availability of the Internet connection 24 hours a day, seven days a week, opens up a range of possibilities for companies to dialogue by exploiting the online channel.

The combination of the two elements characterizing mobile devices has led to the progressive use of the latter as "firm-initiated touch points"[48], or contact points through which companies, on their own initiative, offer personalized promotional services based on the user's search history or on the basis of geographical location; Location services, in particular, can be particularly useful in the context of the in-store experience, as the company can offer promotions or provide additional information to the customer located near the store, or even to the customer who is in the store of a market competitor. Those previously exposed are just some of the many possibilities offered by the mobile world, which is growing in importance and volume of business

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[47]Brynjolfsson, E., Hu, IJ, Rahman, M. (2013). Competing in the Age of Omnichannel Retailing. MIT Sloan Management Review, pp. 1-7.
[48]Lemon, K., Verhoef, P. (2016). Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey. Journal of Marketing, pp. 69-96.

according to various sources: an Accenture study shows that 34% of consumers use smartphones to find information in the physical store,[49].

A further important consideration is that the growing use of mobile devices is facilitating the spread of new purchasing behaviors among consumers, with important implications in the conduct of the customer experience: this is the case of the so-called showrooming and webrooming.

Showrooming consists in the practice of finding information on the product through the physical channel, and completing the purchase online, for example via smartphone[50]. Contrary to what one might think, showrooming and the constant increase in online sales do not mark the decline of the physical channel; on the contrary, the role of physical space remains central and is reviewed and adapted according to the omnichannel strategy.

The showroom, in fact, is conceived as a space inside the store where the customer can test the characteristics and sensations of the product, find information with the help of the sales staff, surrounded by a comfortable and inviting environment. The showroom attracts the customer to the physical store because it helps to reduce uncertainty about the value of the product[51] and then the online channel is used for the transaction at a generally lower price.

The advantages for the company are the possibility of engaging the customer in a stronger relationship thanks to a higher quality service, and the lower costs associated with the physical store (typically, warehouse costs) as it is sufficient to maintain a higher level of inventory. low to fulfill the information function[52].

[49]Melero, I., Sese, J., Verhoef, P. (2016). Recasting the Customer Experience in Today's Omni-channel Environment. Universia Business Review, pp. 18-37.
[50]Ibid.
[51]Gao, F., Su, X. (2017). Online and Offline Information for Omnichannel Retailing. Manufacturing & Service Operations Management, pp. 84-98.
[52]Ibid.

However, the consumer's purchasing preferences vary individually and above all according to the product category (fig. 9): the study shows the tendency to prefer in-store purchases in particular for categories that include differentiated products and whose process of The purchase requires direct contact with the sales staff to obtain advice and information. According to the research, the products suitable for showroom display are "Furniture & homeware" and "Jewelery / watches", respectively furniture and jewelery and watches products.

Preference to buy online versus in-store

Online		In-store
60%	Books, music, movies & video games	28%
39%	Toys	37%
43%	Consumer electronics & computers	51%
36%	Sports equipment/outdoor	44%
37%	Health & beauty (cosmetics)	47%
40%	Clothing & footwear	51%
32%	Jewelery/watches	49%
33%	Household appliances	56%
30%	DIY/home improvements	52%
30%	Furniture & homeware	59%
23%	Grocery	70%

Fig. 9: Buy online vs in - store. Source: PwC (2017). Total Retail 2017. www.pwc.com/2017/totalretail, pp. 1-45.

Webrooming, also defined as virtual showrooming[53], on the other hand, represents an inverse purchasing behavior compared to the showrooming

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[53]Ibid.

described above: in this case, consumers search for information online and then buy at the physical store[54].

The reasons behind webrooming are many, and mainly concern the advantages related to carrying out a transaction in a physical store, including not having to wait for the product to be shipped (often for a fee), the experiential component of touching the product firsthand. before making the decision to buy, the possibility of obtaining discounts at the time of purchase and the ease in making a return in case of problems.

As for the pre-purchase phase, i.e. that of searching for information, it is convenient to use the web to make comparisons between numerous alternatives and to get an idea of the product before possibly going to the store for the purchase: the main function of webrooming, therefore, is the reduction of uncertainty about the value of the product[55].

From an omnichannel perspective, centered on customer needs, companies offer the best possible tools to try to imitate physical presence and simulate the experience that could be had through physical contact: although completely eliminating uncertainty is impossible, some scholars[56]found that the Internet sites that best provide information are able to reduce the typical problem of online commerce, that is, returns, which according to some scholars[57]they represent one third of total sales. However, other studies[58]point out that virtual showrooms could make online commerce so convenient and

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[54]Verhoef, P., Kannan, PK, Inman, J. (2015). From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omni-Channel Retailing Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing. Journal of Retailing, pp. 174-181.
[55]Gao, F., Su, X. (2017). Online and Offline Information for Omnichannel Retailing. Manufacturing & Service Operations Management, pp. 84-98.
[56]Bell, D., Gallino, S., Moreno, A. (2014). How to win in an omnichannel world. MIT Sloan Management Review, p.45.
[57]Banjo, S. (2013). Rampant returns plague e-retailers. Wall Street Journal (www.wsj.com/articles/rampantreturns-plague-eretailers-1387752786?tesla=y).
[58]Gao, F., Su, X. (2017). Online and Offline Information for Omnichannel Retailing. Manufacturing & Service Operations Management, pp. 84-98.

attractive that customers migrate from the offline to the online channel, increasing the overall number of returns despite the decreasing return rate.

A further advantage of webrooming concerns access to information about the availability of the product in stock: knowing that the goods are available attracts the customer to the store, as the risk of an empty trip is eliminated. However, if stocks are out of stock, the customer will forgo the purchase, reducing the utility of the physical store.

For the reasons previously analyzed, showrooms, web rooms and information on availability are subject to overlap and are not perfectly complementary tools. In this regard, the scholars[59] suggest two alternative choices:

- for products with high online return rates, the physical showroom is the choice for retailers;
- when the return rate is low and more manageable, it may be useful to implement a virtual showroom to facilitate webrooming, and at the same time provide information on product availability to maintain the attractiveness of the physical channel.

The new ways in which customers approach their purchasing process, and the growing need to be able to move through multiple touch points to take advantage of the advantages provided by each of them, make omnichannel a new and essential feature for companies that want succeed in serving the consumer's needs in the best possible way.

The sales staff traditionally plays a fundamental role within the shopping experience: through the collection and communication of information, dialogue and assistance, the sales clerk guides the customer in his purchase choices. In an omnichannel context, the perfect integration between channels (also from the point of view of information consistency) implies that the sales staff:

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[59]Ibid.

- must possess constantly updated and in-depth knowledge and skills, to be in line with the quality of the service offered;

- must acquire the awareness that their work may not lead to immediate conversion into a transaction, due to the new purchasing methods that exploit the absence of borders between physical and digital (showrooming, for example);

- it becomes a real touch point, which operates in an integrated and synergistic way with other channels; as already mentioned, in fact, the customer could search for detailed information by asking a sales employee, and then buy on the website.

As with the role of the physical store, the staff does not lose their functionality and are not destined to disappear; however, the change also involves people, giving rise to new needs, new skills to be implemented, new ways of interacting with the customer. The main areas of impact for the sales force therefore concern the type of customer assistance in the phases of their purchase path and the approach to be taken at the time of sale.

The role of the salesperson, commonly defined as a salesperson, has been redefined in recent years by the different path that the customer takes from identifying a need to purchasing the product that satisfies him. The customer journey, today, begins when the potential customer comes into contact with the company by carrying out research independently (especially through digital channels such as company website, platforms for comparing products and social media); according to some[60], the buyer is already halfway through the evaluation process when they physically meet the seller for the first time. Effectively exploiting the synergies of an omnichannel strategy means capturing information that comes simultaneously from multiple points of contact, to obtain a unique customer view and allow salespeople to customize

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[60]Sluis, S. (2014). 4 ways to master omnichannel selling. CRM Magazine (www.destinationCRM.com), pp. 48-51.

communication based on customer needs. The doctrine[61]identifies four key steps to better manage the omnichannel customer relationship:

1. know the customer's preferred channel. In order to establish a positive and profitable relationship, it is necessary to make the customer feel at ease by allowing him to choose the method of communication most pleasing to him: the coherence of the message, characteristic of omnichannel marketing, manifests itself in the ability to make the experience equivalent through all channels. Salespeople maintain their fundamental role in providing information and, especially for purchases whose decision-making process is long and complex, the customer often decides to deepen the information found online through direct communication with an employee. Technology is not an adversary, but an ally: by exploiting the data collected when the buyer searches online,

2. trace the customer journey. In the past, the task of salespeople was to convey the information obtained about the customer in a system that, however, received data that were often incomplete, disconnected or discordant. The driver of the new way of operating is always technology, which integrates information from the various points of contact and helps to create a unified overview of the customer: according to an analysis by Forrester Research[62]a potential buyer interacts on average with a number of touch points ranging from eight to twelve, before interacting with a sales employee. It is therefore necessary to grasp the numerous information coming from the website, from online communities, from the exchange of e-mails to decide if, when and how often to move the relationship towards one-to-one direct communication.

[61]Ibid.
[62]Ibid.

3. take advantage of the conversation on social media. The world of social media is considered a great ecosystem capable of connecting people to discuss products, ideas and companies. The main topics of conversation must be monitored to understand which elements the perception of brand value revolves around, and the company can also actively interact with users by listening and responding. The advantage of social media communication is twofold and involves both parties: the buyer acquires personalized, complete and specific information on the topics of interest to her; the selling company, on the other hand, differs from the competition and manages to involve the user even earlier in the purchase cycle. Furthermore, the salespeople see their consultative role enhanced and extended to the digital world,[63].

4. Refer to the customer, not the channel. This point concerns the absolute need to overcome the logic of silos not only in terms of results in terms of sales, but also in the relationship with the customer throughout the entire shopping experience. The latter must be seen from a perspective that includes all interactions, not taken individually but considering them as part of an integrated communication history[64]. Referring to the customer takes on the meaning of effort by the company in obtaining complete information to improve the quality level of the experience for the final consumer: the management of the relationship with the customer becomes, in this way, a source of advantage. competitive.

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[63]Ibid.
[64]Ibid.

To summarize and corroborate the previous analysis, it is useful to integrate it with the research conducted by some scholars[65]: as regards communication tools and platforms, the critical elements are the growing importance of social media to attract and engage customers, and the ability of companies to collect and analyze information. Some scholars[66]underline the importance of relying on customer relationship management (CRM) systems capable of collecting customer data in a unitary and systematic way, and then exploiting them in more precise segmentation and targeting processes: in this way the effectiveness of the staff sales is maximized through specialization and focus of effort.

The impact of an omnichannel strategy on the sales staff is not limited to the need to follow the customer through the entire customer journey: when the physical meeting between buyer and seller takes place, the behavior that the latter puts in place is also fundamental. in place; the theme takes on greater importance from an omnichannel perspective precisely because of the changing attitudes of customers during their shopping experience.

Scholars[67]highlight in particular how today the consumer can be defined as "multi-device" and "multiscreen": technology, especially mobile, leads to a situation in which the customer no longer accesses the channel, but is always within it or in more than one at the same time. The resulting omnichannel customer figure is that of an individual who expects a uniform experience and who above all, knowing how to get information, has a greater perception of control over the interaction with the salesperson.

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[65]Cummins, S., Peltier, J., Dixon, A. (2016). Omni-channel research framework in the context of personal selling and sales management: A review and research extensions. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, pp. 2-16.

[66]Raman, P., Wittmann, CM, Rauseo, NA (2006). Leveraging CRM for sales: the role of organizational capabilities in successful CRM implementation. Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, pp. 39-53.

[67]Juaneda-Ayensa, E., Mosquera, A., Sierra Murillo, Y. (2016). Omnichannel Customer Behavior: Key Drivers of Technology Acceptance and Use and Their Effects on Purchase Intention. Frontiers in Psychology, pp. 1-11.

The model elaborated part of the doctrine[68]identifies the elements that influence the purchase of a consumer who uses multiple channels during his customer journey.

There is an outline of the path that goes from the search for information ("search") to the purchase decision ("purchase intention") (fig. 9): in particular, the relationship between searching for information on multiple channels and the predisposition to conclude a purchase is deemed positive. According to the doctrine[69]in fact, the omnichannel consumer proves to perceive a higher value, due to the greater research effort and the possibility of using more channels at the same time; this translates into an increase in purchase intent[70].

Another element that affects the final purchase is the perceived control, which is also considered a determining element by other doctrine[71]. The perception of control, from an omnichannel point of view, can be considered as a positive feeling of security that the customer feels when he is well informed about the product and therefore can orient himself towards the best choice. In the past, the salesperson was the main catalyst for a sale; today the customer is "empowered"[72], that is, entitled to control, by technology.

The mediation implemented by the perception of control takes place in two ways: the first determines the positive relationship between research on multiple channels and the perception of control, the second instead identifies

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[68]Rippé, CB, Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Yurova, Y., Hale, D., Sussan, F. (2016). Guiding when the consumer is in control: the moderating effect of adaptive selling on the purchase intention of the multichannel consumer. Journal of Consumer Marketing, pp. 469-478.
[69]Ibid.
[70]Kleijnen, M., Ruyter, K. and Wetzels, M. (2007). An assessment of value creation in mobile service delivery and the moderating role of time consciousness. Journal of Retailing, pp. 33-46.
[71]Juaneda-Ayensa, E., Mosquera, A., Sierra Murillo, Y. (2016). Omnichannel Customer Behavior: Key Drivers of Technology Acceptance and Use and Their Effects on Purchase Intention. Frontiers in Psychology, pp. 1-11.
[72]Pires, GD, Stanton, J. and Rita, P. (2006). The internet, consumer empowerment and marketing strategies. European Journal of Marketing, pp. 936-949.

the direct and positive influence of the perceived control on the will to buy, thanks to the greater perception of the value of the purchase in progress.

The role of the salesperson emerges at the moment of direct interaction with the customer: as already mentioned[73], the perception of control is a growing phenomenon and the majority of potential buyers arrive already partially informed at the point of sale, thanks to digital channels. As the model illustrates, adaptive selling techniques positively influence the relationship between perceived control and purchase intention.

Adaptive selling can be defined as the modification of sales behavior within an interaction or between one interaction and another, depending on the situation.[74]. Adaptation manifests itself through the quantity, frequency and substance of the information shared, but also with changes in the communication style: being able to satisfy the customer's preferences contributes to increasing the perception of control, and with it the propensity to buy.
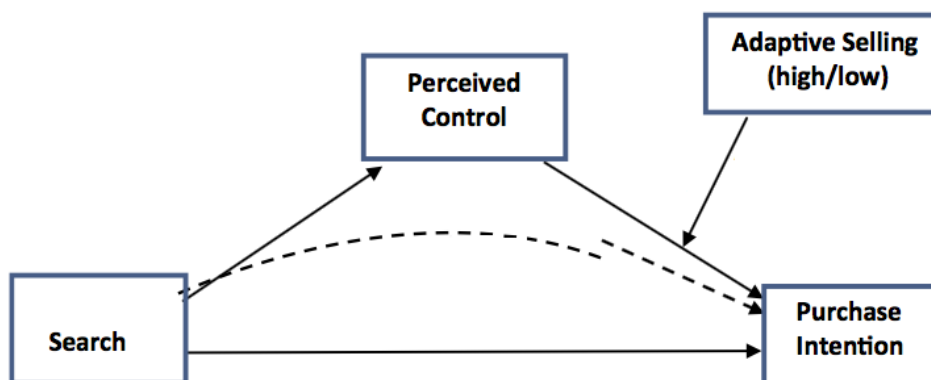

Fig. 9: By "search" to "purchase intention". Source: Rippé et al. (2016)

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[73]Sluis, S. (2014). 4 ways to master omnichannel selling. CRM Magazine (www.destinationCRM.com), pp. 48-51.

[74]Rippé, CB, Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Yurova, Y., Hale, D., Sussan, F. (2016). Guiding when the consumer is in control: the moderating effect of adaptive selling on the purchase intention of the multichannel consumer. Journal of Consumer Marketing, pp. 469-478.

The statistical study[75], conducted on 387 US students to verify the consistency of the hypotheses of the model described above, showed that:

- perceived control (PC) plays a fundamental role in mediating between research activities and purchase intentions (PI);
- there is not sufficient statistical significance to argue that the consumer moves directly from the initial research phase to the purchase decision, further confirming that the perception of control is an element that significantly affects the purchase process;
- a high degree of adaptation in the approach to selling ("high adaptive selling") positively affects the relationship between perceived control and propensity to buy; it is possible to represent (fig. 10) the graphic elaboration of the impact of adaptive selling (the blue line illustrates the result of a high degree of adaptation, while the red line concerns the impact of a slightly marked adaptation).
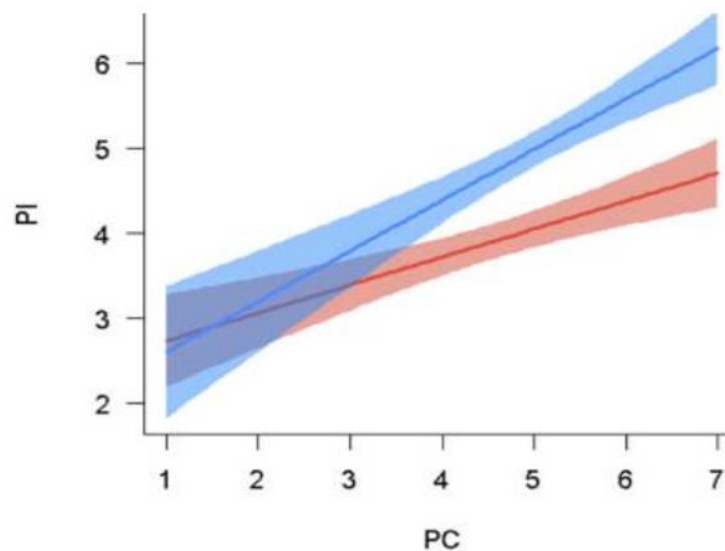

Fig. 11: Impact of adaptive selling. Source: Rippé et al. (2016)

[75]Ibid.

The conclusion is drawn[76]is that the sales force is by no means obsolete; on the contrary, through adaptive selling it has a fundamental persuasive role for the customer. At the managerial level, the non-substitutability of the salespeople's ability to adapt implies the planning and implementation of staff training programs.

The adaptive selling technique is studied in greater depth by the doctrine[77], which identify two sub-dimensions of the phenomenon: they speak, in this regard, of non-interactive adaptive selling and interactive adaptive selling. The first consists in determining the needs in terms of information sought by each omnichannel consumer; the second refers to the inclination to adjust the sales style and possible solutions during an interaction. In both cases, the customer appreciates that the salesperson directs his or her efforts towards satisfying the personally expressed needs. However, the two types of adaptation approaches do not have the same effectiveness in all situations: the type of product, for example, is a discriminating element in determining the best behavior to adopt. Scholars[78]make a distinction based on:

- utilitarian products, i.e. functional products. In this case, the customer is oriented towards an effective and efficient purchase in terms of costs and time: to optimize his choice, he will avoid contact with staff, unless this is a quick and complete source of information. A non-interactive approach is important to understand what information is needed, and to what depth.

- hedonic products, i.e. hedonistic products. The entire purchasing process is geared towards giving life to a pleasant experience: touching the product first hand or talking to an employee adds value

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[76]Ibid.
[77]Yurova, Y., Rippé, C., Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Sussan, F., Arndt, A. (2017). Not all adaptive selling to omniconsumers is influential: The moderating effect of product type. Journal of retailing and consumer services, pp. 271-277.
[78]Ibid.

to the experience, therefore a type of interactive approach is more suitable.

The conclusion that emerges from this research is that both methods of adaptation must be studied and appropriately adopted based on the sales context. The thesis most recently reported[79], as well as the previous one[80], suggest the implementation of training programs for the sales force to better manage both situations. In the case of non-interactive adaptive selling, the seller must be able to understand how well the customer he is dealing with is informed, asking questions about the type of research conducted before going to the store; if the situation, on the other hand, requires interactive adaptive selling, the competence to be developed will be the ability to adapt one's style to the client's personality.

2.5. CRM

One of the customer-oriented approaches is Customer Relationship Management, better known by the acronym CRM.
It is an integrated approach for the management and development of relationships with the aim of building customer loyalty; a combination of people, processes and technology that facilitates knowledge of a company's customers[81].

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[79]Ibid.
[80]Rippé, CB, Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Yurova, Y., Hale, D., Sussan, F. (2016). Guiding when the consumer is in control: the moderating effect of adaptive selling on the purchase intention of the multichannel consumer. Journal of Consumer Marketing, pp. 469-478.

[81]Chen IJ, Popovich K., 2003. Understanding customer relationship management (CRM).

CRM reflects an integration of enterprise-wide technologies in its integrity such as data warehouse, web site, administration, sales, marketing and production[82]. CRM applications help answer questions like "What products or services are important to customers? Which packaging do they prefer? Size and color? "

CRM mainly takes the form of software useful for collecting contact information, studying functional needs and measuring transactions. Over time, however, we tried to adapt CRM software to the evolution of the market considering the need to break away from traditional channels to focus on social ones[83].

Thus was born the Social CRM with the aim of involving customers more through collaborative communication. In addition to monitoring traditional interactions, SCRM software examines information from channels such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and online review platforms.

However, it is an approach that is limited to analyzing relationships with customers: the emotional bond, as in customer satisfaction, disappears.

At the base of CRM there is Relationship Marketing with the aim of improving long-term relationships with customers. In the article "Preventing the Premature Death of Relationaship Marketing"[84]it is highlighted how the discipline in question represents a turning point from a theoretical point of view, however, on a practical level, entailing confusion and stress for customers: they feel manipulated by the new approach that companies use with the intention of satisfying their needs. From the article emerges a clear criticism from the authors who affirm that the enthusiasm with which the

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[82]Bose R, 2002. Customer relationship management: key components for IT success. Industrial Management & Data Systems, 2002, 102, 2, 89-97.
[83]Choudhury MM, Harrigan P., 2014. CRM to social CRM: the integration of new technologies into customer relationship management. Journal of Strategic Marketing, January 2014, 22. 2, 149-176.
[84]S. Fournier et al., 1998. Harvard Business Review on Customer Relationship Management.

company promotes this type of approach is not justified, given that the customer does not always want to be part of this relationship.

For example, consider what is happening with the telephone companies: customers are stunned by the thousands of offers that each operator proposes to reserve first place in the ranking. Mobile home, fiber and internet offers as a competitive advantage, but we certainly cannot speak of a relationship in the strict sense. The same reasoning can be done with airlines: just think of how difficult it is to contact low-cost airlines in case of need. Customer relationship management is a fundamental competitive lever for companies, but they must learn to implement efficient strategies.

The expectations of modern consumers are high and CRM has represented only the first step towards managing relationships with them: the sole management of a company's interactions with its customers is limiting to say the least for companies. The next step is better known as CEM, customer experience management. While CRM considers customers in statistical terms, CEM takes a more qualitative approach. Customer experience management tends to focus on the customer as an individual and on the importance of providing them with a consistent experience in every touchpoint with the company. This allows us to offer greater personalization of the experience taking into account the preferences of the consumer.

CHAPTER II
DIGITAL MARKETING AND SPORTWEAR

1. Sportwear: peculiarities of the sector and overview of the global market

Between trends and the various sporting events that follow each other over time there is a very solid union, in fact, thanks to events such as the Olympics or the soccer world cup, many brands have the opportunity to highlight their products.

According to a study, the sportswear market is influenced by two elements, on the one hand there are the variable costs of materials and design that influence the customer in the purchase, on the other hand there are more sustainable products.

Both variables combined with marketing campaigns with sponsorships of famous athletes and celebrities, produces an excellent earning prospect.

The sportswear business is booming, according to an Export planning report, Italian exports are highly dynamic due to increased sporting practice (fig. 12).
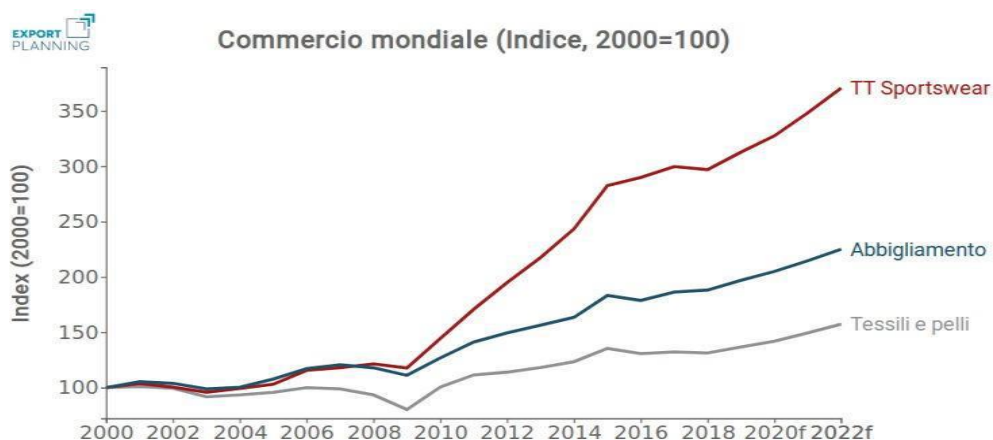
Fig. 12: Comparison of the evolution of the sector with benchmarks. Source: https://www.exportplanning.com/it/magazine/article/2019/10/02/abbigliamento-sportivo-e-textile-technical-growth-dynamics-particularly-accelerated-at-the-Italian-level-and-above all-
international/.

Taking into consideration 100 as an index, the graph shows that from the 2000s to today the value of sportswear has tripled, reaching 350 and is continuously growing in the years to come.

In a forecast horizon up to 2022, Italian sportswear exports will grow at an average rate of 3%

In terms of sales, with a share of 12.4% in the market in Italy, Adidas is identified as one of the leading brands together with Nike obviously.

Adidas is also the technical sponsor of Juventus, the link with the football teams and players, in fact, is an essential element of the brand's image[85].

The importance of the sportswear industry in the world economy is also demonstrated by the numbers, as well as by market research on consumers.

The available data, and the research carried out, divide the broad sector into specific sub-categories ranging from performance apparel to apparel and footwear sport-inspired.

The first of these sub-categories includes clothing designed and created for actual sporting activity, which is often also referred to as activewear.

The second, on the other hand, is the one that plays a predominant role in the sector in terms of sales volumes and market shares. It includes all products, clothing and footwear, which take inspiration from technical products but are intended for uses that go beyond physical activity in the strict sense. Often these products are purchased for comfortable and informal everyday use.

Although it has been specified that the main interest is on everything that sportswear includes in the extended definition, it is considered useful, to frame the economic value of the sector, to report evaluations and graphs

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[85]https://www.exportplanning.com/it/magazine/mobile-article/2019/10/02/sportswear- and-textile-technical-growth-dynamics-particularly-accelerated-at-the-Italian-level- and - above all - international /.

concerning both the aforementioned categories. The reports available online and made free by the various research agencies or international newspapers offer information that is the most up-to-date for 2016 but with detailed information relating to previous years. Alongside this, they propose future forecasts that are considered very reliable and sometimes verified by scholars and economists for the current years.

Wanting to understand geographically how growth is distributed, it is useful to focus on another figure (Fig. 14) proposed by the Catalyst corporate finance agency.

Although referring to 2013 data, it clearly highlights which areas are most interested in the growth of the sector. Developing countries, especially Eastern Europe, South America or Asia, are expected to have much higher growth rates than more developed countries which, although growing, have lower rates.

The revenues calculated for the year 2013 in the sportswear sector are higher for the North American and Western European countries.
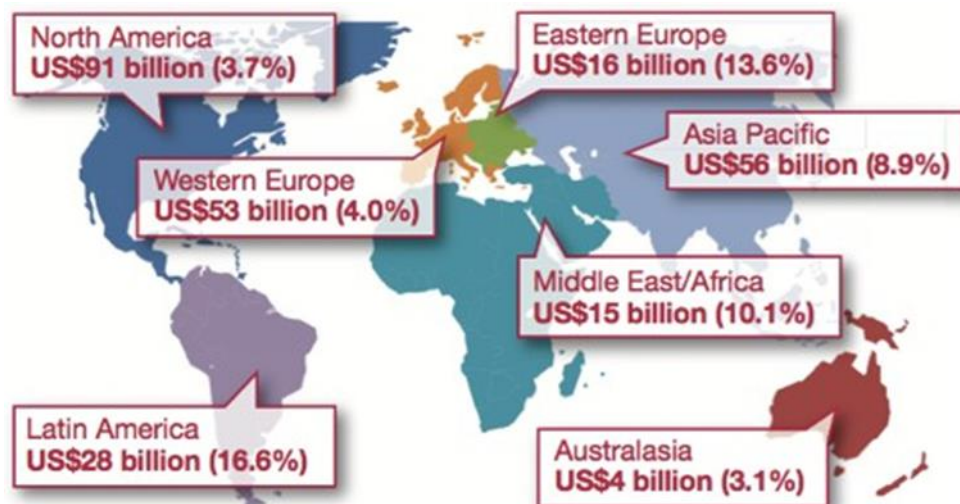
Source: Global sportwear market by region. Source: Catalyst corporate finance, Global sportwear sector.

All these values refer to the sportswear sector in its broader meaning, including both sports equipment and clothing and footwear for daily use.

It is now interesting to understand which category is the one that drives the sales of the sector and according to recent studies it can be seen that both the performance and sport-inspired sectors have had a significant increase in sales volume over the last 5 years since 2009. to 2014.

For the performance category there was a jump of almost + 7%, while for sport-inspired products, sales went from around 80 billion to over 100 billion. The outdoor sector also experienced an increase in volumes but of lesser consistency than those mentioned (Fig. 15).
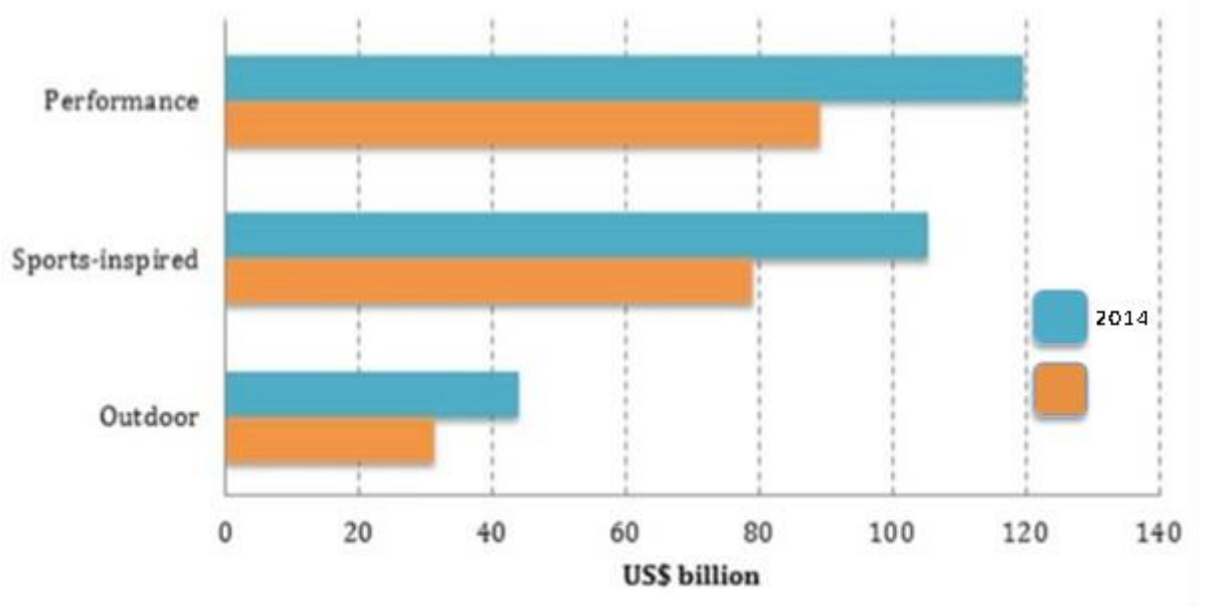

Fig. 15: Sportwear sales volume by category. Source Euromonitor international (2015), New insights in the appeal and footwear market in 2015.

The country that will have the dominant role in the industrial economy is China, which by 2025 will see its sales volume increase by 10%, acquiring 26% of the market share.

Followed by Europe and the USA with important shares, respectively of 21% and 14%, but with a relatively low rate of increase.

The highest growth rate of the market belongs to India, a country in strong development and with strong impulses of Western culture that invade one of the most populous markets in the world.

The reasons that can support the forecasts of an increase in the market, even in the medium to long term, are numerous. Consumers have just begun to focus on a healthy and active lifestyle, this implies a need for adequate products to live the sporting experience and communicate their values of well-being. The number of people practicing sports around the world is increasing, creating new market opportunities for companies and retailers in the sector (fig. 16).
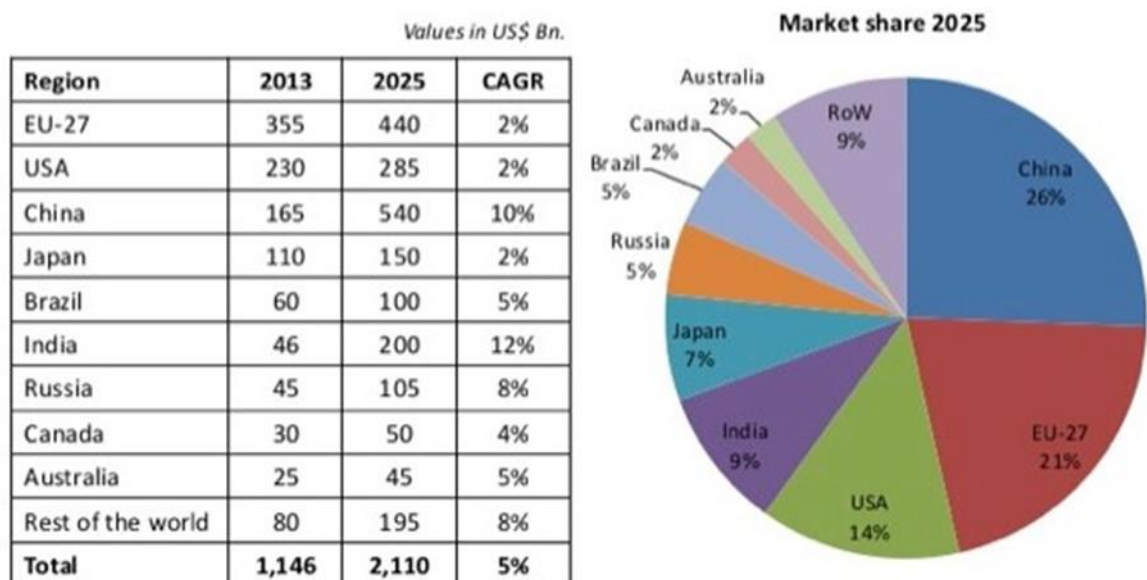
Values in US$ Bn.

Region	2013	2025	CAGR
EU-27	355	440	2%
USA	230	285	2%
China	165	540	10%
Japan	110	150	2%
Brazil	60	100	5%
India	46	200	12%
Russia	45	105	8%
Canada	30	50	4%
Australia	25	45	5%
Rest of the world	80	195	8%
Total	1,146	2,110	5%

Market share 2025

Fig. 16: Market forecast for 2025. Source: Role of indian texile and appeal industry in changing global supply demand scenario, Wazir management consulting.

Another key point is the technological innovation taking place also in this economic sector, and the attention that consumers pay to this aspect. This factor is essential to offer more attractive products and greater added value for those who use them, who will be willing to pay even higher sums to take advantage of technology and innovation that improve the experience.

Finally, as already mentioned in the previous paragraph, a great cause of the increase in the sportswear market is the mix that is increasingly being created with fashion. Casual and informal design, combined with athletic performance, converge in a trend that demonstrates the progressive cancellation of the boundary between sport and fashion. The demand for comfortable, innovative and versatile lifestyle products is increasing and sportswear meets exactly these needs.

In the sector, there are large international groups that include multiple brands, even from different sectors, and among these stand out in particular four holding companies that together obtain almost 60 billion annually in revenues.

To select the brands on which the digital customer experience will be analyzed, these large groups were considered and the most important brands in each of them were identified, alongside some Italian brands that stand out on the international scene while competing alone.

2. The sportswear consumer

In marketing and communication, one of the first rules to be adopted to plan any strategy or campaign is to know the recipient, whether called target, audience or customer is always the interlocutor of every activity.

In this case it is useful to understand to whom all the considerations made so far on the theme of the customer journey and customer experience are addressed. Who is the customer in this document? What are its peculiar characteristics?

To answer these questions it is necessary to start from the reasons behind the choice of sportswear product by consumers.

The primary need for the purchase can be identified in the intention to practice physical activity with the aim of paying more and more attention to one's personal health.

Alongside this, they strongly influence consumer choices, including the need to have a comfortable and practical product, without giving up an attractive and modern look. In fact, those who buy a sportswear item often pay attention not only to the technical characteristics, but also to the style and aesthetic elements of the product.

From here we can understand how fashion and outward appearance greatly influence people's behavior, both in terms of purchase and in terms of the decision to practice sports.

This is especially true for the categories of adolescents and women, who are the most attentive to well-being, comfort and use these products on a daily basis.

However, there is an important distinction to be made between the segment of young consumers, under 35, and adults, over the age of 35.

For young people, the reasons for purchasing are often linked to the brand, the style that is recognized as a synonym of quality and the psychological obsolescence of the products already owned. Furthermore, for this segment the price is a secondary factor that comes after the consideration of the brand and the psychological importance it has for the group to which the young person belongs. In fact, the product is often seen as a symbol of participation in a community, of sharing ideals and models of life and of attention to fashion and current trends.

On the other hand, adults favor sportswear products for reasons related to the comfort and wearability of the products, often preferred for everyday life to the rigid formality of tailored suits. For this group of consumers the price is a determining factor in making the purchase and in this case the quality is perceived through the perception of the materials used.

The factors that determine the repurchase, for adults are often linked to the wear of the product rather than the intention to update themselves to fashion trends.

It must be considered that in the future today's young people will maintain and evolve the informal mentality that they already demonstrate, and it is plausible that comfortable, informal and qualitatively good products will be increasingly preferred as long as a chic and fashionable style is maintained.

According to some research carried out by the Fashion Sportsystem Observatory and Sita Ricerca for Assosport, reported in the MarkUp magazine[86], the reflection is confirmed that, in Italy, the purchase of sportswear products is increasingly determined by the presence of a famous brand and with the main purpose of appearing.

The consumer is increasingly wearing sportswear while not practicing sports and confirms that this is a fashion trend. This category of products fully meets the needs of customer segments with a mix of different needs.

From the data reported in the article[87]out of the total of people who call themselves sports, a good part of the population, only 39.9% also practice sports, while the remaining 60.1% boasts a sporting style but does not practice any type of activity.

An interesting research for the topics addressed in this thesis, is proposed by the Millward Brown Digital agency which traces the purchase path of consumers of certain types of products. Among those analyzed is the athetic footwear shoppers category that we can undoubtedly consider falling within the broader sportswear sector. It is considered useful to analyze this path in order to understand how the theme of the customer decision journey and the shopping experience is evolving.

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[86]Bertolini A. (2009), Sportswear for Italians is fashion & functional, Mark Up, July.
[87]Ibid.

According to the research, consumers use the online channel a lot as a source of information but only a third of them complete the process by purchasing through a digital marketplace.

These users use the official websites of the brands mostly in the initial, informative and evaluation phase, but abandon them once they have decided to conclude the purchase, often favoring physical channels or at most other more convenient and trusted digital places.

From here it is clear that the offline experience in the stores is still relevant. The main reasons why the physical store remains crucial in the purchase process are in the first place the possibility of trying on the shoe and then having the product immediately available at no additional cost.

More and more, as we have seen, the point of sale is also transforming itself into a place for information and testing of the product of which the online purchase is completed, and this is also confirmed in this research.

The internal struggle between the sales channels, and the search for the integration of the various platforms into a single seamless experience. is the basis of the strategies that companies are implementing to capture customers at each point of contact in a relevant way, and to do this it is important to know why one channel is preferred over another.

In 2013, the American web analysis agency Compete carried out a research in a national sample of consumers from which the reasons that push people to choose the physical channel rather than the digital one to conclude the purchase process emerged (fig . 16 and 17).
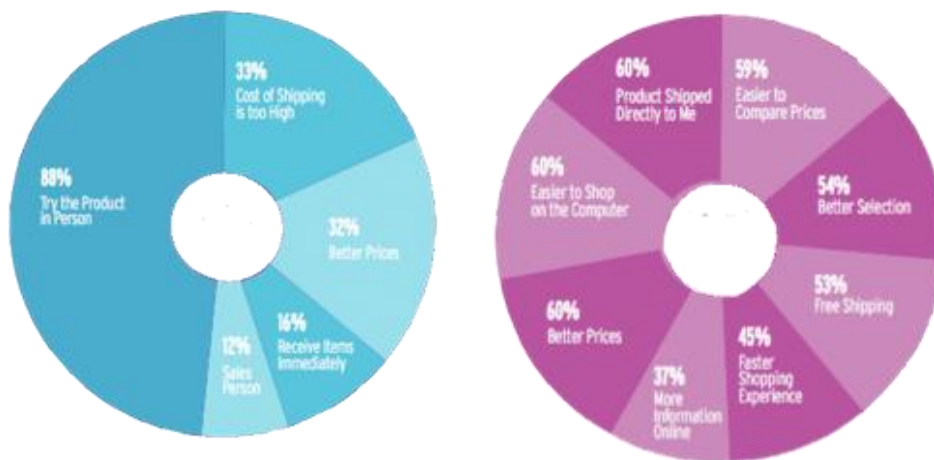
Fig. 16: reasons for preference Fig. 17: reasons for preference of online store
physical store
Source: Complete path to purchase millwardbrown.com

As you can see, offline sales places are preferred as there is the possibility of concluding the purchase with greater guarantees of satisfaction, especially for product testing and consultation with specialized personnel. On the other hand, the preferences of the online channel are varied and linked to the wide choice, the convenience of home delivery and the ease of finding the best deals.

However, all research agrees that products from this sector are among the favorites of consumers' choices when completing or renewing their wardrobe. The current trend is even giving birth to a new term that will characterize the coming years, this word is athleisure[88].

In November 2015, Vanessa Friedman, fashion critic of The New York Times, analyzed this fashion and traced the cause of the spread in the habit of wearing, by the female people, the leggings beyond the confines of the gyms and the gymnastic activity.

From his direct observation of the people participating in the New York marathon, which annually collects more than 50,000 registrations from more

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[88]Tabuchi H. (2016), Products and competition stretch market for 'athleisure' clothing, The New York Times, March.

than 100 countries, he was able to note how sportswear has been cleared even for different contexts and practices not specific to certain products.

After dressing in athleisure style for a week, Vanessa Friedman defined it as «a sartorial value system that puts the comfort and functionality of gym clothes on the same level as style, and which communicates to the rest of the world that health and well-being are put on the same level "[89]. Athleisure, she concludes, «is an expression of contemporary identity, communicated to the rest of the world through clothes. This is fashion "[90].

The importance of the sector and the growth potential of the market are confirmed by research[91]proposed by Morgan Stanley, which indicates an increase in profits over the next five years for those investing in the sportswear sector. This also derives from cultural factors and the increase in people increasingly attentive to health and physical well-being.

Athleisure is the union of the words comfort and style that meet and influence each other, it is a hybrid clothing that can be worn during athletic activities or in other contexts, such as school, or work (fig. 13).
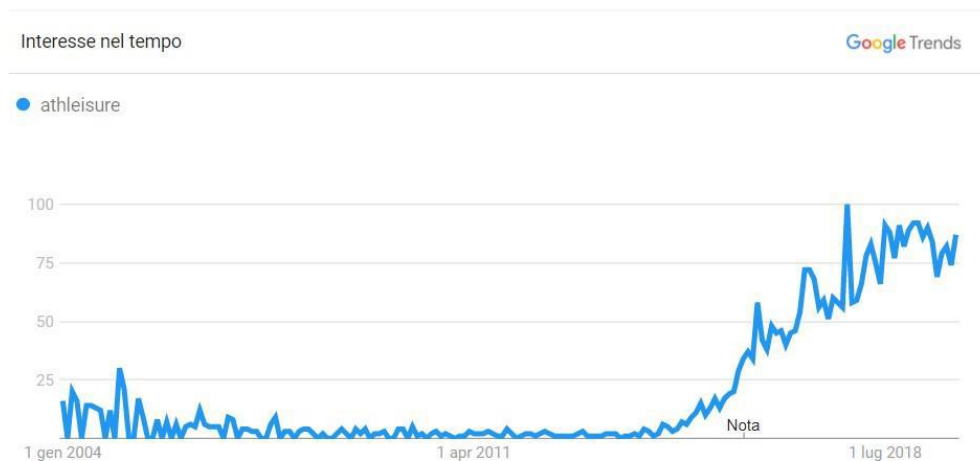

Fig. 13: Athleisure trend. Source: Google trends.

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[89]Freidman V. (2015), Adventure in athleisure clothing, The New York Times, November 4.
[90]Ibid.
[91]Brain M. (2015), You know what's a great investment opportunity? Activewear, says Morgan Stanley, qz.com.

As we can see from the graph there has been an evolution in the interest of the word Athleisure from 2004 to today.

The 5 most iconic garments of Athleisure fashion are the winter caps, which are the learners of the baseball league uniform cap, the tracksuit, which was initially worn for training or to be more comfortable at home, is now used a lot among boys even for outings with friends or at school, just think of the side stripe pants, the leggings, also initially used for dancing and subsequently considered valid for any occasion to go out, the sweatshirt used with or without hood has become a must among boys and finally sneakers, used in the world of sport, of physical exercise, whose characteristic is that of having a rubberized sole that allows you to have a quieter step than other shoes.

Sneakers have grown much faster than the rest of the sportswear sector, the brands have in fact also created limited editions to sell them at very high prices.

Precisely with regard to the trend that revolves around sports shoes, Adidas also has its own Sneakers models, on the e-commerce site there are various types of models, each with its own peculiarity and at different prices to best meet customer requests.[92].

3. The marketing strategies of the sector and the competitiveness of the sector

The analysis of sector strategies is the key point to be able to penetrate the market, managing to satisfy the consumer and to challenge competitors.

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[92]https://www.thismarketerslife.it/stories/athleisure-abbigliamento-sportivo-non-ha-piu-niente-a- che-seeing-with-sport /.

These strategies must then be translated into actions, to be able to do this you need a well-defined organizational structure, which is able to implement the decisions made efficiently.

It will be very important for companies to know the market, segment it and have a well-defined target of customers[93].

One of the marketing strategies used by large companies in the sportswear sector is the use of digital marketing, or social channels, to be able to obtain engagement among consumers and create a solid customer journey that can lead to long-term goals.

Digital marketing is used through social networks Instagram and Facebook, where there is the display shop utility, which allows the company to have a showcase with all the products, once the product has been chosen, the consumer will be redirected to the e-commerce site and can make the purchase.

To improve communication with the consumer, many companies make use of the brand Ambassadors, that is, they use the image of important athletes, to advertise and increase brand awareness, as well as the possibility of stipulating sponsorship contracts for important sporting events, such as the World Cup. of football or the Olympics, which provide a plus for the visibility of the brand.

Many companies also opt for integrated marketing strategies that serve the company to communicate better with its consumers, and to create lasting relationships over time, for example through the personalization of products that reach the target consumer in a targeted way. , enhancing its identity, and improving the brand experience[94].

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[93]See above chap. I. See Pammoli F., Models and marketing strategies, FrancoAngeli, 2005.
[94] *https://www.popupmag.it/le-best-performance-di-social-media-marketing-sportivo-nello-sportswear/.*

4. The Adidas case

The human center is at the center of Adidas' corporate culture, all this to give strength to its employees, it is a scheme, defined by the 3Cs, namely:

- Collaboration, "by the wall", overcoming the wall, having an open, direct dialogue and having faith in people's talent.

- Confidence, that is, having faith in people, helping them to make difficult decisions and to improve the mistakes made.

- Creativity, you have to explore, have ideas, stand out to be successful. People make the difference within the company, in fact they can be a source of creation and destruction of corporate value, it is therefore difficult to imagine oneself distant within an organizational system that hopes for collaboration between the various employees to achieve certain objectives. and who therefore tries to avoid human resources who have the mindset of prevaricators within a project[95].

Fundamental in this path is that there is well-being within the company and that communication professionals to the company are the first to ensure that these values of sharing and well-being are put in the foreground.
Adidas aims to harmonize the interests of the company with the private life of its employees, there are in fact initiatives that include flexible working hours, the opportunity to carry out teleworking and programs to ensure employees benefits or incentives. , such as the purchase of shares or profit sharing.

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[95]Macario GP, Financing and work: the social value of business for a "circular" economy, in*https://macariomanagement.it/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/GpM_Il_Valore_Sociale_di_Impresa_Economia_Circolare.pdf*.

Adidas also refers to the leadership role model, in fact for the company it is important to have great leaders who can inspire their teams always following the initial 3c model mentioned: creativity, collaboration, confidence, all this always remembering that leadership is develops over time, through practice. As a leader it is first of all important to appreciate the culture of the company, as a second point it is important to be inclined to promote it with your team, creating a shared vision through collaborative and trusting behaviors[96].

4.1. Corporate strategies and competitive positioning

A solid and well-structured plan accompanies Adidas, whose goal is to maximize profits and increase brand awareness even more.
As we can see (fig. 18) from the image, the strategic choices on which Adidas focuses are:

- Speed - how they deliver: Adidas puts its customers first, to serve them in the best possible way, all of this is possible thanks to the creation of new and attractive products for consumers.

- Cities - where they supply: in this case there is an analysis of the global trends and growth prospects of the various cities, Adidas has identified six cities in which to increase the trend share and the profit share, specifically referring to large realities such as London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Shanghai and Tokyo.

- Open source-how they create: the creation of brand value is given through collaboration and innovation, collaboration that takes place thanks to athletes, consumers and partners in the solid definition of sports culture.

  To accelerate Adidas sales and promote its brand, a series of initiatives have been introduced, in addition to the 3 strategic choices mentioned

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[96]See https://www.adidas-group.com/en/group/culture/.

above, one of these strategies is called portfolio, it is about focusing meticulously on the Adidas and Reebok brands in such a way to follow the consumer in a targeted manner.

Another strategy implemented is to strengthen its drive in North America since the sports goods sector has a total share of 40%, all this through investments, human resources, infrastructure, marketing and points of sale.[97].

Adidas also focuses heavily on digital, in order to create a direct customer relationship, becoming more efficient and faster in communication.

The latest strategic initiative is One Adidas, or rather to seek operational excellence in a single large reality that allows you to work more intelligently and efficiently without breaking up into many smaller companies.
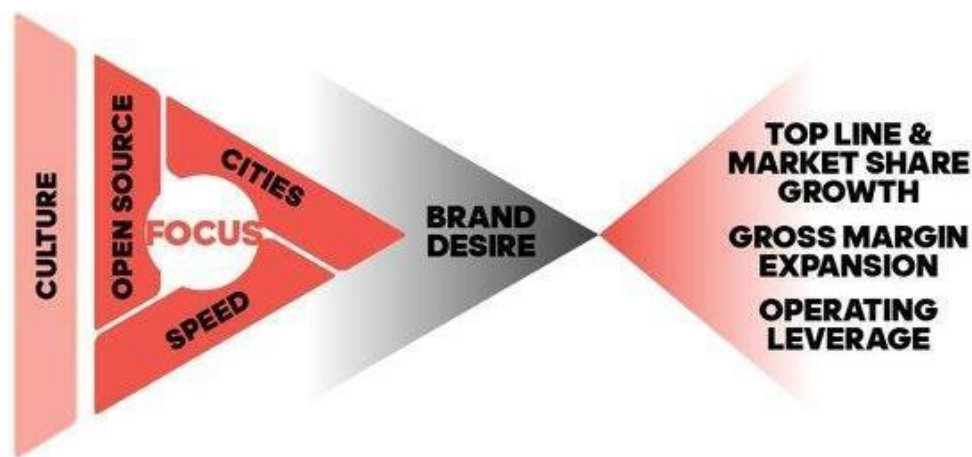

Fig. 18: Adidas company strategy. Source:https://www.adidas-group.com/en/group/strategy-overview/.

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[97] *https://www.adidas-group.com/en/group/culture/.*

4.2. Strategic positioning

Very important for the company business was the possibility of perfecting the positioning of its product within the market, taking into consideration four main points:

- Market penetration (existing market and existing product), increasing sales of current products, Adidas implements marketing strategies such as, for example, sponsorships at sporting events and advertising videos that have solidified its position in the market.

- Development of the new product (existing market and new product) Adidas has invested in the research of innovative products, the primary objective of the company was in fact to invest in research and development, reaching a cost of approximately 153 million euros, also in 2018 won the "German Innovation Award" thanks to its Speedfactory, an excellent example of production since it allows you to adapt the design, the cut of each individual shoe in relation to the individual needs of the customer, with basic algorithms reducing production cycles.

- Market development (New market and existing product), in this case the SWOT analysis carried out revealed the opportunity for Adidas to interface in new markets with the same products that are already widely known and appreciated by consumers.

- Diversification, the strategy implemented by Adidas, has led to providing a wide range of products for different customers, just think of the introduction of more casual shoes to include a mass target and no longer a niche.

Another important strategic point used by Adidas consists in the use of integrated marketing strategies, in the possibility of personalizing the product

at the customer's request, just think of football boots with the consumer's personal name and surname[98].

Another project in which integrated marketing was used involved the involvement of fans in the design of the game jerseys, through the Adidas Creator Studio platform, thanks to it, many fans had the opportunity to create a third jersey for their favorite team and to use the platform to collect votes. The most voted were chosen by the most important players of the clubs and officially became the third uniforms, then used in the official matches of the various clubs[99].

4.3.   Business competitiveness analysis: Porter's model

The analysis of this model is based on 5 fundamental aspects, which then determine the attractiveness of the sector.

As can be seen from the graph (fig. 19), it is necessary to take into account the contractual strength of the buyers they have in influencing the transactions, they have a high bargaining power if few customers buy a significant part of the firm's production, if the firm failed to diversify the product, thus making it identical to that of its competitors and if they have a large amount of information.

Another force present in the model is the bargaining power of the suppliers to which the company turns to obtain supplies, in this case, if there are few suppliers or if the product of that supplier is indispensable for the company, the negotiating power will be greater. .

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[98]See   https://www.calcioefinanza.it/2016/08/08/maglie-adidas-2017-2018-creator-studio-tifosi-creano- jerseys-top-club.

[99]V.*http://subuwani.blogspot.com/2011/04/adidas-strategic-management.html*.

The company then takes into account the possible threat of new companies that can overcome the entry barriers and the intensity of competition from companies already present in the market.

As for new companies wishing to enter the market, they have to face the existing economies of scale that lead to an increase in entry barriers and the know-how that is available to already established brands.

On the other hand, as regards companies already present in the market, they will be able to implement aggressive marketing strategies and increase trade offs to retain consumers, thus trying to differentiate themselves from other companies to acquire a greater share of the market thus obtaining an increase in profitability.

The last of Porter's 5 strengths is the threat of replacement products or services, i.e. how easily a product can be replaced[100].
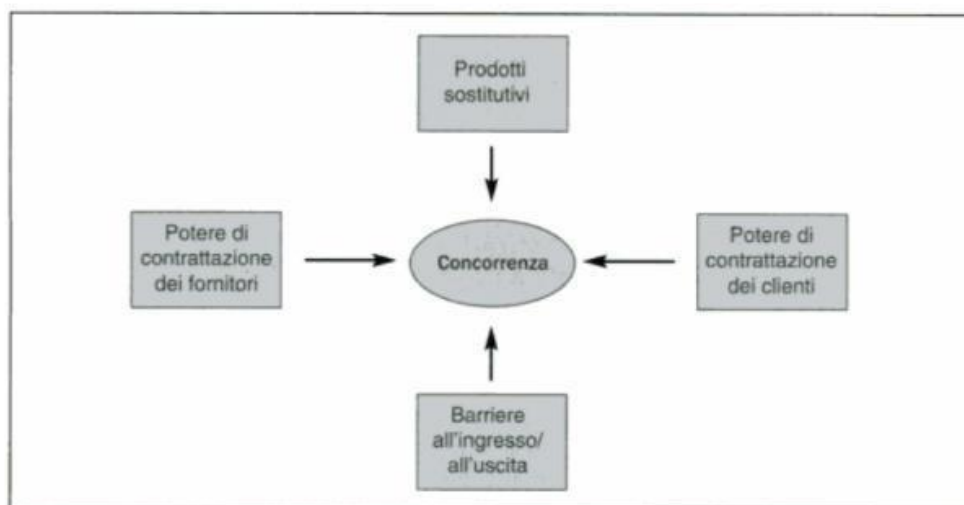

Fig. 19: Porter's five forces. Source: Davis Friykman, Assessing the company ,, JAkob Tolleryd, Pearson Italia Spa, 2005

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[100]Berenschot B., Management Models: Ideas and Tools, Pearson, 2005.

Porter's model is useful for establishing the attractiveness of the sector in which I interact. Applying it to Adidas[101]it can be noted that:

- suppliers in this case have a low bargaining power since Adidas is a well-known brand, so it could easily find other suppliers from which to source;

- the barriers to market entry are high, in fact in the case of Adidas the entering companies represent a weak threat given the wide competition of the brands present in the sector;

- replacement products that can cause market losses, since they are items sold at a lower price that create strong competition, in the specific case applied to Adidas one of the replacement products are running shoes;

- the Competitors in this case we will have companies like Nike, Puma, Fila, all competitors fighting to acquire more and more market by increasing their profitability.

Consumers have low to medium bargaining power, given anyway
high competition from competitors on the market, and moderate replacement availability[102].

Another key model for the company to be able to have important information on the competitive environment in which it operates is SWOT analysis.

The swot analysis is used by the company to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses present in it, alongside the opportunities and threats present in the market.

The strengths and weaknesses are assessed through internal control, while the risks and opportunities fall on the external environment (Figure 20).

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[101]See
https://web.uniroma1.it/dip_management/sites/default/files/allegati/Definizione%20dell%E2%80%99 Orientation% 20strategico.pdf.
[102]See   https://sitrattadelleuropasitrattadite.travel.blog/2019/06/23/   adidas-internationalization-strategy /.

Matrice SWOT

Fattori interni \ Fattori esterni	Forze (S) elencare da 5 a 10 forze interne	Debolezze (W) elencare da 5 a 10 debolezze interne
Opportunità (O) elencare da 5 a 10 opportunità esterne	Strategia SO Generare strategie che usino le forze per trarre vantaggio dalle opportunità	Strategia WO Generare strategie che traggano vantaggio dalle opportunità attraverso il superamento delle debolezze
Minacce (T) elencare da 5 a 10 minacce esterne	Strategia ST Generare strategie che usino i punti di forza per evitare minacce	Strategia WT Generare strategie che rendano minime le debolezze ed evitino minacce

Fig. 20: SWOT matrix. Source: Manelli M., Business internationalism, FrancoAngeli, 2017.

This type of matrix analyzes the main factors that can influence the success of a company's investment, starting with the identification of the strengths or where the company excels and therefore where it benefits from, then moving on to the points of weakness, or the elements of the organization that are detrimental to the company's purpose[103].

Opportunities, on the other hand, refer to technological developments, demographic changes and changes in trends, for example there is the opportunity to transform research and development into cash, through the granting of licenses or the sale of patents.

Risks, on the other hand, constitute a real threat to the company, they can derive from lower sales that would lead to a reduction in profitability and from the inability to define the equilibrium point.[104].

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[103]Berenschot B., Management models, cit.
[104]Manelli, The internationalism, cit.

The model incorporates the four main aspects of the company, that is the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks present within the sector. Among the strengths of the Adidas company we certainly find:

- the value of the brand and its perception, or how much consumers would be willing to pay for its product (fig. 21).
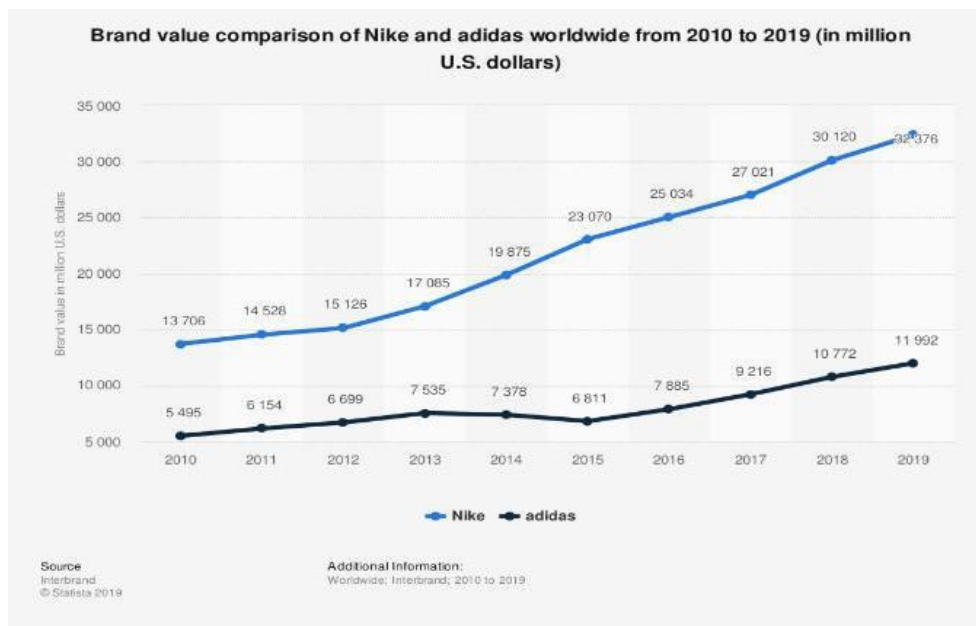

Fig. 21: Value of the Adidas - Nike brands. Source:https://www.segnaliditrading.net/adidas-analysis-di-mercato/.

- Sponsorship of international sporting events Adidas is in fact one of the main sponsors of the Olympic Games, of the NBA and it was of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, it also uses the image of important athletes and therefore of the brand Ambassadors to improve its brand awareness. ;
- Diversified portfolio, Adidas offers not only sportswear products but also hardware accessories, apparel and footwear;
- Efficient supply system, the supply chain is very important to ensure that there is an efficient organization, Adidas outsources almost all its

products, in any case followed by internal management to keep operations going without any hitch;

- Financial strength, Adidas has the ability to protect its share of the market and its profitability in the long term, it is among the most stable companies globally, it uses this financial strength to push back its competitors;

- A diversified distribution network, Adidas has 2,300 corporate-owned retail stores, over 14,000 franchised mono-brand stores and approximately 150,000 co-branded retail and wholesale stores;

- Effective marketing strategy Adidas balances promotions, advertising and the use of technologies, in fact it uses international sponsorships, it is the main sponsor of the world championships and the Olympics, uses the visibility of high-profile athletes such as Messi to increase brand awareness, and finally uses musical celebrities like Kanye west and Beyoncé to keep her brand young and urban.

In the weak points we find the shortcomings that belong to the company and that it must know in order to improve:

- excessive dependence on foreign suppliers, in fact, as mentioned in the previous points, Adidas has an efficient source of supply, which can however lead to a risk of excessive dependence on foreign suppliers;

- Expensive products, Adidas has targeted its consumers, pushing towards those with upper middle income.

Opportunities, on the other hand, are all those opportunities belonging to the company that can lead to a competitive advantage in the market:

- E-commerce, many consumers nowadays focus a lot on online purchases, Adidas in addition to its e-commerce site where you can choose the products to buy, has implemented its sales through

Instagram, inserting the shop function within its account, this led to a 40% increase in sales in the first quarter of 2019, which implies that it could push a lot on the Facebook page as well;

- Investing in new innovative materials to keep up with technological progress by investing in better synthetic materials than traditional materials, in 2019 Adidas collaborated with International space station national lab, for the development of new products without gravity, in space NASA astronauts performed an experiment using the process of creating the Boost midsole, without gravity;

- Exploring emerging markets, Adidas must also focus on new emerging markets to expand its market share.

Finally, let's move on to what are the threats of the sector, therefore everything that constitutes a danger to the profitability of the company, we find therefore:

- Fake products, sale of low quality shoes at reduced prices, this represents a real threat to Adidas and other companies in this sector as it can lead to a decrease in profits;

- Exchange rates, fluctuations in the euro and dollar currencies can have a negative impact;

- Global economic slowdown, as happened due to the covid, lead to a reduction in sales;

- Technological advances, be in step in the search for new high-tech products to strengthen the brand position;

- Competition, due to globalization and technological advances there has been an increase in competition, although Adidas' main rivals remain Nike, Puma, Fila[105].

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[105]See*https://bstrategyhub.com/adidas-swot-analysis/*.

5. Nike case

Nike is a US multinational, the line of products and services offered varies from the production of footwear to the creation of high-tech sports devices. Founded in 1971, it is headquartered in Beaverton, in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area. The company name is inspired by the Greek goddess of victory Nike, a winged goddess capable of moving at high speed, whose most famous representation, a sculpture on display at the Louvre Museum, is the Nike of Samothrace. The brand, now famous all over the world, has a simple and quickly recognizable logo: the so-called "Swoosh", that is an inverted and horizontal comma.

Since its creation, Nike has marked the history of footwear and sportswear, becoming the largest supplier of sports equipment in the world. Over the years, it expanded its product line to include various sports and became the world's leading manufacturer of sports accessories and clothing, especially for football, basketball, tennis and many other sports. Not only that, it also deals with the production of accessories such as wristwatches, glasses, casual clothing for adults and children. Thanks to this vast line of products and the ability to diversify its offer, in its field the companies that can compete are very few, among the major competitors we certainly include Adidas and Puma.

We are not sure how a successful brand can be born, sometimes by chance, sometimes due to the combination of many precise and studied factors, but almost always from the intuition and vision of a person, which is then carried forward in the time and becomes the philosophy of a company. In this way the idea "Nike" was born and takes shape, one of the most famous brands in the world, both in the field of sports clothing and accessories as in streetwear.

The consecration of the brand took place towards the end of the 70s, but neither a brilliant idea nor the best logo in the world would have been enough to make Nike the cultural phenomenon it has become today, the key to everything was to contractually bind. to internationally renowned athletes, the first major sponsorship came in 1978 with the tennis player John McEnroe, the first great sportsman to wear clothing from the US multinational. From that moment the company began to grow exponentially and proceeds with a complete restructuring of the production system, also expanding outside the United States, and in 1979 patents the cushioning system known as Nike-Air, a technology that will later be used for the 'entire production of footwear, the famous "Air Max" model,[106].

The following year Nike is listed on the stock exchange with two million ordinary shares as an offer to the public and continues to grow, not only economically, but also in terms of prestige thanks to the collaboration with athletes such as Carl Lewis and Joan Benoit. But it was in the following years that Nike managed to obtain its most important sponsorship, the one that would have led to the launch of the Air Jordan in 1985, the first model conceived in collaboration with Michael Jordan, icon of the American basketball championship, the NBA, followed in Worldwide. Only three years later, in 1988, Nike exceeds one billion in revenues and inaugurates the "Just Do It" advertising campaign, which can be translated into Italian as "just do it", which still remains the company's slogan today.

Starting with the new millennium, the company has also become transversally present in streetwear, not necessarily linked to traditional sports, as demonstrated by the enormous success of many clothing models: the Nike SB line and other operations such as the Air Force One of the famous American singer Cornell Haynes Jr., aka Nelly, from 2002 or the Air Yeezy I and II in collaboration with Kanye West from 2009, although he had less luck with the

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[106]medium.com. - "The history of Nike".

latter, given the passage and success that the artist has enjoyed with Adidas. Another important launch, which took place in 2016, is that of the HyperAdapt 1.0 model, shoes with self-lacing, inspired by the model featured in the film "Back to the Future", which also mark an important technological advance in the footwear sector. The company was able to capitalize on its reputation by also moving towards the high end of the market and new categories. It also encourages physical activity and jogging through various applications and other dedicated programs, as well as through the collaboration with the giant Apple for the "Apple Watch Nike +", or technological wrist watches.

5.1.   Communication strategy

Almost half a century has passed since the first shoes branded with the famous "swoosh" entered the market, but Nike's success shows no signs of stopping. The Oregon company continues to have and maintain a competitive advantage that allows it to excel over its competitors, with nearly $ 30 billion in annual sales and a 10% growth in the last five years.[107]. Despite these results, the brand continues to improve, achieving increasingly astounding results, an unstoppable process, just as customers would like unstoppable wearing its shoes during sports. "Just do it", just do it: Nike's main slogan has been the same for almost thirty years, and it will remain so for a long time to come.

Among other things, recently, it was revealed that this motto was proposed by Dan Wieden, an American citizen who worked in advertising, who was impressed by the last words of a death row inmate in Utah. "Let's do it", said

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[107]calcioefinanza.it. - "Nike, monstre budget".

the multiple murderer: "come on, let's do it". In a somewhat grotesque sense, the man had accepted his latest challenge. From here to the famous "Just do it" it was a short step: the intent of Nike's marketing strategy is in fact to elevate its products to real allies in the daily sporting challenges of its consumers.

Another fundamental element of Nike's success is due to Bill Bowerman, co-founder of Nike, and the publication of his book "Jogging" in 1967. Nike running shoes in fact arrived on the market at the very beginning of the jogging era, inaugurated and caused, at least in part, by Bill Bowerman's book. The main curiosity is that the book was not published with the aim of advertising his product, that is running shoes: he wrote it because he sincerely wanted to promote jogging and its benefits on our health. Certainly this was not a very witty passage of a hypothetical, newborn and even premature marketing strategy of Nike, nevertheless, it could have been, especially looking at the results it has brought.

Consumers did not feel the need for better running shoes, but for a better way to keep fit. And it was this, thanks to the almost casual connection between book and product, that Nike was able to sell from the early years: not just a pair of shoes, but jogging. Bill Bowerman, therefore, put in place one of the best marketing campaigns ever seen, without however realizing it: today, however, we all know very well that even before selling a product it is necessary to convince consumers of the benefits it can have on their lives. It can therefore be said that the co-founder of Nike is a forerunner of the guidelines of modern marketing.

From then on, however, every single Nike marketing strategy was conscious and rationally conceived: already in 1973, for example, the company signed its first sponsorship contract with a tennis star, Ilie Nastase. Since then, the faces of the sportsmen that Nike combined with its products are innumerable. One above all, as already mentioned, is that of Michael Jordan: in 1984 the most famous basketball player ever became the leading man of the brand for

sponsoring the "Air Jordan", a line of clothing and footwear that every year invoices exorbitant figures.

5.2. Customer conquest

M. Jordan, Ronaldo, Ibrahimovic, McIlroy: over the years the faces that have accompanied Nike marketing strategies have been, as mentioned, many, but the basic message has never changed. Better still: from the 70s to today, the voice and identity of the brand have remained true to themselves, always placing the needs of consumers before their products. What has changed is the aesthetics of communication, the media through which to pass one's message have multiplied, the speed of communication has doubled, but the brand has never betrayed itself or its customers: to understand this just take a look at the official Nike pages on social networks.

And on these pages the communication is not limited to an aseptic commercial proposal, far from it: every single post is designed and created to transfer something of value to the user-consumer. In the full spirit of the company, therefore, Nike's social updates are mostly motivational messages for their athletes. For Nike is the philosophy that anyone with a body can inevitably also be an athlete. The focus of corporate branding, therefore, remains always and in any case to help its customers do the best they love to do, be it running, playing basketball, football or tennis.

So first the athletes, then the shoes: this is the mantra of Nike's marketing strategies, and it was this way of thinking that prompted the company, in 2006, to launch its first high-tech gadget, high-tech accessory. , or the "Nike + iPod Sports Kit". A risky move, conceived to differentiate once and for all this company from its competitors: the focus on digital devices, once again,

and even more than usual, was more on athletes than on shoes. The kit allowed to measure the distance and speed of the race.

In conclusion, the Nike marketing strategy, however paradoxical it may be, has proved to be revolutionary and ingenious: selling shoes, without selling shoes. The history of Nike's marketing strategy teaches that, in order to properly launch a product, it is necessary first of all to understand what consumers need. Once you understand their needs and the requirements they would like to meet, you can form a marketing campaign capable of providing all possible solutions through your product. Nike's intuition, for example, was to understand that people needed not shoes, but a new way to keep fit, and so they offered to help them achieve this by selling shoes.

In addition to this, Nike's marketing strategies teach that every communication act of a company towards the consumer must create value, especially through the web, which has now become an immense world where it is easy to get lost: if you are not solving problems, if not you are giving real answers, if you are not helping your audience to improve their daily life, then you are inevitably getting the wrong approach. Marketing does not just mean selling your product, or at least not on the surface: Bill Bowerman did not build an empire by selling shoes, but by selling the art of jogging to his customers, who responded by buying billions of clothing items. , accessories or whatever it is, branded Nike.

6. Nike vs Adidas

The confrontation Nike against Adidas has become a generational duel, a historical dilemma that goes beyond even the sports field. Continuous changes in front have seen first one and then the other brand excel. Both are constantly evolving generating different strategies and striving for customer

loyalty. The two multinationals, in addition to the fantastic history and dizzying numbers, have a common goal: to improve their content more and more by increasing the quality, in order to satisfy, capture attention and make their audience fall in love.

The discourse of the advent of technology and digitization also returns in this historical comparison: yes, because if a few years ago Adidas seemed to never reach the level reached by Nike, with the advent of digital things have changed and everything is changing. 'Now.

To convey the competitive advantage achieved by the American company, just think that Nike is the only sports brand to occupy a place among the fifty companies with the highest market value, while Adidas, which is the main rival in the sports market, is positioned just after the hundredth position, this reached in 2019[108].

Despite this enormous detachment, the comparison is always present and above all divides sportswear enthusiasts from all over the world, both from an aesthetic and stylistic point of view, and from an emotional point of view. Both have enormous potential and aim to reach their audience through content marketing strategies: marketing approach based on distribution and content creation, in order to attract the audience to their target digital channels and increase sales. In comparison, the development of a content strategy was essential, in fact advertising campaigns and online strategies proved to be fundamental.

Wandering around the web, or even more so on various social networks such as Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, you can witness a real digital marketing show. On the one hand there is the Adidas team, which advertises its contents as well as from their official channels, also through the profiles of its "super testimonials": James Harden, an icon of American basketball or Lionel Messi, for many number one in football modern world. While on the other there is

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[108]cobis.com. - "Adidas vs Nike: who has the best content strategy?".

the Nike team, which is unquestionably the winner in terms of turnover, sales and numbers of interactions. The latter boasts among its ranks LeBron James, number one in the American NBA basketball championship, Cristiano Ronaldo, eternal rival of the aforementioned Lionel Messi, and Roger Federer, undisputed phenomenon and for many years number one in world tennis.

As already mentioned, the "numbers race" is certainly won by the Nike team, but what will happen in the next few years is not entirely obvious, in fact Adidas has recently been representing an increasingly serious threat to the leadership of the American giant (fig. 22) .
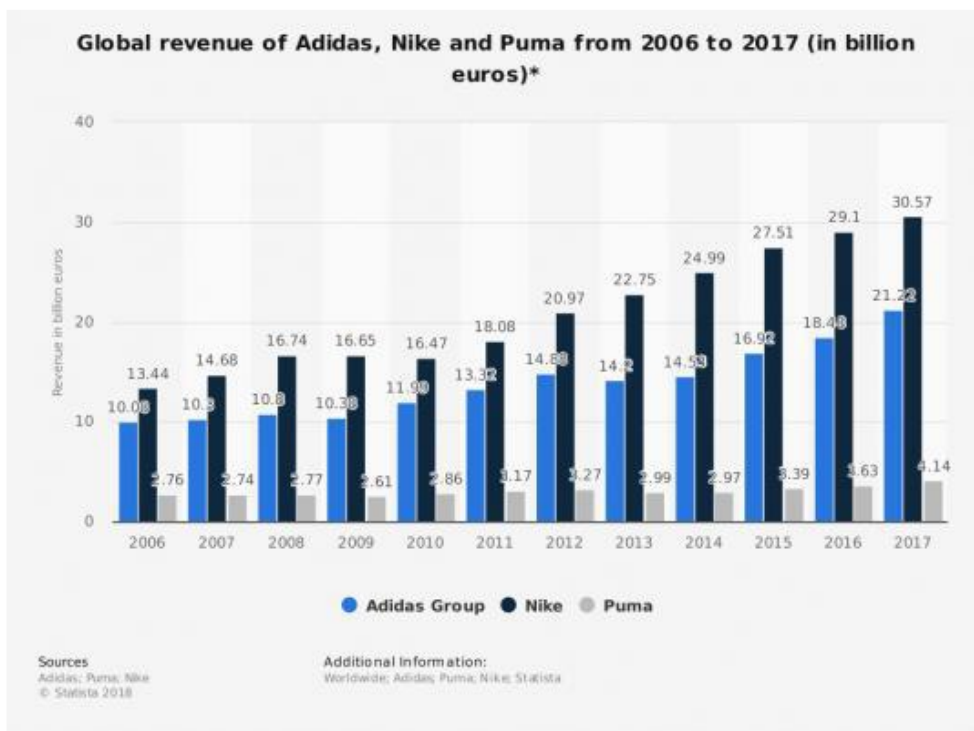

Fig. 22: Global revenue of Adidas, Nike and Puma frpom 2006 to 2017, in billion euros55. - Statista, 2018. Source: profitworks.ca. - "How Nike became successful and the leader in the sports product market."

As a demonstration of what has been said, here is a graph that best represents Nike's excessive power over Adidas and the other more valid competitor Puma. Let's see how the gap in annual revenues, starting from 2006, has

always gone to increase, seeing the US multinational excel. Adidas's numbers have also increased over the years reaching 21 billion in revenue in 2017, but that's not enough to reach the level of its main competitor.

In 2019 the situation does not change, Nike again wins the title of the most valuable brand, thanks to a turnover increased by 16% compared to the previous year, reaching 32.4 billion[109]. Adidas also improves its numbers in 2019, with a turnover higher than 6% compared to the previous year[110].

Filling this gap for the German multinational is very difficult, but not impossible. In the previous paragraph, future moves and future objectives were analyzed. An uphill but not impassable road. Thanks to a careful strategy and with the help of new means and digital communication channels, Adidas can still have its say. In fact, if before the game between these two giants seemed not to exist, today some doubts arise: the entry of digital seems to have rebalanced everything.

To draw a conclusion we can say that currently, Nike beats Adidas in terms of numbers, production and turnover. While saying who has the strongest "team" or the best content strategy is not so obvious. In principle: Adidas moves very well in enhancing its products, in making its brand perceived as a quality producer and in marrying social causes. Nike, on the other hand, is much more effective at creating that sense of belonging and community that only a few brands are able to convey, the winning weapon of modern marketing.

We are facing two brands that you can both love for different reasons and that will continue to battle to conquer, or maintain, the leadership of the sports goods market.

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[109]fashionnetwork.com.- "Nike is still the most valuable brand in 2019".
[110]investoggi.it. - "Adidas: turnover on the rise."

7. Gymshark

Gymshark is currently a major player in the fitness apparel industry that has made a name for itself in quick succession. The founders of the brand knew exactly how to grow a brand in this modern world. They have done some clever things to manage their growth while simultaneously working to get more and more customers to use their products, which has made Gymshark what Gymshark is today.

In this case study, we will focus on understanding what the company is about, Gymshark's marketing strategy that has helped her maintain a strong brand perception among her target audience and the rest of the world. So, let's first look at Gymshark's knowledge as a company.

Two schoolmates, Ben Francis and Lewis Morgan, both nineteen, founded Gymshark in 2012. It initially started out as an e-commerce company offering fitness supplements. But just the following year, in 2013, Gymshark shifted his full focus to the fitness apparel division[111].

Since then, Gymshark has gone from a garage printing business to one of the fastest growing and most recognizable brands in the fitness industry. Being innovative and producing high-performance clothing was his goal along with building an ever-expanding digital presence.

Based in Solihull, England, Gymshark is an online retailer and manufacturer of fitness clothing. It sells almost all types of sports and fitness clothing, all over the world.

Gymshark is considered to be one of the most famous brands in the world. The brand is highly regarded by fitness fanatics and fashion-conscious people. The success behind this high-flying fitness brand can be attributed to a well-defined customer base.

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[111]Shastri A., Gymshark's Key to Success: Digital Marketing Strategy: A Case Study, in*https://iide.co/case-studies/marketing-strategy-of-gymshark/*.

The company knows its target audience by heart as it is always open to hearing their opinions and preferences and provides them with whatever they require.

It initially started out as a brand aimed at the men's fitness category, but it also quickly realized the enormous potential of the women's division. Speaking of the present, as of 2020, more than two-thirds of its sales come from the women's segment.

Now that we have an understanding of your target audience. Let's take a look at how Gymshark achieved tremendous success thanks to his exemplary marketing strategy.

7.1. Marketing strategy

Gymshark is a company that has always favored digital marketing over marketing that uses offline methods. Over the years, he has built a very active and engaged audience on various social media platforms, most notably YouTube.

They also have a couple of very popular niche websites where they sell their products and post articles. It uses content marketing, it is also one of the first to adopt influencer marketing[112].

Gymshark mainly uses all major social networks such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Facebook and Tik Tok. Along with this, it also effectively uses all other forms of digital channels to increase brand awareness and customer loyalty in the fitness industry.

That said, let's take a look at his marketing strategies.

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[112]Ibid.

Gymshark is one of many e-commerce brands and companies that have adopted Instagram as a way to introduce their products to consumers. Like many others, you too would most likely have stumbled upon Gymshark via Instagram. Influencer marketing proved to be a game changer for Gymshark. Being personal fans ofLex GriffinAndChris Lavado, famous YouTubers and fitness fanatics, Ben Francis sent them Gymshark clothing samples in 2013. As YouTube was gaining popularity since the early 2010s, it worked as a great marketing source for Gymshark.

Gradually, they began to collaborate with various Instagrammers and bloggers for greater reach. Gymshark sought out people promoting fitness and later partnered with influencers such asWhitney SimmonsAndNikki Blackketter.

Gymshark follows the practice of selected influencers to improve the experience of its customers. He has partnered with many famous athletes and influencers to increase the sales of his products. These influencers promote Gymshark and also provide references about Gymshark in their captions and biographies so that people can check out the website and purchase Gymshark clothing for themselves.

Gymshark announced his "66 Days | Change Your Life" on his website and other social media platforms. Followers were asked to take on the challenge where a 66 day before and after photo of transformation needed to be uploaded later. 66 days[113].

This Gymshark marketing campaign turned out to be very triumphant. In just a few weeks, the hashtag # Gymshark66 has flooded all social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, etc., and brought Gymshark to reach a wider reach.

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[113]Ibid.

Gymshark has his content marketing strategy up to an art. This includes Spotify's blogs, newsletters, and playlists. Everything pushes you to open up to your world, whether it's fitness or fashion.

Through informative and in-depth blogs and newsletters, Gymshark creates awareness among people on various different topics related to fitness. Health conditions, different supplements and healthy recipes are some of the topics that they keep regularly posting the name on their website.Gymshark Central blog.

Gymshark has leveraged every popular platform where it can interact with a large audience in less time. On Spotify, she shares playlists of famous fitness celebrities so her audience can listen to them and work harder in the gym[114].

7.2. Social media

Gymshark, as previously mentioned, is actively engaged with her audience across all social media platforms. It has 3 very populated Instagram handles with over a million followers which show how well they are accepted by the public.

Tiktok, the most downloaded social media app in the US as of September 2018, with over 500 million global monthly active users, is also being used by Gymshark to reach an audience. He has collaborated with Wilking Sisters (1.2 million fans), Rybka Twins (5.7 million fans), Laurie Elle (2.8 million fans), Twin Melody (6.3 million fans), Lesotwins (1 , 5 million fans) and Antonie Lokhorst (4 million fans). These influencers have posted videos related to fitness, health and lifestyle.

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[114]Ibid.

Today, hashtags have become a very significant part of every social media campaign. Businesses use hashtags in a witty and engaging way and are easy for the public to remember. In no time, these hashtags go viral and work well for the business.

Gymshark was one of the first to adopt hashtags. The company creates a big buzz with a new hashtag every month. The # TheGymshark66 campaign went viral in no time thanks to this hashtag. Many pop-up events in different cities have also been promoted via hashtags[115].

7.3. The approach to the customer

Gymshark is a fast-growing e-commerce fitness apparel brand that has doubled in size every year over the past three years. Their success is a direct result of their customer-centric approach to business and this is something that permeates everything they do.

He has mastered the art of creating valuable and engaging content. Furthermore, it goes beyond simply telling you the characteristics of its products. Therefore, by allowing potential and existing customers to gain a better understanding of what they should be looking for when shopping on his website, what he should do about his fitness regimen, which makes the customer feel that they are a trustworthy company.

Gymshark appreciates his clients and regularly asks them for feedback which also brings a sense of belonging and a feeling of "esteem" in the minds of the clients.[116].

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[115]Ibid.
[116]Ibid.

CHAPTER III
NEWS AND FUTURE OF DIGITAL MARKETING SPORTS BRAND

1. Blockchain

Blockchain technology is essentially a distributed database system, which securely and immutably records transactional data or other information thanks to appropriate cryptographic mechanisms and consensus algorithms that govern its operation.[117].

Another way to see the blockchain is to think of it as an electronic ledger distributed among users on a network, each of whom has a copy of it that is updated in real time. The integrity of this register is guaranteed by the mechanisms mentioned above.

It is known in the literature that, due to its characteristics, the use of blockchain technology allows to solve the problems of transparency and reliability in those contexts in which individuals and institutions share information with each other and their interests are not aligned.[118].

Within the scientific literature it is possible to find different definitions of blockchain, which however share the fact that they highlight the distinctive factors of the same, such as transparency, immutability, the typical structure in blocks arranged in chronological order. These factors determine its attractiveness by companies that take it into consideration for supply chain management.

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[117]Swan, M. (2015). Blockchain: Blueprint for a New Economy. O'Reilly Media.
[118]Cole, R., Stevenson, M., & Aitken, J. (2019). Blockchain Technology: Implications for operations and supply chain management. Supply Chain Management: an International Journal.

The blockchain was presented for the first time in 2008 by an individual (or a group of people) who goes by the name of Satoshi Nakamoto, within the White Paper entitled "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System"[119]. Thanks to this study, for the first time, the world became aware of one of the best known applications of technology: Bitcoin.

The document describes the possibility provided by blockchain to carry out electronic payments from one actor to another without the need to resort to third-party organizations, such as financial institutions.

Furthermore, the distinctive characteristics of the technology are exposed, such as its structure, which takes the form of an evolving list of ordered and signed records, which are grouped into blocks that have a timestamp, and a link. to a previous block.

As already mentioned above, thanks to its technical characteristics, the content of the blockchain is irreversibly recorded and cannot be altered over time.[120]. Furthermore, it is visible to all members of the blockchain, also called nodes, who have the ability to trace transactions back in time. This "secure" traceability is guaranteed by various algorithms that ensure that the registration is "permanent, chronologically ordered and available for every actor in the network"[121].

Due to these characteristics, in supply chain traceability applications, the transactions relating to a product can be safely saved and traced back to their authors and may be subject to future checks.[122].

Over the years there have been several evolutions of blockchain technology. Today, four main versions are generally distinguished on the basis of the use made of them.

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[119]Nakamoto, S. (2008). Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System. White Paper.
[120]Nowiński, W., & Kozma, M. (2017). How Can Blockchain Technology Disrupt the Existing Business Models? Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review.
[121]Gupta, M. (2017). Blockchain For Dummies. IBM Limited Edition; Gupta, V. (2017). The Promise of Blockchain Is a World Without Middlemen. Harvard Business Review.
[122]Montecchi, M., Plangger, K., & Etter, M. (2018). It's real, trust me! Establishing supply chain provenance using blockchain. Consumer & Organizational Digital Analytics (CODA).

Version 1.0 concerns the use of blockchain linked to cryptocurrencies, in particular to Bitcoin. Version 2.0, on the other hand, solves some programming problems encountered with Bitcoin, with the introduction of Ethereum, which is easier to program, and smart contracts.[123]. With the introduction of version 3.0, the gaps in previous versions are filled, extending the possible applications in other sectors, in addition to the financial one.[124]. Finally, with the advent of industry 4.0, blockchain 4.0 was born, increasingly focused on scalability and interoperability between the different platforms, for example those of the supplier or the customer, in order to obtain a single efficient ecosystem in which they can take part. all stakeholders.

This latest evolution has facilitated the use of blockchain at an industrial level for Supply-Chain Management, financial management systems, workflow management and asset management.[125].

The problem of double spending in managing transactions within a network, which is also discussed in Nakamoto's pioneering paper, finds a solution with the use of blockchain technology.

Before going into understanding what it consists of, it is necessary to clarify what it is

a peer-to-peer system, a concept on which any blockchain is based.

Peer-to-peer networks are a specific type of distributed systems. They consist of individual computers (also called nodes), which make their computing resources (e.g. processing power, storage capacity, data or network bandwidth) directly available to all other members of the network without having a central coordination point. The nodes in the network are equal in

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[123]Srivastava, A., Bhattacharya, P., Singh, A., & Mathur, A. (2018). A Systematic Review on Evolution of Blockchain Generations. ITEE Journal.

[124]Ackermann, J., & Meier, M. (2018). Blockchain 3.0 - The next generation of blockchain systems., (Pp. Advanced Seminar Blockchain Technologies, Summer Term).

[125]Srivastava, S., Bhadauria, A., Dhaneshwa, S., & Suneel, G. (2019). Traceability And Transparency In Supply Chain Management System Of Pharmaceutical Goods Through Blockchain. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH.

their rights and roles in the system. Furthermore, all of them are both suppliers and consumers of resources[126].

In order to facilitate understanding, we report an example concerning the use of a peer-to-peer system for the management of real estate properties. In such a system, the registers that keep track of information about a certain property are maintained by the individual computers of its members instead of being stored within a central database. Hence, each actor keeps their own copy of the ledger. As soon as ownership of a house is transferred from one person to another, all the registers owned by the nodes must be updated to the latest version. However, passing information between nodes and updating individual registers takes time. Until the last member of the system receives the new information and updates his or her copy of the ledger, the system will not be consistent. At some point in time after the transfer, some nodes will already be aware of this fact, while others have not yet received this information. The fact that not all accounting records are up to date makes them prone to being exploited by anyone who already has the most recent information.

Let's also imagine the following situation. Person A sells his house to person B. The transfer of ownership from A to B is documented in one of the peer-to-peer system records. This particular ledger must inform the other members of this transfer, who in turn inform other nodes as well, until all users become aware of the transfer of ownership from A to B. However, let's assume that person A approaches quickly to another accounting register in the system and which requires documenting a different transfer of ownership of the same home from person A to person C.

If the node you are sending the information to is not yet aware of the transfer of ownership from A to B that occurred earlier, then it will approve and document the transfer of ownership from A to C for the same home. For this

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[126]Drescher, D. (2017). Blockchain Basics: A Non-Techical Introduction In 25 Steps. Apress.

reason, A will be able to sell his house twice by taking advantage of the fact that distributing information about his first sale takes time. This process creates a discrepancy with what happens in the real world, since B and C cannot own the same house at the same time. Only one of them should be the new and rightful owner. The characteristics and the seriousness of the double spending problem emerge from this example[127]. Today, this is generally solved by resorting to intermediaries - such as banking institutions - who, acting as guarantors of the transactions that have taken place, ensure that the problem of double spending described above does not occur.[128].

The technology proposed by Nakamoto, which focuses on the use of a peer-to-peer network, represents an innovative way to overcome this type of problem, which allows you to make transactions between user A and B, without involving third parties in the process that regulates the transfer of ownership of the assets in question.

Before describing in detail the functioning of the blockchain, it is appropriate to outline the key components of this technology, which are described in this paragraph.

A node is the elementary entity that makes up the blockchain network. There are two categories of nodes: "full nodes", which store the entire blockchain and guarantee the validity of transactions, and "light nodes", which do not store or maintain an integral copy of the blockchain and must pass their transactions to full knots[129].

A transaction represents the elementary unit of information that is stored in the blockchain. It can have a different nature from the financial one: it can in fact represent the transfer of everything of value[130].

[127]Ibid.
[128]Pilkington, M. (2015). Blockchain Technology: Principles and Applications.
[129]Yaga, D., Mell, P., Roby, N., & Scarfone, K. (2018). Blockchain Technology Overview. National Institute of Standards and Technology.
[130]Tapscott, D., & Tapscott, A. (2016). Blockchain Revolution: How the Technology Behind Bitcoin Is Changing Money, Business, and the World. Portfolio.

Block is the data structure that is used in blockchain ledgers to group transactions. The blockchain is made up of a sequence of blocks, each of which contains an ordered list of transaction records like the traditional public ledger.

Figure 26: Blockchain block structure representation provides a general representation of the blockchain from which the chained block structure and transactions can be observed.

The first block of the blockchain is called the genesis block since it does not have a parent block. Each block consists of the block header and the block body.
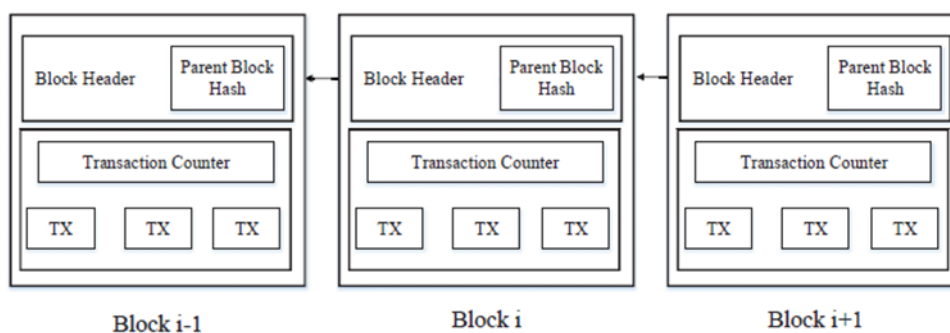

Figure 26: Representation of the blockchain structure.Source: Zibin, Shaoan, Hongning, Xiangping, & Huaimin, 2017.

The main elements that make up the block header are the following[131]:

- The version of the block: indicates which set of block validation rules have been followed;

- Merkle tree root hash: the hash value generated starting from a grouping of all the transactions contained within the block;

- The timestamp;

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[131]Zibin, Z., Shaoan, X., Hongning, D., Xiangping, C., & Huaimin, W. (2017). An Overview of Blockchain Technology: Architecture, Consensus, and Future Trends. IEEE 6th International Congress on Big Data.

- Parent block hash: A 256-bit hash value that functions as a pointer to the previous block.

The block body instead contains the transactions, the number of which depends on the size of the block itself and on the size of each transaction[132]. Hash functions are algorithms that transform any type of data into alphanumeric strings of fixed length, regardless of the size or characteristics of the incoming data[133].

Often in literature the hash values generated by the aforementioned functions are considered as fingerprints, since their use allows to uniquely identify the starting data.

It is good to specify that the characteristics of the hash function ensure that even a slight variation of the input data leads to a completely different output hash value, as can be seen from the example in Figure 27.

Input	Output (Hash)
Cat	93g56gtf229hbno00r45sktrpbs59so9r3t7saer
A white cat is outside	js03bbstgo94r6s1z8mg05fgt3sba9tob32bsap7
A white cat is inside	bbr19007go2tsi52bsi50o21nmiseas45on23mjn
A whiet cat is inside	339n5sbk249nb9530gjdl04h92jg02jg9sm93hpz
A white cat is insid	4bbj390osoh9djm395bksh94gf03sg034dfjh31x

Figure 27: Example of the variation of the hash value starting from different input data. Source: Cointelegraph.

More specifically, cryptographic hash functions have the following properties[134]:

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[132]Ibid.
[133]Weisstein, E. (2020). MathWorld - A Wolfram Web Resource. Retrieved from https://mathworld.wolfram.com/HashFunction.html.
[134]Drescher, cit.

- Quickly calculate hash values from any type of data;

- They are deterministic and therefore produce identical hash values when the input data is the same;

- They are random and therefore the returned hash value changes unpredictably when the input data is changed;

- They are one-way functions, ie they do not provide any way to obtain the input values from the outputs;

- They are collision resistant as it is very difficult to find two or more distinct data for which the same hash value is obtained.

Hash functions play a fundamental role within the cryptography used by the blockchain, as we will see later when the digital signature is dealt with.

The timestamp, or time stamp, is a sequence of characters that contains information about a date and / or time and that allows you to ascertain the actual occurrence of a certain event.

Timestamping is the process of generating and affixing the time stamp, by a trusted third party, to an IT document,

digital or electronic. The affixing of the time stamp makes it possible to establish the existence of an IT document from a certain instant and to guarantee its validity over time. The timestamp also prevents the operation, once performed, from being altered or undone[135].

The digital signature is a tool that allows you to certify the authenticity of digital messages or documents, providing the recipient with the guarantee that the message was created by a declared sender (authentication) and that it has not been altered during transit (integrity). At the same time, it allows to pursue the principle of non-repudiation, according to which the sender cannot deny having sent the message.

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[135]Morabito, V. (2017). Business Innovation Through Blockchain - The B³ Perspective. Springer.

Blockchain uses the digital signature mechanism, based on asymmetric cryptography, to validate the authentication of transactions whose operation is now briefly described.

Each user of the blockchain network has a private key pair and a public key. The private key, which must be kept secret, is used to sign transactions. The signed transactions are then transmitted throughout the network. The signature phase is followed by the verification phase. The example below helps to clarify the two different phases.

One user, Alice, wants to send a message to another user, Bob. In the signing phase, Alice encrypts her data with her private key and sends Bob the encrypted result along with the original data. In the verification phase, Bob applies Alice's public key to the encrypted data and checks them with the original data, being able to check there has been any type of tampering[136].

In Figure 28, the digital signature process is schematically described in which the use of public and private keys can be seen in the relationship between the sender and the receiver.
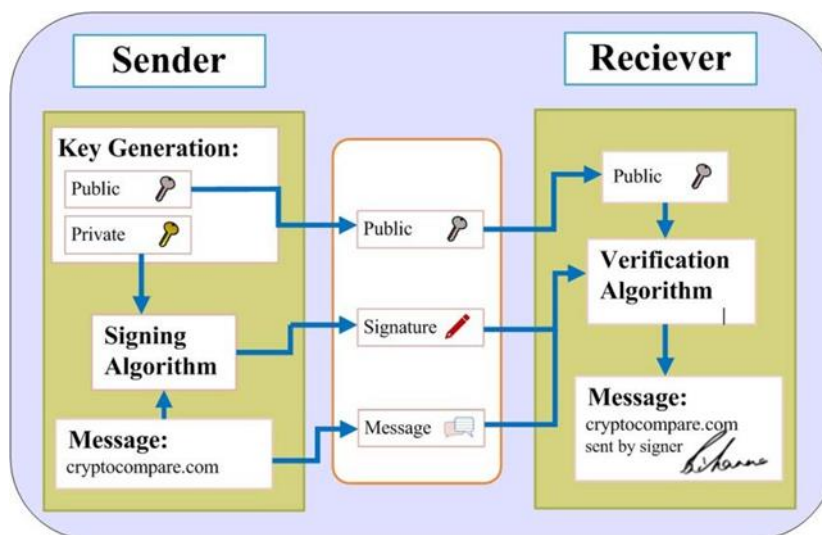

Figure 28: Schematic example of how digital signature works (Fang, et al., 2020)

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[136]Zibin, cit.

The term ledger (or ledger) identifies the set of all the blocks that are saved in the blockchain. Throughout history, paper ledgers have been used to track the exchange of goods and services. In modern times, accounting books have been stored digitally, often in large databases owned and managed by a centralized trusted third party (i.e. the owner of the ledger). These centrally owned registers can be deployed centrally or distributed (that is, a single server or a cluster of coordinating servers).

There is growing interest in exploring the possibility of having distributed ownership of the ledger. Blockchain technology allows for such an approach using a distributed physical architecture which generally involves a much larger set of computers than is typical of a centrally managed distributed physical architecture. The growing interest in distributed ownership of ledgers is due to possible problems of trust, security and reliability associated with centralized management.

Centralized ledgers can in fact:

- Get lost or destroyed; the user must be sure that the owner is backing up the system correctly.

- Being on a homogeneous network, where the software, hardware and network infrastructure can be the same. Due to this feature, the overall resilience of the system can be reduced, as an attack on one part of the network will have significant repercussions on the whole system.

- Be located entirely in specific geographic locations (for example, all in one country). If network outages occur in that location, the ledger and the services that depend on it may not be available.

- Contain transactions that are not made transparent, are not valid or complete. The user must in fact trust that the owner validates every transaction received and includes all transactions received.

- Having been altered; the user must be confident that the owner is not altering past transactions.

- Being insecure. A user must be confident that computer systems and associated networks have implemented best practices for security.

Due to all these reasons, the blockchain is based on a distributed ledger that will be described in detail below, highlighting its properties that prove to be useful for managing a supply chain.

In Figure 29, the differences between a centralized and distributed network discussed above are schematically presented.
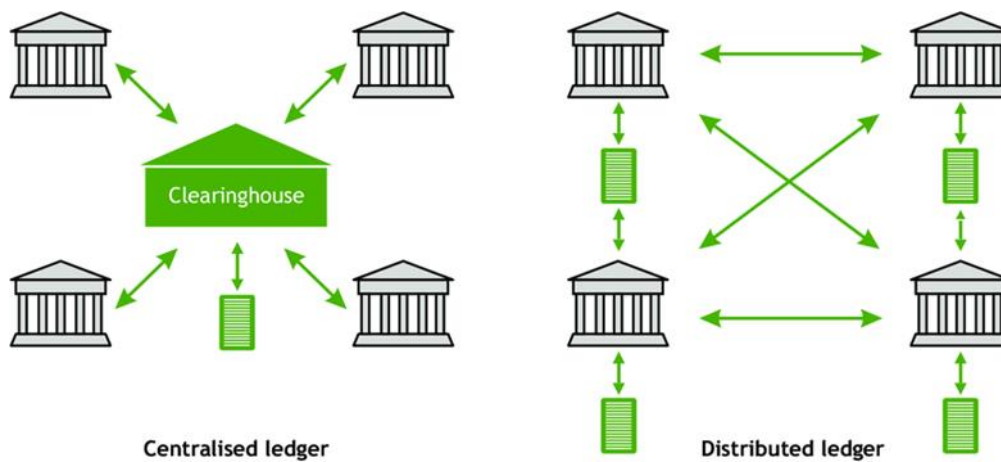

Figure 29: Difference between centralized and distributed ledgers (Tripoli & Schmidhuber, 2018).

One of the most innovative features of the blockchain, as stressed several times, is the creation of trust that involves a large number of nodes. This is made possible thanks to the use of sophisticated consensus mechanisms that allow the entire network to unanimously decide on which records to include in the next block and in what order in the blockchain, then in agreeing on the status of the ledger.[137].

Several consensus mechanisms have been devised for the blockchain that have significant differences in terms of how they pursue the aforementioned goal.

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[137]Voulgaris, S., Fotiou, N., Siris, V., Polyzos, G., Jaatinen, M., & Oikonomidis, Y. (2019). Blockchain Technology for Intelligent Environments. Future Internet.

Before dwelling on the different types of existing blockchains, it is good to explain two important conflicts that this technology is facing.

The first concerns the contrast of transparency with privacy. While it is true that a distinctive feature of the blockchain is its being open and transparent, sharing information undermines privacy from the moment transactions are publicly accessible from any node in the network. This first conflict can be traced back to the blockchain reading operations.

The second conflict is based on the antithesis between safety and speed. Security is a key concept of the blockchain and to ensure that data is saved securely it is necessary to use consensus algorithms which, more often than not, require a significant time expenditure. This contrasts with the speed and scalability requirements in various commercial applications.

It is possible to distinguish two main types of blockchains that deal with the aforementioned conflicts in different ways. They are:

- Public blockchain (permissionless): grants all users or nodes read access and the right to write and verify new transactions[138];
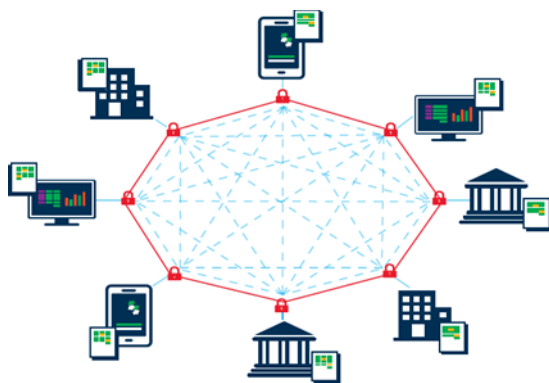

Figure 30: Permissioned blockchain. Source: World Bank Group.

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[138]Bitfury Group. (2015). Public versus Private Blockchains - Part 1: Permissioned Blockchains. Retrieved from bitfury.com: https://bitfury.com/content/downloads/public-vs-private-pt1-1.pdf.

- Private blockchain (permissioned): limits access to the network, therefore the ability to read and create new transactions to a pre-selected group of users or nodes[139].

Figure 31: Permissionless blockchain (World Bank Group, 2017)

While public blockchains guarantee greater security and transparency, private blockchains allow better performance in terms of speed and privacy.

The problem with the private version is that it limits the ability to write and read all transactional history and this impacts the following aspects of the blockchain[140]:

- The peer-to-peer architecture: being that some users or nodes have greater freedom of writing and reading than others, the concept of equity between nodes on which peer-to-peer systems are based is undermined.

- The distributed nature: since only some members of the chain can guarantee or reject transactions, the concept of a distributed chain disappears, thus making it centralized in contrast to the definition of blockchain.

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[139]BitFury Group. (2015). Public versus Private Blockchains - Part 2: Permissionless Blockchains. Retrieved from bitfury.com: https://bitfury.com/content/downloads/public-vs-private-pt2-1.pdf.
[140]Drescher, cit.

- The Goal: The main problem solved by the blockchain is the achievement and maintenance of integrity in a purely distributed peer-to-peer system of an unknown number of members. By establishing restrictions on read and write, not only does the properties of the distributed peer-to-peer system change, but also the trustworthiness of the nodes.

Blockchain technology, as we have seen, is an encrypted distributed ledger containing all the transactions that take place between the participating parts of a network.

Adding any transaction to the ledger requires system participants to verify its validity. Once the transaction is considered verified, it is indelibly inserted in a block of the chain and then added in all the registers owned by the nodes[141]. A representation of the connected block structure of the blockchain is shown in Figure 32.

The transactions can be traced back to the first block, commonly called the genesis block which, as can be seen in Figure 32, is the only block that is not connected to an upstream block.
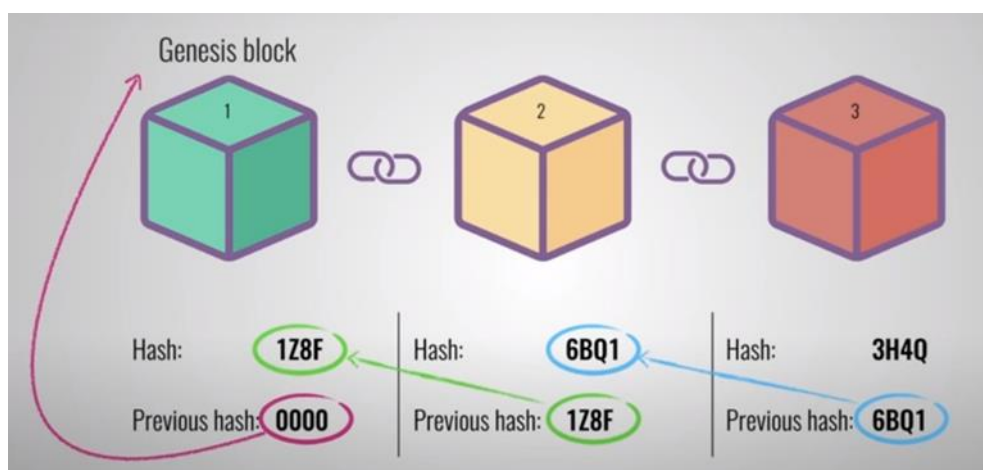
[141]Crosby, M., Nachiappan, Pattanayak, P., Verma, S., & Kalyanaraman, V. (2016). BlockChain Technology: Beyond Bitcoin. Applied Innovation Review.

Figure 32: Blockchain and the relationship between the various blocks. Source: Simply Explained, 2017.

The blockchain contains a certain and verifiable record of every single transaction carried out between the various blocks.

The immutability of the blockchain is linked to the fact that each hash value is calculated on the basis of the content of the block and the hash of the previous block, as shown in Figure 32. For this reason, if a user wanted to tamper with block i, he should recalculate the hash of block i as you can see in Figure 32. This in turn will require the hash of all subsequent blocks to be recalculated, as changing a hash will invalidate all subsequent hashes, each hash value being closely related to previous hash values.

Now, since the ledger is distributed, it would be necessary to change the hash of at least 51% of the entire network. The enormous computational effort required makes this nearly impossible in practice[142].

However, the use of the hash function is not enough to prevent tampering, in fact nowadays computers are very fast and can compute hundreds of thousands of hashes per second.

So, there is the possibility, even if it is remote, that a computer will effectively tamper with a block and recalculate all the hashes of the other blocks to make the blockchain valid again.

In this regard, the blockchain uses consensus protocols, such as Proof of Work or Proof of Stake, which try to prevent fraudulent or incorrect behavior by members of the network.

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[142]Elmessiry, M., & Elmessiry, A. (2018). CRYPTO COPYCAT: A Fashion Centric Blockchain Framework for Eliminating Fashion Infringement. Engineering and Technology International Journal of Materials and Textile Engineering, 12 (7).
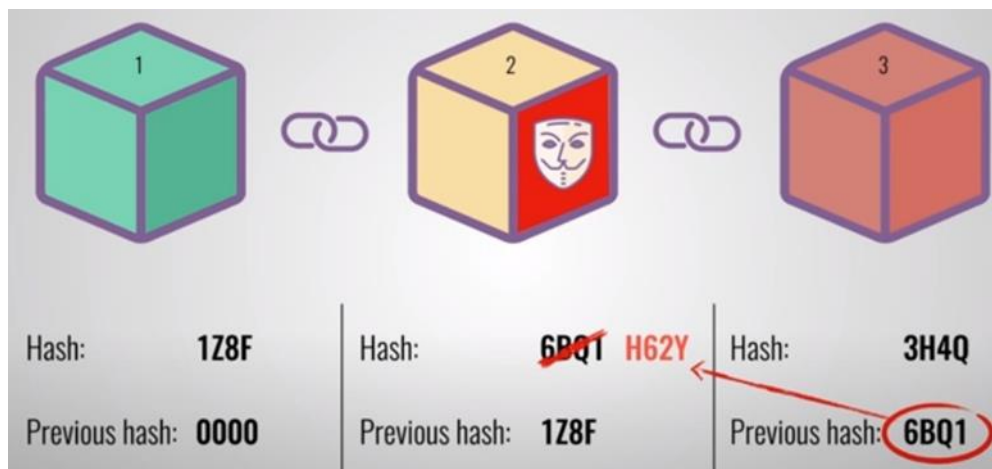
Figure 33: Blockchain: what happens when a block is tampered with. Source: Simply Explained, 2017.

Each consensus protocol is governed by different "rules", but the general objective is the validation of the transactions and the consequent addition to the chain in order to maintain the integrity and security of the system without resorting to an intermediary.

To pursue this purpose, consensus protocols in public blockchains purposely slow down the creation of new blocks: in fact, each block of the blockchain will be approved on condition that it includes an answer to a very particular "mathematical problem" or if certain conditions are met.[143].

This math puzzle is not trivial to solve and you can set the complexity of the problem to increase the safety of that process[144].

In private blockchains, the decision-making power is in the hands of a few nodes and in this case the validation of a block is faster, to the detriment of a decision-making centralization that compromises disintermediation, the cornerstone of the blockchain, making the system susceptible to tampering.[145].

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[143]Voulgaris, cit.
[144]Apte, S., & Petrovsky, N. (2016). Will blockchain technology revolutionize excipient supply chain management? Journal of Excipients and Food Chemicals.
[145]Voulgaris, cit.

This technology can be used for economic transactions of various types of currencies, assets and / or financial contracts, but the general functioning does not change[146].

Finally, a smart contract is an executable code that works on the blockchain to automatically facilitate, execute and enforce the terms of an agreement once the specified conditions are met.[147].

However, smart contracts are characterized by a series of properties (e.g. immutability and transparency of contractual conditions) that govern the blockchain such as, for example, the immutable recording of data.

Unlike traditional paper contracts that rely on third-party intermediaries for execution, smart contracts automate contractual procedures, minimize interactions between parties, and reduce administration costs. Thanks to the ease of implementation, smart contracts on public blockchains or "public smart contracts" have attracted a wide variety of commercial applications. Smart contracts on permissioned blockchain or "permissioned smart contracts" are instead more often used in collaborative business processes as they allow you to avoid unwanted updates from occurring, improving efficiency and reducing costs[148].

2. NFT

A non-fungible token is a token or digital asset that links ownership to unique physical or digital objects, such as art, music, video, etc. and a license to use the resources for a specific purpose. It is a unique, non-interchangeable unit

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[146]Elmessiry, cit.

[147]Alharby, M., & van Moorsel, A. (2017). Blockchain-Based Smart Contracts: A Systematic Mapping StudY. International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology.

[148]Liyanage, M., Manzoor, A., Thilakarathna, K., Jourjon, G., & Seneviratne, A. (2019). Blockchain-based Smart Contracts - Applications and Challenges. arXiv.

of data that is stored on a digital ledger platform called the blockchain that provides the NFT with verified and public proof of ownership. A non-fungible token provides a certificate of authenticity that guarantees its uniqueness and immutability. An NFT is built on a digital ledger platform, i.e. blockchain which is also the technology behind cryptocurrency. Due to the principles of cryptography, an NFT can never be changed, regulated and stolen and this makes the blockchain unique. To develop understanding of NFTs,

Fungible Objects: These are the elements that can be interchanged because they are identical and their values define them rather than their unique properties. For example, the currency, which is digital and physical, is fungible because $ 1 USD or 1 BTC can be exchanged for another.

Non-fungible items: these are objects that are not interchangeable because each token has unique characteristics and each of them has a different value. NFTs can be considered modern collectibles and represent digital proof of ownership of items bought and sold online and securely registered on blockchain that make subsequent or counterfeiting of NFTs difficult.

NFT has the following properties:

- each NFT is different from the other, which means that NFT cannot be replaced;
- NFT can be downloaded, copied and shared due to the digital asset, but the original NFT and proof of ownership live on the blockchain;
- From historical data stored on the blockchain, anyone can verify NFT that authenticates the original owner and creator.

Several blockchains support NFTs but the Ethereum blockchain is the platform where most NFTs are created and stored where anyone can review NFTs and easily verify and trace ownership. However, the person who owns the token remains fake. Different types of digital assets can be tokenized, for example works of art, game items and even video from live broadcast and the

file size does not matter as it remains separate from the blockchain. Also, copyrights and license may not be obtained with the purchase depending on the NFT, as the purchase of the limited edition print does not guarantee you the image rights exclusively. NFTs are created on the Ethereum blockchain, but are different from ERC-20 tokens,

An NFT at a time can only have one owner and is managed through its unique ID and metadata that no other token can replicate it. The minting of NFTs can be done via smart contracts and when someone coins an NFT, they execute the code which is stored in smart contracts which is compliant with different standards like ERC-721 and then this information is updated on the blockchain.

When someone owns an NFT, it has the following meaning:

- they can easily prove they own it in a similar way to prove that you have ETH in your account. When they buy NFTs, ownership of the unique token is transferred to their wallet via the public address. NFT is linked to a private key which acts as a unique ID or credential. The token proves the digital file's originality and their private key is proof of ownership, which means that the private keys behind that address control NFT;
- Nobody is able to manipulate it in any way;
- They can sell it and in some cases even earn resale royalties to the original creators;
- Or they can keep it for as long as they want knowing that the asset is protected by the wallet on Ethereum.

NFT opens up new perspectives for the blockchain. TRON, which is a blockchain-based digital platform, introduced the first non-fungible token standard called TRC-721 in December 2020, which was anticipated as the possibility for new blockchain applications and to keep pace with the growing NFT industry. of Ethereum. The purpose of the introduction of the standard

is to allow applications to track and transfer NFTs through the TRON platform. On this platform, each NFT has its own proprietary ID, metadata, links to secure files, and other information that is recorded in smart contracts that help identify NFTs.

There is no shortage of online marketplaces to trade, buy, sell or even create (mint) NFTs. Once the creator and buyer have agreed on a certain price, these are the following major online markets where NFT trading can take place:

- Foundation: It is a public platform where the artist must be invited by other fellow creators who already exist on this platform. There is a cost to the artist in the sense that she has to purchase gas to mint NFT, which means she could increase the artwork.

- OpenSea.io: This is a peer-to-peer platform and the largest NFT marketplace where a collection of collectibles exists. To use this platform, the artist just needs to open an account to find NFT collectibles.

- Rarely: This platform also works similarly to OpenSea which offers a variety of NFTs. It is a public platform where buyers and sellers can trade NFTs. Use the RARI token to reward platform members.

- Gateway elegante:Questa piattaforma è incentrata sulle opere d'arte e attraverso la quale le persone possono acquistare e vendere collezioni di arte digitale. È una piattaforma utilizzata da grandi marchi e atleti e chiama i loro oggetti da collezione come Nifties.

- Super Rare: SuperRare is a digital marketplace for trading single edition artwork. The main objective of this platform is to exhibit and offer digital works of art.

NFTs are undoubtedly very popular right now, but at the same time they also have positive and negative aspects. So here are some pros and cons of NFTs. Professionals:

- NFTs give ownership of digital assets to their creators. When someone creates digital content, an NFT offers them a chance to show not only the authenticity of the asset, but it also gives them the opportunity to earn profits from their work. For example, memes are widespread nowadays and could be a source of income for creators.

- NFTs are unique and collectible, they provide uniqueness to art and a layer of legitimacy to collectible content, especially in the form of digital assets, and many people appreciate the excitement they get from these features.

- Since NFTs are blockchain based, so they are immutable and can never be changed, replaced or deleted. The most valuable quality of NFTs is their origin and authenticity can easily be proven.

- The deeper benefit of an NFT is that it includes smart contracts which is another fascinating feature of the blockchain. A smart contract NFT could give its creators a certain percentage of profit when the NFT is sold.

Versus:

There are also some downsides to any new technology. The disadvantage of NFTs is the following.

- One of the downsides of NFTs is that it is a speculative market. It gives rise to many confusing questions such as what is the value associated with NFT? Is it a long-term investment? Or are they just a fad? In fact, it is very difficult to say, currently the only value depends on the emotional quality of the NFTs.

- Having the NFT does not necessarily mean that you can control the asset, you simply have the authenticity of the art. And that's why copies of your NFT might exist. The art can be copied and published just like GIFs, memes and videos posted on various websites and social platforms.

- The technology behind NFTs is relatively secure, but many platforms are not as secure, so there is a possibility that NFTs could be stolen as such incidents have been reported as reported by cybersecurity breaches.

On 3rd May 2014, Kevin McCay was the first person to create the first ever NFT. He coined "Quantum" as his first NFT even though there was no hype in the cryptocurrency market. Since the creation of the first NFT in 2014 there was a lack of awareness among people until mid-2017. But, in December 2017, the success of CryptoKittes became a source of public awareness and a boom in non-fungible tokens. People took an interest in this new emerging technology, but overall production was still below average. However, NFT's rapid growth began during the COVID period, i.e. during 2020 with a value of $ 250 million that year. In 2021, the

According to the most authentic source on non-fungible tokens (www.screw.com), the trend of NFT sales in the third quarter of 2021 concerns only the highly usable platform or the Ethereum blockchain. More than half of the NFTs were sold during the 3rd quarter of 2021 within the $ 101- $ 1000 price range which constitutes the largest percentage of NFTs sold of all. Whereas only 0.01% of NFTs were sold in the $ 500,001- $ 1,000,000 price range. The US-based project called Art Blocks was the only highly-sold NFT on the Ethereum blockchain which was around $ 6.9 million at the time. In recent years, NFT has received tremendous attention probably due to the massive increase in the price of cryptocurrencies. Therefore, NFT has become the new favorite thing to study, explore and trade. The word "non-fungible" token endorses at least one characteristic or a unique attribute, position or identity is associated with it and this is how it differs from cryptocurrencies. The demand for NFT has increased due to its wide range of applications in multiple aspects from art, music and meme to the gaming industry. However, there are multiple uses and perspectives for this technology. There is a

particular segment of people, who prefer to use these tokens and invest in them. This chapter will also be used to explore and exploit the motivation of the people behind the buying and selling this new technology-based trading. NFT has also changed the conventional method of doing business - it has been a source of interaction between people and brands. Therefore, this chapter will mainly answer these following questions:

- How is NFT created?
- What is the value of an NFT and how is it perceived by people?
- What are the different applications of NFT and how has it revolutionized traditional business?
- Finally, what is the motivation behind buying and selling NFTs?

People see NFT as the future of ownership. All property types, from currency to event tickets, will have the status of their property tokenized via non-fungible tokens. NFT bridges the gap between an artist and the end user and ultimately helps the artist make more money and for each transaction NFT changes ownership. Fans were able to enjoy the benefits of attending concerts, video calling and other communication benefits offered by influencers. Some of the real-time examples are included to study the main objectives behind this trading and how people can decide to invest in it or not. The NFT has gained a lot of attention over the past decade and especially after the pandemic situation has passed. Especially the art world is a bit conservative, but the blocks have fostered tremendous growth to wake it up and compete with the digital world. This question has been raised by several artists these days due to its attractive prices for which the NFT has recently been sold. There are numerous examples of NFTs that are sold for millions of dollars. Therefore, it is absolutely worth exploring whether NFT can be a source of income and wealth in the near future. This is a kind of unique platform where it is almost impossible to replicate the success of any other NFT which is the main focus behind the creation of NFT: uniqueness and

ownership of the single non-fungible token. The companies that allow this type of transactions, and the platforms that help in the generation of NFTs, charge an amount of fees to NFT artists, before and after the sale. The method of creating non-fungible tokens is referred to as Minting, explained below:

- Step 1 Platform selection.

First, it is important to select the platform you want to use for NFT generation. There are multiple options available where you can make and sell NFT which includes popular platforms like OpenSea, SuperRare, Nifty Gateway, NFT Showroom, BakerySwap etc. While for the payment, the platforms used are MetaMask, CoinBase, WallectConnect etc.

- Step 2 Select the payment method

The next step is to create a digital wallet where all transactions take place. Once the digital wallet is chosen, the digital currency (Cryptocurrency) will be added to that specific wallet. Subsequently, the digital wallet will be linked to the NFT platform already chosen. It is important to note that an individual must pay a fee upfront for the NFT (Minting) generation of his work which is known as a Gas fee.

- Gas commission for NFT minting:

Gas tariffs are payments that users must make based on the energy consumption required by a transaction on blockchain technology. It is similar to the service fee that credit / debit cards charge for making any online transaction. Gwei is the gas charging unit used by the Ethereum blockchain platform. For illustration: To explain the phenomena of the gas tax, one can take as an example a car that is in the transaction. To drive a car, the driver needs fuel the same way for the Ethereum transaction, gas is needed. If I want to reach a friend, I have to take the car and put in the gasoline necessary to reach the destination. If the traffic is low, it will take less fuel to reach the

target destination, however if I try to reach the same destination during rush hour, the car will consume more fuel due to heavy traffic, but the distance remains the same in both conditions. Likewise, every transaction on the Ethereum network requires a gas commission to execute trades and is affected by network congestion at that time. Gas on Ethereum has been assigned a market price which is affected by the availability of resources over a given period of time. every transaction on the Ethereum network requires a gas commission to execute trades and is affected by network congestion at that time. Gas on Ethereum has been assigned a market price which is affected by the availability of resources over a given period of time. every transaction on the Ethereum network requires a gas commission to execute trades and is affected by network congestion at that time. Gas on Ethereum has been assigned a market price which is affected by the availability of resources over a given period of time.

Together with the seller, it is also a problem for the buyers. Buyers must also pay this gas tax while placing an order and cancel one. The gas fee is also charged during the transfer of the NFT from one person to another which is also affected by the traffic of the platform at that time. Therefore, stakeholders face different problems, especially when they are unaware of gas tariffs. If the transaction fails, a gas commission amount is also charged. For example, if the transaction is initiated for 100 ETH and there are insufficient fees on the account, the buyer will be charged 100 ETH plus the gas fee for the energy used for the failed transaction.

Most platforms require payment to be made through Ethereum, the native cryptocurrency of the open source blockchain platform ETH, where NFTs were first introduced and launched. Hence, the initial step to buy some cryptocurrencies to mint NFT on any open source platform.

- Step 3: minting NFT (generation)

Here comes the main stage of NFT minting and the platform will provide the options to choose individually, one-time, or sell the same item multiple times. The digital file needs to be uploaded here which will be converted to a non-fungible token.

Accept multiple formats such as PNG, GIF, WEBP, MP4, MP3 files.

Once the three main steps above have been completed, artists can proceed to auction the minted NFT. Multiple auction methods include fixed price, timed or unlimited auction. In this part, the sales process is decided. Fixed prices allow the artist to set a price and the seller can purchase it immediately. The Timed Auction is limited to a specific time period and will automatically close and the Unlimited Auction will continue until the owner accepts it.

With the emergence of NFT, there has been a huge shift in the business and in how trading was done before. It is reshaping conventional trading and the current lifestyle to a greater extent. Some examples are illustrated below: NFT is changing the way digital art is bought and sold. It reduces the chances of involving an agent. An artist can directly create art on the public blockchain platform and reach out to the layman and eventually sell it on the same platform. Artists are generating a lot of revenue through web hosting advertising. Some of the NFTs were sold closing the offering up to $ 400,000. The future of NFT seems to revolutionize the way of traveling for an occasional traveler who does not need to carry paper documents to prove their identity. NFT can help create a digital identity document that can be used for traveling within the country or even abroad. It can save confidential data that needs to be verified by authorities, healthcare professionals or employers, etc. NFT is also changing the buying and selling of tickets. Due to the reliable transactional process, it is also used to issue tickets instead of printing paper tickets, which ultimately reduces costs to a greater extent. It also helps reduce the risk of resale due to the fact that the tokens are non-fungible and cannot be replaced.

A similar platform NFT.Kred provides the service that can create digital tokens / tickets for events.

After understanding the concept of NFT, the thought immediately comes to mind: what is its value and who decides it? The value of NFT is different from the practical things we trade in everyday life. It is very important to understand the exact value of an NFT before trading and how it evolves over time. It is not limited to physical things that have real world value associated with them. That is why the value of an NFT depends on the type of NFT that is on the blockchain platform.

If the asset is related to a physical thing, the value depends on the associated NFT on the blockchain platform. But if the target asset is digital, its value depends on the buyer's perspective and how they value it, it is purely speculative. Its value is reflected in the phenomena of market supply and demand.

An art can be taken as an example for this concept. The price of an art is speculative and is influenced by two main factors: public sentiment and the buyer's willingness to pay. This allows the seller to set the price of that art to the extent he wants, but whether the buyer is willing to spend that amount or not, that's a different thing. These two perspectives give rise to the speculative price of an NFT. Several examples include the price of famous tweets, snaps, stories, memes and artwork, etc. A striking example of NFT includes the sale of CEO twitter's first tweet, which stated "just to set up my twitte", was initially released on March 21st, 2006. There was no parameter to set a price for this type of digital asset. It went on sale on March 6, 2021, and Bridge Oracle CEO Sina Estavi won the auction by spending 1,630.58 Ethereum worth approximately $ 2.5 million at the time of the sale.

The example above shows the sky-high for the price of NFTs which have no parameter / criteria to define a specific price but since the value of that NFT is defined by how much buyers are willing to spend on that type of digital asset, it can completely exceed the wildest expectations of traditional sellers

as well as buyers. In addition to the originality of the content there are some other factors that can have a huge impact on the value of an NFT which includes the signature of the creator of the content, the place of formation of the heritage, the autographs etc. Therefore, the value of an NFT is not predefined and is not even associated with physical assets. It solely depends on the type of NFT being auctioned and how much buyers are willing to pay for that art or item.

After the sharp boom in NFTs, we have observed different types of NFTs being sold and bought on different platforms. Therefore, it is quite necessary to classify the forms and types of NFT.NFTS can be classified into three main categories:

Original or copy of the work, these are created on the blockchain platform.

Digital native NFTs, the assets that are able to issue NFTs to different people along with property rights.

NFT metadata, involves linking to NFT metadata but does not provide ownership but only the rights to use them.

The current evolution of NFT and innovation can be a source of its coinage in different application domains. NFTs can be of different types, depending on the nature of NFT and its use. The common list of recently traded NFTs includes:

- Collectible items

The first application of NFTs was observed as online collectibles. CryptoKittes is a good example for this type of application. It is based on a game that allows users to collect, breed and sell virtual cats.

- Artwork

Another famous interaction between technology and art refers to the digital artwork traded on the digital platform, for example blockchain. Different tools available on the blockchain platform help artists to make different illustrations. NFT allows buyers to register for real-world art ownership on the blockchain platform.

- Meme

Social media enthusiasts are also participating in this new ecosystem by buying and selling memes like NFTs. It provides meme creators the ability to trade their NFTs on the blockchain. It seems to have been revolutionized among other NFT applications for selling / buying memes that were never imagined before.

- Tickets for events

As mentioned earlier in the NFT revolution aspect through this technology, event managers can easily mint NFTs and sell tickets via blockchain. This type of ticketing method can be used for concert tickets, music events, football matches and other applications where attendees can show their tickets digitally and also prove their identity.

- Music

Blockchain was also used to link music to NFT. There have been several experiments to create this category in the NFT application area. Provides access to fans or candidates to use the media or music. Two of the main

platforms used for this type of applications are Mintbase & Rarible. By doing this, artists / singers are able to reach their fans and followers by directly providing them with a premium experience and other services. Some of the artists allow their fans to purchase their NFTs and in return they get their close experience such as access to online meetings, information on the upcoming release, autographs etc. Earlier this year, Kings of Leon became the first band to release NFT.

- Game

Common application of NFTs has been observed in the gaming industry. This has raised the interest of gaming enthusiasts to a different level. Players would be able to easily sell and buy in-game items. Game developers make big revenue by minting NFT which generates revenue for every sale of game items in an open market.

- Identity

Due to an important feature of NFT, namely scarcity, it is widely experienced to be used for identity purposes. It is not fungible meaning it is unique and cannot be replaced with anything else. Therefore, it works like a passport and can be used by the owner for his identification without the fear of losing the data.

- Arianee:

Arianee, a blockchain alliance of some luxury brands, releases the digital passport for luxury goods. These digital passports are digital tokens, which are non-fungible tokens that are linked to distinctive luxury items and are linked to physical items. These digital passports are actually proof of the authenticity and ownership of the associated physical items which also enhance the resale of those items. In addition, this new idea also increases customers' connection with the brand.

The Breitling alliance brand is currently issuing digital passports for its watches and these passports are accessible by downloading the encrypted digital wallet or scanning the owner's electronic card which acts as the watches' digital identity and also proof of ownership and authenticity. Through this digital passport, in case of resale the property can be easily transferred without any paper documentation formalities.

Of the aforementioned categories of NFTs (sports, games, utilities, art and collectibles etc.) that have been most sold out on the Ethereum blockchain, the illustration below is only for one month in the third quarter of 2021. Among them , the most famous ones were collectibles and art while the least sold was sports NFT. The most expensive NFT ever sold was a digital collage (digital art) at Christie's for $ 69.3 million.

Mike Winkelman, also known as Beeple, became the third richest living artist after his NFT sold for around $ 69 million at an auction in March 2021. NFT has flourished as one of the hottest commodities in all of the world, generating over $ 10.7 billion in sales recently through the first week of November 2021 according to market tracker Nonfungible.com report.

According to Eloisa Marchesoni, buyers of NFTs are not just traditional investors who expect a rate of return over a fixed period of time.

Perhaps it is worth buying NFTs if someone enjoys collecting, supporting specific communities, or intends to invest in something. NFT provides unique value thanks to reliable transactions performed on the blockchain. When someone buys an NFT from the artist, ownership is transferred so that it

becomes theirs. In most cases the buyer does not buy the content but rather a token that links her name with the artist's art on the blockchain platform. Therefore, NFT is a certificate of ownership of a digital asset that can be traced on the blockchain platform. With this, there are other benefits that can be considered while purchasing NFTs which are explained as follows.

- Advantages of the brand

Getting an NFT from your favorite company could come with some extremely big benefits. Discounts, airdrops, merchandising, limited edition products, exclusive invitations and even more digital assets for your wallet are all possibilities. Investing in a brand to qualify for this type of utility could be a smart move. If the customer is loyal to the brand, it would encourage him to buy more frequently and take advantage of the token's bonuses, discounts and collectability. Buying an NFT from a brand is equivalent to buying a smaller stake in that company. You have invested money in their product, which you could resell for profit on a variety of platforms.

- Collectivity

When it comes to non-fungible tokens, collectability is one of the crucial aspects. In the past, we collected soaps, shoes, Pokemon (video games) and even sweatbands. We never bought such products with the aim of reselling them, instead, we bought them because we liked what they were.
Currently, the best way to collect is on the blockchain. The historical data of each NFT is revealed on the blockchain. As a result, NFTs can be a completely transparent source of trading and negotiation. Not only are the transactions decentralized, they are also completed almost immediately, with

the seller and buyer signing a document that verifies the transaction before proceeding with the sale.

- Investment opportunity

Investing in digital assets like NFTs could be a lot of fun, but it's also very risky. However, a high risk leads to a high return. Every day, thousands of people benefit from NFT development and trading, and many people make their living full-time by buying and selling digital assets.

You can get a great return by investing money in NFTS in a variety of ways. One of the most typical strategies for making money with NFTs is to buy assets at a low price and then sell them at a higher price. Looking into long-term investment options is another approach to investing. Long-term investment prospects abound as many new businesses and brands are developed on the basis of NFT. Proper research should be done before finalizing any decision and assessing in advance whether it is worth investing in NFT for a specific company.

3. NFT marketing and case studies

Many brands in the fashion, food and beverage sectors have already experienced the potential of NFT marketing: shortly after the first spread of NFTs, towards the end of 2019, they had coined their NFTs, decided their goals and developed a strategy[149].

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[149]Di Vietri M., NFT marketing: case studies for your brand strategy, 9 February 2022, in https://www.ninjamarketing.it/2022/02/09/nft-marketing/.

Among the first to welcome and use this innovative form of marketing, there were brands such as Gucci, Adidas, Coca Cola Mc Donald's, Ray-Ban or Mattel, just to name a few.

Through NFT marketing plans these brands have undertaken important initiatives carried out for different purposes, but all united by the great results achieved in terms of profit and branding, thus attesting the value that NFT marketing strategies are able to bring to brands.

NFTs represent an ever-growing trend as early as 2021, as is also shown by the Google Trends chart below. What are the main reasons behind this constant growth?

Wanting to summarize the reasons that could explain the success of NFTs, we can list three main reasons:

- the technology behind NFTs (blockchain);
- the support of NFTs received from some of the largest and most innovative brands in the world;
- the link of NFTs to the common unconscious need in human beings to belong and be part of a community by expressing their person through their possessions, physical or digital.

The Metaverse represents a novelty in the way of interfacing with the world and this novelty brings with it a multitude of experiences now possible that can connect to different sectors such as fashion and gaming.

NFT and Metaverso are connected because today every person has the opportunity to create their own 3D avatar and, for example, to proceed for example to the purchase of garments or accessories (but also portions of virtual territory or access to exclusive communities) through NFT.

This possible experience translates into two different advantages for the user and for the brand, respectively summarized in the following points:

- the user has the opportunity to buy or try on "in virtual life" a garment or a product, which could be out of their financial or other possibilities in real life;

- the company instead acquires the possibility of increasing its profits through the sale of virtual products and clothes to an ever wider audience.

As an example of the mix between fashion and gaming in the Metaverse we can refer to the collaboration established between Balenciaga, a well-known international fashion brand and Epic Games, developer of Fornite, one of the big names in gaming.

Thanks to this collaboration, users during the game had the opportunity to buy authentic looks made specifically for Fortnite in the Balenciaga virtual stores.

Uniqueness and exclusivity therefore represent the cornerstones of this collaboration between the big names in gaming and fashion.

The future scenarios of the Metaverse foresee various developments of the latter, which aims to obtain a "material" interaction through:

- device;

- home automation;

- the work;

- entertainment;

- interactions with social media;

- the possibilities offered by augmented reality.

The value that an NFT Marketing plan can bring to the brand can be evaluated from different points of view; to understand how NFTs create value for brands, it is indicative to identify the opportunities that these offer them.

In fact, NFTs are able to:

- allow a direct connection with your fanbase;

- allow the brand not to limit itself to offering only physical products or services, but also to range in virtual products;
- allow the sale to an ever wider audience;
- eliminate various problems such as shipping, product defects, storage costs and others, which do not concern virtual products but represent a criticality only for commercial activities;
- allow for an increase in profits;
- offer branding opportunities.

Using NFTs in marketing strategies is essential to take advantage of the value they are able to offer to brands, but to use them optimally it is good to take into account the correlation with different disciplines, activities and tools, including:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Influencer Marketing
- Community Management
- Sending Web And Mobile Push Notifications
- Email Marketing
- Feedback collection
- Co-marketing actions
- Social campaigns.

Setting up an SEO strategy is essential in this context because knowing the right keywords for search engine optimization is a fundamental aid for the target audience to quickly and easily reach the brand's NFT markets.

Influencer Marketing is growing rapidly and remains an indispensable tool for achieving certain goals. It remains particularly important to choose the most suitable influencer, who must be in line with your target audience, and who can become an excellent starting point for your NFT marketing strategy.

Creating an online community is necessary to build consumer loyalty and is the basic action to create a long-term connection with your audience.

Through a community it will in fact be possible for the brand to initiate a process of educating its customers on NFTs and updating them on market trends.

Push notifications are clickable pop-up messages that appear on users' browsers and represent a technique that allows companies to transmit messages, offers or other information to those who have subscribed to push notifications. It goes without saying that we can also consider them a good system for promoting our strategies regarding non-fungible tokens.

Email in NFT Marketing is another very useful element to use in a successful strategic plan, because through emails the brand has the opportunity to:

- share information about the release of a new product;
- receive feedback from them on new products;
- identify the best times for product launches.

At the base of the success of any project is listening to users. These are the feedbacks thanks to which the brand is able to become aware of the needs and desires of its customers and potential ones.

Feedback represents that two-way communication to be established with its customers which is of fundamental importance for any improvement in the strategy undertaken.

This strategy is another great way to market your NFT services. In fact, merging with different sectors as needed will represent a good way to get more visibility and traffic.

They are necessary to embed a PR strategy in the market for products and services. Social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn are therefore to be strongly considered for campaigns, because they are excellent tools through which to understand the wishes and expectations of their target audience.

NFT projects are currently being launched and supported by some of the largest and most innovative brands in the world which, through NFTs, are achieving numerous successes in terms of appreciation and revenue.

In fact, anyone can mint an NFT and make it available for purchase. Among the well-known brands that have coined their own NFTs we already find[150]:

- Adidas[151];
- Budweiser[152];
- Taco Bell[153];
- Asics[154];
- Clinique[155];

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[150]Ibid.

[151]Adidas, the well-known multinational sports clothing, shoes and accessories, has started a project called "Into the Metaverse", through which it has achieved incredible success by selling a collection of 30,000 digital tokens at a price of 0.2 Ether each (equal to about 700 euro) for a collection of 23.5 million dollars. But in addition to the collection, another result is arousing attention, namely the rumors related to the initiative that have certainly contributed to Adidas brand equity. In this case, therefore, thanks to NFT marketing, the value obtained by the brand was a strengthening of the brand and an immediate profit.

[152]Last year Budweiser, the well-known American beer company Anheuser-Busch launched a collection of NFT, consisting of 1,936 different artistic illustrations inspired by the iconic Budweiser beer can with NFT sold between $ 500 and $ 1,000, making for the company a collection of one million. Also in this case it is good to point out that it is not only the profit that has to be noticed, but the effectiveness and innovation in reference to branding.

[153]As early as March 2021, Taco Bell had built and sold 25 NFTs. Pioneer in the use of the new tool, the brand sold them for a symbolic amount of less than 2 dollars, thus obtaining a not significant collection but confirming the success of the test. In fact, just a few hours after the purchase of the NFTs, they were resold, in some cases even reaching $ 20,000.

[154]Even Asics was already one of the first brands to use NFTs for the sale of the Asics Sunrise Red collection in July, which included limited edition digital sneakers. This initiative has been described by the sports brand as a "celebration of sport and a first step in building a future where digital goods inspire physical activity". Proceeds from Asics' NFT offering are reinvested in their Artist-in-Residence program between digital content creators allowing for cultural exchange between different countries.

[155]The popular beauty brand in October unveiled MetaOptimist, its first limited edition series of NFT. Clinique has launched a contest to give away three NFTs to members of its Smart Rewards program who share stories of optimism and hope for the future on social media with the hashtags #MetaOptimist #Clinique #Concorso. Contest winners also received complimentary products.

- Mattel[156];

- McDonald's[157];

- Rayban[158];

- Original Penguin[159];

- Gucci[160];

- Pepsi-Cola[161];

- Dolce & Gabbana[162].

To understand how to use NFTs in your marketing strategy is to consider a series of exemplary use cases that show how some of the most well-known

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[156]Mattel, one of the world's leading toy manufacturers, launched NFTs in its Hot Wheels brand, releasing 40 different Hot Wheels NFT designs with a starting price of $ 15 each in November. Mattel defines its NFTs as a way to combine art and innovation in the toy industry, as well as a way to keep up with the times and make its creations timeless.

[157]In November 2021 McDonald's launched its first-ever NFT promotion by issuing a limited number of NFTs (nicknamed MCNFTs) as part of a collectible virtual art collection. The aim of this initiative was to create enthusiasm for the temporary return of the McRib product to the fast food menu. The marketing strategy used by the brand was that the collection of 10 individual McRib NFTs was only available to those who had retweeted the brand invitation. More than 21,000 people accepted and shared the invitation.

[158]In October 2021 the eyewear brand entered the NFT space with its first and only NFT, the iconic Aviator sunglasses, created by German artist Oliver Latta and auctioned on OpenSea. The proceeds from the sales went to the Italian Art Trust.

[159]The historic American sportswear brand Original Penguin, unlike the other brands that got on the NFT train, stood out for a strategy that saw it being the first fashion brand to commission influencers to make videos of TikTok as an NFT resource. Original Penguin collaborated with influencer artists from TikTok in the creation and delivery of its first NFT auction, which took place in November. Proceeds from the auction were donated to Free Arts NYC, a non-profit organization that helps young people through arts and mentoring programs.

[160]The well-known Italian fashion brand in June auctioned its first NFT called "Aria", a work inspired by the fashion film Gucci Aria co-directed by Alessandro Michele in an online auction with a starting price of $ 20,000 . Also in this case, the proceeds are donated by the brand to UNICEF USA in order to support the COVAX initiative of the non-profit organization aimed at guaranteeing equal access to anti Covid-19 vaccines.

[161]Pepsi-Cola has launched a collection of 1,893 unique NFTs, inspired by iconic objects from the music world, to pay homage to the brand's legendary history in music. The main element between stages and accessories is the microphone. In fact, each NFT shows a vintage microphone with different characteristics.

[162]The well-known fashion brand Dolce & Gabbana, in September 2021, sold at auction a digital collection called "Genesis" consisting of nine NFT creations, obtaining a profit of about 5.7 million dollars and winning the title of the most expensive collection in the digital sector.

brands, both historically advanced and considered "more traditional" have used them in marketing through the development of different strategies and to achieve different purposes.

And it is precisely from the analysis of the purposes pursued by the brands, before talking about the strategy adopted to obtain them, that it is necessary to start to understand well the use that can be made of NFT marketing and to find a source of inspiration for one's strategy.

Some of the objectives pursued by these brands so far can be summarized as follows:

- generate new revenue streams;
- build brand loyalty;
- raise money for a good cause;
- increase your image;
- tell a story;
- reach a new audience;
- use NFTs as a ticket office for live events.

Based on the objectives most in line with your brand, it is therefore possible to build a strategy suitable for the intended purposes, it being understood, however, that in order to develop a successful NFT marketing strategy it is essential to pay attention to three elements at the basis of the optimal use of NFTs. :

- training;
- accessibility;
- longevity.

Education must be an essential component of any campaign. The target audience must have a level of familiarity and comfort with NFTs to acquire an asset.

The accessibility of NFTs is instead linked to some decisions such as:

- determine the number of copies to be minted;
- the type of market to be used;
- the type of NFT wallet to use or recommend to buyers.

In reference to longevity, thinking long-term and evaluating blockchain ecosystems can instead be a good choice to avoid a hasty contract that can significantly limit minting capabilities.

Finally, among the important considerations to make when defining a durable NFT program we find the mapping:

- property rights;
- royalties;
- the location;
- the duration of the hosting.

A successful NFT campaign requires good planning. The fluidity of the NFT market creates opportunities and challenges, but both are manageable by following best practices.

There are several main platforms for NFTs used by brands and where it is possible to create online auctions and sell different types of virtual products. Some of these are:

- Coinbase
- OpenSea
- Crypto.com
- Binance NFT Marketplace
- FTX

4. Gamification

Gamification is establishing itself decisively in the field of digital marketing. On the other hand, if realities like Nike, Starbucks, McDonald's, Coca-Cola have implemented complex projects (marketing and more) through gamification, obviously this is not a superficial phenomenon. The legitimate question of why a practice based on play and playful dynamics is taken so much into consideration can be faced with a simple but inclusive and complete answer: "because downstream of a correct design, a balanced game balancing and a 'effective operational implementation, gamification works "[163]. It goes without saying that gamification should be thought of not as something that replaces the entire strategy, but as a multiplier lever of the benefits originating from a good design and implementation of the same and as a catalyst capable of making the technology more engaging. Implementing a gamification system means doing a difficult job of balancing art and science. On the one hand, in fact, it presupposes "emotional concepts" such as motivation, fun and happiness, on the other it requires a measurable and sustainable system to achieve concrete business objectives.[164]. In the rest of the chapter, the strengths of gamification will be presented, i.e. the main ideas and concepts that are the basis of its success and, subsequently, the key principles, fundamental to conceive a strategy aimed at a specific business objective, will be exposed. . Finally, to obtain a good result, it is necessary to follow a process made up of 6 steps, which will be presented in the last part of this chapter.

For an initial organization of the concepts underlying the success of gamification, the classification made by some scholars will be used[165]. He

[163]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015. Games to be taken seriously. Gamification, storytelling and game design for innovative projects. Milan: Franco Angeli.
[164]Werbach, K., Hunter, D., 2012. For the Win: How Game Thinking Can Revolutionize Your Business. Philadelphia: Wharton Digital Press.
[165]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.

lists three main strengths that make gamification so effective: motivation, fun, happiness. According to the scholar, in fact, "gamification is a tool that allows you to achieve your business goals, encouraging people through intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, making them happier at the same time". The theme relating to the first of the three strengths, motivation in the strict sense (extrinsic), i.e. generated by exogenous and external factors, is opposed to the concept of interest, more precisely called intrinsic motivation (i.e. that originates within the individual). This can be explored with the "flow theory"[166]. The flow, or flow, is a condition of perfect balance between anxiety and boredom that is reached through the integration between system and player (fig. 23). Studies in digital marketing and online consumer psychology[167]argue that the motivational levers capable of leading to the condition of flow can be both extrinsic (goal-oriented flow) and intrinsic (experiential flow), that there is no type of motivation better than the other and that often the two types are integrated . The individual's performance in terms of competences, skills and abilities is greatest when he focuses on a challenging task "at the right point", which can also include the risk of failure, but only if contemporary and co-existing with the possibility of try again, improving performance[168]. The goal of those who design a gamification strategy is "to constantly test the interactions between system and player to find that point between anxiety and boredom"[169].

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[166]Ibid.

[167]Hoffman, DL, Novak, TP, 1996. Marketing in Hypermedia Computer-Mediated Environments: Conceptual Foundations. Journal of Marketing, 60 (July). pp. 50-68.

[168]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.

[169]Zichermann, G., Cunningham, C., 2011. Gamification by Design: Implementing Game Mechanics in Web and Mobile Apps. Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media.

Fig. 23: Optimal experience model. Source: Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011, reworked by Maestri, Polsinelli, Sassoon, 2015.

The second strong point is fun which, unlike what one might think, is a complex concept, as it is defined by two strongly integrated characteristics: multi-dimensionality and subjectivity.[170]. In a 2004 article titled "Why We Play Games", Nicole Lazzaro, expert in player experience, outlined four different types of fun: hard fun, easy fun, altered state fun and social fun.

1. Hard fun is a type of fun that is based on overcoming obstacles and reaching the final goal. In other words, the gambler does it to try to win some form of competition. In this case the challenge must be designed to focus attention on the reward.
2. Those who approach easy fun give greater importance to the only joy of participating in the playful activity. In this case the challenge must be focused on stimulating the player's curiosity and his desire to try something new through experience.

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[170]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.

3. For some players, the perception alone of feeling within a specific context is important. In the altered state fun it is not the experience itself that adds value, but the way in which the external aspects of the experience create internal emotions. Here the focus is on letting players discover new, intimate and profound dimensions.

4. The last type of entertainment is based on the possibility of interacting with other individuals inside and outside the gaming experience. The social dimension of social fun attracts those who want to relate to potential acquaintances, even if the means (the playful experience) is not necessarily of great interest. The social dimension can intervene both online and offline, although nowadays the fun that comes from being able to play together even if everyone is at home seems much more popular. Most videogames, in fact, allow you to play in multiplayer mode by connecting different users through the network. An example of offline social fun is the very famous Mario Kart video game, which allows 4 players sitting on the same sofa to share the screen for a race, involving and entertaining even those present who do not play. Group play, in short, adds new behaviors, rituals and emotions that make games more exciting.

The third strength is happiness, a virtuous and difficult to achieve concept, often absent from traditional marketing goals. In its most refined sense, gamification stops being a tool, a system or a project, transforming itself into a "vehicle towards happiness"[171]. Psychologist Martin Seligman (2011) introduced the PERMA model[172], which lists the 5 components that according to his studies make people happy:

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[171]Ibid.

[172]Seligman, MEP, 2011. Flourish. A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being. New York: Free Press.

- Positive emotions: Increase the positive emotions of the past, present and future.

- Engagement: from this point of view it is about putting personal potential into practice with the aim of developing a greater number of excellent experiences.

- Relationships: Taking time to nurture relationships increases the feeling of companionship which directly affects the perception of well-being.

- Meaning: Includes the meaning of life and the development of goals that go beyond oneself. It is important to make a distinction between purpose and meaning of life, where purpose is more related to goals and meaning to the place and function it occupies in the world.

- Accomplishment: Setting goals that motivate the person to reach them.

Reading the five components of the model, one perceives how they are very present in the logic of gamification, thus obtaining the demonstration that the happiness and well-being of the player are not factors to be underestimated in a gamification strategy. In fact, to make the participants in the game happy, gamified systems must take into account all the five dimensions listed above, giving greater importance to one or the other according to the objectives to be achieved, the type of audience and other specificities of project[173].

4.1. The key principles: the octalysis model

As can be understood from the introductory paragraph, the validity of a gamified strategy, especially in the case of marketing, comes from a careful analysis of the relationship between play and the human mind. Having clear the importance of general strengths, the goal here is to get more specific into

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[173]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.

this relationship by identifying the key principles of gamification. The "core drives" that allow to reach the motivation, the fun and the happiness of the user are listed in a Framework of one of the pioneers of gamification, the American of Asian origin Yu-kai Chou (2014)[174]. The latter, after having studied the phenomenon for years, has identified the eight key principles that are presented below in a work entitled "Octalysis".

1. Epic meaning & Calling The epic meaning represents the desire to participate in something much greater than oneself and in this regard McGonigal[175]he says that "the best way to give meaning to our lives is to connect our daily actions with something bigger than ourselves and, the bigger it is, the better." The epic sense, for example, is what drives those who work hard for free on open source projects like Wikipedia, with the aim of feeding the largest encyclopedia in the world.

2. Development & Accomplishment (progress) The intrinsic drive to progress is an innate instinct that pushes each of us to challenge ourselves with increasing difficulty. The resulting mechanism is called "leveling up" and is not a prerogative of games in the strict sense but of any gamified project. The tools used to implement it are transversal and recurring techniques, used in the construction of playful experiences[176]. The most representative are the following: Points / credits: they have the prerogative to quantitatively determine the results of a user in comparison with others, and can keep the individual motivated until reaching a more advanced level[177]. In other

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[174]Yu-Kai Chou, 2014. Octalysis - the complete Gamification framework [online]. Available at: http://yukaichou.com/gamification-examples/octalysis-complete-gamification-framework/#.WybCNRIzaqA.
[175]Petruzzi, V., 2015. The power of Gamification. Using play to create changes in individual behavior and performance. Milan: Franco Angeli.
[176]Ibid.
[177]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.

words, the "points" constitute the immediate reward for the player's actions and at the same time denote his skill and experience.[178]. Levels: show the progress of the user[179]and they serve both to provide a moment of gratification and to stimulate the desire to move to a more challenging level; Badges / Achievements: they are virtual certificates that demonstrate the user's ability to do a certain thing. They sanction the achievement of a goal, increase the challenging component and characterize the user's profile[180]; Rankings: Put users in a performance benchmarking situation[181]and are therefore able to ignite the spirit of competition, fostering interest and increasing the time spent inside the game[182]; Challenges: they offer users a mission to accomplish, obstacles to overcome to earn points and level up, they can be both individual and group. Virtual goods: they represent something that has value for the player within the virtual world of the game and that it is possible to earn by playing and, in some cases, to buy in exchange for real money[183]. They offer two key benefits: first, users can purchase them to build their online identity; secondly, they can be used by developers to generate revenue from their sale. It is important to emphasize that these tools do not necessarily all have to be included for the gamification strategy to work. To create involvement, it is necessary to identify and use the combination of game elements most suitable for each specific case[184].

3. Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback (self-expression). By self-expression we mean that innate tendency that leads us to experiment, personalize and try different creative solutions to obtain different

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[178]Petruzzi, V., 2015, cit.
[179]Zichermann, G., Cunningham, C., cit.
[180]Petruzzi, V., 2015, cit.
[181]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.
[182]Ibid.
[183]Petruzzi, V., 2015, cit.
[184]Ibid.

results. People not only need ways to express their creativity, but they need to be able to see the results, receiving feedback.[185]. In other words, anyone producing original output needs to know what others think.

4. Ownership & Possession (possession) The fourth core drive is based on the principle that governs very famous successful games such as FarmVille or Sim City, that is the user's adversity to abandon something that he has built or conquered with his own hands and that he owns. , albeit virtually[186]. The virtual goods mentioned in point 2 are the main tool to express the desire to possess as users, in addition to time, have also spent money on virtual goods that improve what they have painstakingly built and this will make it even more hostile. idea of abandoning it.

5. Social Influence & Relatedness (relationality) The concept of relationality is strongly linked to that of social function mentioned above. More specifically, this drive incorporates all the "social elements" that guide people's behavior, including mentorship, acceptance, companionship but also competition and envy. This principle is the basis of the cooperative and competitive mechanics that act within a social system and that we find in "social games", that is, the type of games where you can invite friends, challenge them, ask them for help or give them bonuses. This element of "community" is among those that certainly characterize the rise and widespread diffusion of the gamification phenomenon in the deepest way.[187].

6. Scarcity & Impatience The sixth core drive is based on the urge to want something because you can't have it. If you manage to convey the feeling that a product or service is limited, potential buyers will

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[185]Yu-Kai Chou, 2014, cit.
[186]Petruzzi, V., 2015, cit.
[187]Ibid.

automatically take action so as not to miss the opportunity. This principle was used by Facebook in the first months of its existence, when it could only be used by Harvard University students. Subsequently, access was also granted to two other prestigious colleges and, finally, to all the numerous users who wished to access a platform that had, up to that moment, been "forbidden" to them. Mechanisms such as the countdown, in which users are only allowed a certain amount of time to complete a task, and appointments,

7. Unpredictability & Curiosity (unpredictability and curiosity) This principle is based on something that is inherent in the human being, namely the desire to know what will happen next. Think about when an episode of an engaging TV series ends, which leaves the viewer in a frantic wait to know what will happen in the next episode. In gamified systems this core drive is exploited through mechanisms such as random bonuses and game elements that the developers hide in the product, letting the user find them gradually, generating a surprise effect.[188].

8. Loss & Avoidance (fear of loss) The last of the drives identified by Yu-Kai Chou is based on the user's drive to avoid something negative, also understood as that instinct that leads us to do everything to avoid losing something that belongs to us. A classic example applied to game mechanics is the purchase of extra lives: in order not to lose and to overcome the more complex levels, players choose to spend real money to buy new virtual lives.

Continuing his analysis, Yu-Kai Chou underlines that some drives (development & accomplishment, ownership & possessioin, scarcity & impatience, loss & avoidance) are rational levers as they concern logic and calculation and represent extrinsic motivations, while other drives

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[188]Ibid.

(empowerment of creativity & feedback, epic meaning & calling, social influence & relatedness, unpredicatibility & curiosity) are irrational levers, belonging to the emotional sphere and represent intrinsic motivations. Finally, according to Yu-Kai Chou, the only truly effective approach is the "human focused design" one, which optimizes the design in consideration of the human factor, taking into account emotions, motivations and involvement. As widely said,[189].

4.2.   The gamification process

After having expressed the fundamental concepts of gamification, we can proceed with their implementation in the gamified strategy, which can be implemented in many different ways. "Gamifying" a process is certainly not a simple thing since there are no predefined formulas, recipes or standards and moreover, as already mentioned, it is a complex work of balancing art and science. According to scholars[190]the discipline that bridges the artistic and scientific dimensions is design, where a good design process blends creativity and structure to combine people's needs with technical feasibility. The operational process underlying gamification is delicate and requires precise steps that should not be underestimated. In fact, if the strategy is reduced to inserting only points or badges, without a precise idea, a poor result is obtained, of little success and with little value for the user, therefore with a high tendency to abandon. In other words, it is not enough to grasp some notion of game design and transfer it to a business environment to obtain the results that gamification promises, also because, in this case, we would no

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[189]Petruzzi, V., 2015, cit.
[190]Werbach, K., Hunter, D., 2012, cit.

longer speak of gamification but of pointsifaction or badgeification.[191]. The doctrine[192]assimilate a correct design of a gamification strategy to a 6-step process:

1. Define business objectives
2. Outline target behaviors
3. Describe your players
4. Devise activity cycles
5. Don't forget the fun
6. Deploy the appropriate tools.

With reference to what has been said before, it should be noted that only in the last of the 6 steps we talk about gamification tools, i.e. game elements such as points, badges or rankings, further confirmation of the fact that the components and mechanisms are not the "core" part of the process. What is particularly important and rather complex is deciding how to implement the techniques available to a particular situation and that is why the first 5 points of the process are dedicated to this challenge.

1. Define business objectives To define a concrete gamification strategy, it is crucial to understand the objectives, which must not be confused with the organizational mission. From this point of view, objectives are understood to mean the specific results that are to be obtained through the gamified process, such as greater customer loyalty or a greater drive to visit the points of sale. This first phase is of vital importance as a gamification strategy, even if effective and engaging, can lead to results that are not actually positive for the business idea. To avoid this risk, scholars[193]they recommend, in this first phase of the process, to use a simple but effective scheme (fig. 24). The first

[191]Petruzzi, V., 2015, cit.
[192]Werbach, K., Hunter, D., 2012, cit.
[193]Ibid.

step is to draw up a list of potential objectives, which at the end of the process must be as detailed as possible but which at this stage can also be extended to more general considerations. The next point consists in a classification in terms of importance for these objectives, in order to arrive at trade-off considerations between negligible objectives and main objectives. At this point the list will have to be narrowed down of everything that does not represent an end but a means to achieve the objectives set. For example, setting the goal of making users accumulate scores is not the reason why you decide to gamify a system but rather a simple dynamic instrumental to the game. At this point, once the final objectives have been defined, they must be linked to the benefits they will bring to the organization, that is, they must be somehow "justified".

Fig. 24: The objective process. Source: Werbach and Hunter (2012)

2. Outline target behaviors

Once you have identified the "why" of gamifying a system, process or activity, you need to focus on what you want users to do and how they will be measured, that is, the metrics of the desired behaviors. The latter are nothing more than the tool for translating behavior into quantifiable results. The desired behaviors, in addition to being real and specific, must be "promoters" of the final objectives that were defined in the previous phase, even if the relationship is indirect. For example, pushing consumers to spend more time on a product's website or talking about it on the Facebook page, are not behaviors that can be immediately translated into earnings, but they are still desirable behaviors for the purpose of increasing earnings. Once all desired behaviors are listed, consistent metrics must be set. In the most advanced processes they can be represented by algorithmic software, while in the most elementary processes game systems can be used.

3. Describe your players

The system you are designing will be used by real users, by people. Starting from the fact that users are not all the same, it is vital to understand who the users are and how they will relate to the system. In other words, users can be grouped according to their respective personality traits and their approach to the gamified experience[194]. Hence the need for management to implement a user segmentation process. On the other hand, the more you know the user, the easier it will be to design an experience that guides their behavior in the desired way[195]. The first segmented model was proposed by researcher Richard Bartle[196], who managed to distinguish four main types of "player" (fig. 25):

- The Explorer-type player loves to explore unknown realities, subsequently bringing them back to the community of origin. An

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[194]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.
[195]Zichermann, G., Cunningham, C., cit.
[196]Maestri, A., Polsinelli, P. And Sassoon, J., 2015, cit.

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example of a game suitable for this type of user is Super Mario Brothers, where the protagonist must face more than 100 types of games to find each level hidden behind each pipe or block, and bring this discovery back to his companions.

- The second type of player is the Achiever, who wants to reach the final result of the game, to win at all costs regardless of the context and the other people involved. Designing gamified systems exclusively oriented to this typology is very complex and risky, as it presupposes the possibility for all participants to be winners with the same probabilities[197]. For this category, losing in the game will lower the interest level.

- The Socializer player is a type of user who, driven by the benefit of social interactions, plays not to win but to meet new individuals. For these players, the game is not the goal, but a context in which to meet and a catalyst for interactions.

- The fourth type represents a low percentage of the entire player population. The Killer loves not only to win and establish himself, but also to see the defeat and feel the anguish of the other players. Users don't belong exclusively to one of the categories listed, but most of them have a percentage of each category[198].

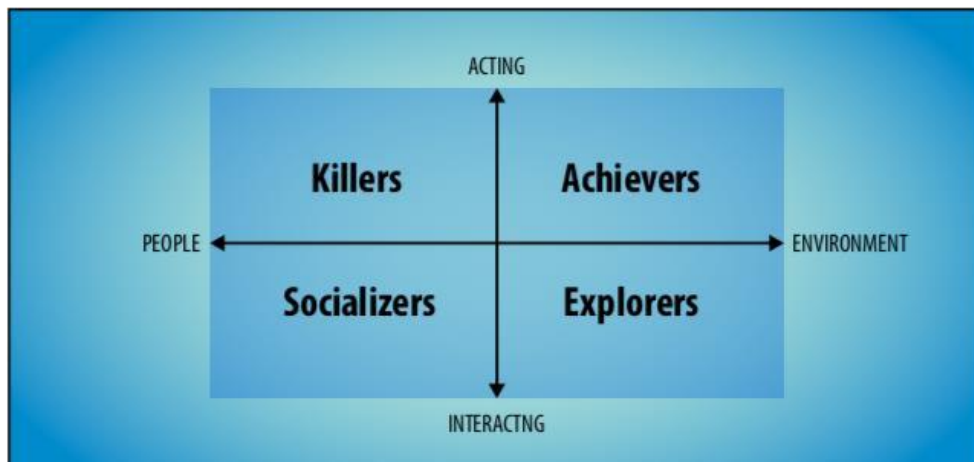[197]Ibid.
[198]Zichermann, G., Cunningham, C., cit.

Fig. 25: The 4 player profiles that characterize a game context. Source: Bartle, 1996, in Zichermann and Cunnigham, 2011.

While Bartle's research was not conducted in a marketing context, his findings are relevant to understanding the optimal target audience for a game-based marketing strategy.[199].

Once the different groups have been identified, gamify involves studying a final dimension relevant to this third phase: the user's lifecycle.[200]. Each user begins as a "novice", or a novice who needs advice, help, tutorials to overcome the initial phase and settle in the best way. At this stage it is important to reinforce the beginner's experience by getting him involved in the system. Once this phase has been passed, the user proceeds to the second stage of "regular", in which he needs other stimuli and novelties to familiarize himself with the activities. The third and last phase is the one in which the user becomes an "expert". The experienced player needs challenges that match his abilities, difficult enough to get him involved.

4. Devise activity cycles. As already mentioned, the gamification process is not a simple and straightforward process. The most suitable way to model actions in a gamified system is that of activity cycles, a

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[199]Giles, A., 2016. Gamification as a Marketing Strategy. Smith School of Business, Queen's University.
[200]Zichermann, G., Cunningham, C., cit.

concept that is also very present in social networks.[201]. Activity cycles consist of particular processes in which the actions of one user cause activities, which in turn cause the actions of other users. Think, for example, of a Facebook user who uploads a photo to his profile and tags his friends, or other users of the platform. The notification of the tag will lead the other users in the photo to leave a comment, and this is how a new notification returns to the initial user. There are two main types of business cycles to refer to in order to develop the system: engagement loops and progression stairs. As already mentioned, the engagement loop is a sequence of motivation, action, time, feedback and emotion that is triggered as a new behavioral habit of the user who, consequently,[202]. However, attention must be paid to the phenomenon of disengagement, which can occur if, as the user advances in the system, the experience does not evolve and remains only a repetitive action. To overcome this risk, gamification introduces the concept of progress ladders. The latter reflect the objective assumption that the gamified experience changes based on how the player moves through the system. The path should be mapped by combining short-term activities and long-term goals, which in fact underlies the concept of progress.[203]. Usually in games, and consequently in gamification, a model is used that provides for different levels in which the constantly increasing difficulty is followed by a relatively easy rest phase, finally followed by the very demanding final phase, which determines the passing of the level. This ultimate challenge, if well designed, will produce an explosion

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[201]Werbach, K., Hunter, D., 2012, cit.

[202]Viola, F., 2017. My Lidl Shop - From the videogame to the [online] shop. Gamification. Available at: http://www.gameifications.com/gamification/mylidl-shop-dal-videogioco-al-negozio/.

[203]Werbach, K., Hunter, D., 2012, cit.

of positive emotions, which in the player's environment is defined as an "epic win", a strong tool for engagement.

5. Don't forget the fun. In this phase, the management together with the designers should ask themselves questions regarding the effective attractiveness of the system from the point of view of enjoyment. An excessive concentration on the elements of user identity and activity cycles can make you lose sight of the essential means for the success of the gamified project: fun. On closer inspection, the main difficulty of this phase of the process lies in the fact that the fun is not objectively predictable. A good solution is to test the process once it is complete and refine it to make it fun for the target audience.

6. Deploy the appropriate tools. The last stage of the gamification process involves identifying the appropriate mechanisms and tools. This is essentially a deployment phase, i.e. distribution, where the previous phases are summarized and transformed into the general and definitive experience for users.[204], testing its solidity and functionality.

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[204]Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, marketing is one of the important factors in the success of any business. Adjusting your strategies according to changes and new trends is therefore essential for long-term growth.

In reference to the new trends, NFTs certainly represent the one to pay more attention to at this time given the constant growth recorded in the last year.

As proof of this there are also the big leading brands in the food and beverage or fashion sector that are riding the wave always obtaining great results. Consequently, considering an NFT Marketing plan for each company is certainly recommendable and not only for the possible profits that can be obtained, but also for a branding project whose results are visible in the short and long term.

With regard to the best strategies to use for marketers in the perspective of an optimal NFT Marketing, you have the opportunity to observe initiatives and successes completed by big brands from which to take inspiration, but the best way is always to experiment with something innovative. , just as innovative is this new trend.

However, the ultimate goals behind NFT marketing will have to be to create unique brand experiences, increase brand awareness and encourage interaction.

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The evolution of Digital Marketing in sportswear brands

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Summary

INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed at investigating the development of digital marketing with particular reference to the field of sportswear.

For these purposes, in chapter I, the structure of digital marketing will be analyzed, with particular reference to its mainstreams, i.e. segmentation, targeting and positioning, product management, communication and advertising, sales and channel strategy and, finally, CRM.

Given these basic prerequisites for the subsequent analysis, the topic of sportswear will be introduced, with particular reference to the peculiarities of the sector and a global overview of the market. Therefore, the consumer of this sector will be analyzed, and the related marketing strategies related to the competitiveness in the sector. An empirical analysis will then be carried out on some business cases concerning the development of digital marketing in the sportswear sector. In particular, the Adidas case will be examined, with reference to the related corporate strategies and competitive positioning, strategic positioning and Porter's model with reference to corporate competitiveness. The Nike case will also be exposed, with particular regard to communication strategy and customer conquest. Moreover, space will be given to the competitiveness between the two companies. Finally, the GymShark case will be analyzed, with particular regard to the marketing strategy, the use of social media and the approach with the customer.

In chapter III the implications of technological evolution on digital marketing will be analyzed. In particular, after having explained the topic of blockchain and NFTs, the application methods of these new technologies will be exposed to the digital marketing field, with particular reference also to some companies even not part of the sportswear sector. Finally, gamification as an innovative tool applied to digital marketing will be exhibited.

Abstract

Over the last decade, both academically and practically, there has been a continuous change in traditional marketing paradigms.

The constant development of digital, social media and mobile marketing (DSMM) and at the same time the growing penetration of the internet and objects connected to the network, have determined an important step forward, to the point of being defined by scholars as one of the strengths driving forces for the future.

Digital marketing is the set of activities that, through the use of digital tools, allow the development of integrated marketing and communication campaigns, targeted and capable of generating measurable results, which help the organization to identify and constantly monitor the needs of demand and facilitate exchanges in an innovative way, building an interactive relationship with it that will generate value over time.

The research and practical application of the market segmentation process has a long history, but its effectiveness continues to be undisputed.

New methods of consumer segmentation and profiling are being developed by companies, going beyond the limits within which traditional marketing was concentrated.

The segmentation process consists in the subdivision of the demand into distinct subsets of consumers-customers, homogeneous within them but inhomogeneous with each other, where each segment can be chosen as the goal to be achieved with a particular configuration of value, through the variables of the marketing mix . A market segment is made up of a group of consumers who share a certain set of needs and desires, that is, they seek the same set of benefits.

Online advertising differs strongly from traditional advertising in particular in two respects: Mass Customization of advertising: advertisements based on

"behavioral targeting" are person specific, that is, the advertising banners that appear on a Web page are customized to depending on the preferences of the user who visits the site. This peculiarity significantly differentiates online channels from traditional communication channels, in which the same advertising banner is shown to online users without having carried out a previous analysis and segmentation of their preferences; The advertising banners shown through the use of "behavioral targeting" are based on the consumer's past experience. The companies analyze the user's online behavior by analyzing the information search phase, the purchases made previously and his activity on social networks, in order to create a profile representative of the interests and preferences that the user expresses in the online context. Ultimately, a positioning operation that can be defined as valid must have "one foot in the present and one foot in the future", so it must be focused on immediate objectives, but it must also be able to look far and try to predict those that may be the expected results in the future market.

Product marketing is the set of all those tactics and processes that are used to launch a product on the market. These include the decision on positioning, the introduction of the product to the market, with the guarantee that sellers and buyers understand and appreciate it, as well as its management over time. In fact, the process does not stop once the product is placed on the market, but continues even after launch to ensure that people are aware of the product, that they know how to use it and that their feedback and their needs are listened to throughout the life cycle of the same. In practice, all this is part of the skills of a particular figure, namely the Product Manager, from whom the practice itself takes the name of Product Management.

The online advertising market in Italy continues to grow. The speed of receiving campaign results typical of digital marketing makes it easier (compared to traditional media) to modify, reorganize and optimize campaigns. Digital marketing offers a considerable advantage over traditional advertising, namely the ability to monitor and measure the results achieved at

any time. In fact, the company has at its disposal a series of metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the advertising campaign and make, if necessary, the necessary changes.

Marketing is a relatively young discipline and, as it is deeply linked to the economic and social changes that impact the market, it is subject to the need to adapt and evolve to identify and satisfy human needs. The channel strategies adopted by companies throughout history reflect this continuous need for adaptation and to offer more and more value, leading to the gradual transition from a single-channel strategy to a multichannel, to reach omnichannel marketing.

One of the customer-oriented approaches is Customer Relationship Management, better known by the acronym CRM.

It is an integrated approach for the management and development of relationships with the aim of building customer loyalty; a combination of people, processes and technology that facilitates knowledge of a company's customers.

CRM reflects an integration of enterprise-wide technologies in its integrity such as data warehouse, web site, administration, sales, marketing and manufacturing. CRM mainly takes the form of software useful for collecting contact information, studying functional needs and measuring transactions. Over time, however, attempts have been made to adapt CRM software to the evolution of the market considering the need to break away from traditional channels to focus on social ones.

Thus was born the Social CRM with the aim of involving customers more through collaborative communication. In addition to monitoring traditional interactions, SCRM software examines information from channels such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and online review platforms.

However, it is an approach that is limited to analyzing relationships with customers: the emotional bond, as in customer satisfaction, disappears.

At the base of CRM there is Relationship Marketing with the aim of improving long-term relationships with customers.

Between trends and the various sporting events that follow each other over time there is a very solid union, in fact, thanks to events such as the Olympics or the soccer world cup, many brands have the opportunity to highlight their products.

According to a study, the sportswear market is influenced by two elements, on the one hand there are the variable costs of materials and design that influence the customer in the purchase, on the other hand there are more sustainable products.

Both variables combined with marketing campaigns with sponsorships of famous athletes and celebrities, produces an excellent earning prospect.

The sportswear business is booming, according to an Export planning report, Italian exports are highly dynamic due to increased sporting practice.

In marketing and communication, one of the first rules to be adopted to plan any strategy or campaign is to know the recipient, whether called target, audience or customer is always the interlocutor of every activity.

The primary need for the purchase can be identified in the intention to practice physical activity with the aim of paying more and more attention to one's personal health.

Alongside this, they strongly influence consumer choices, including the need to have a comfortable and practical product, without giving up an attractive and modern look. In fact, those who buy a sportswear item often pay attention not only to the technical characteristics, but also to the style and aesthetic elements of the product.

From here we can understand how fashion and outward appearance greatly influence people's behavior, both in terms of purchase and in terms of the decision to practice sports.

The analysis of sector strategies is the key point to be able to penetrate the market, managing to satisfy the consumer and to challenge competitors.

These strategies must then be translated into actions, to be able to do this you need a well-defined organizational structure, which is able to implement the decisions made efficiently.

It will be very important for companies to know the market, segment it and have a well-defined target of customers.

One of the marketing strategies used by large companies in the sportswear sector is the use of digital marketing, or social channels, to be able to obtain engagement among consumers and create a solid customer journey that can lead to long-term goals.

Digital marketing is used through social networks Instagram and Facebook, where there is the display shop utility, which allows the company to have a showcase with all the products, once the product has been chosen, the consumer will be redirected to the e-commerce site and can make the purchase.

To improve communication with the consumer, many companies make use of the brand Ambassadors, that is, they use the image of important athletes, to advertise and increase brand awareness, as well as the possibility of stipulating sponsorship contracts for important sporting events, such as the World Cup. of football or the Olympics, which provide a plus for the visibility of the brand.

Many companies also opt for integrated marketing strategies that serve the company to communicate better with its consumers, and to create lasting relationships over time, for example through the personalization of products that reach the target consumer in a targeted way. , enhancing its identity, and improving the brand experience.

The human center is at the center of Adidas corporate culture, all this to give strength to its employees, it is a scheme, defined by the 3Cs.

A solid and well-structured plan accompanies Adidas, whose goal is to maximize profits and increase brand awareness even more.

Very important for the company business was the possibility of perfecting the positioning of its product within the market.

The analysis of this model is based on 5 fundamental aspects, which then determine the attractiveness of the sector. It is necessary to take into account the contractual strength of the buyers they have in influencing the transactions, they have a high bargaining power if few customers buy a significant part of the company's production, if the company has not managed to diversify the product, thus making it identical to that of its competitors and if they have a large amount of information.

Another force present in the model is the bargaining power of the suppliers to which the company turns to obtain supplies, in this case, if there are few suppliers or if the product of that supplier is indispensable for the company, the negotiating power will be greater. .

The company then takes into account the possible threat of new companies that can overcome the entry barriers and the intensity of competition from companies already present in the market.

As for new companies wishing to enter the market, they have to face the existing economies of scale that lead to an increase in entry barriers and the know-how that is available to already established brands.

The analysis also covered the Nike company and GymShark.

Blockchain technology is essentially a distributed database system, which securely and immutably records transactional data or other information thanks to appropriate cryptographic mechanisms and consensus algorithms that govern its operation.

Another way to see the blockchain is to think of it as an electronic ledger distributed among users on a network, each of whom has a copy of it that is updated in real time. The integrity of this register is guaranteed by the mechanisms mentioned above.

It is known in the literature that, due to its characteristics, the use of blockchain technology allows to solve the problems of transparency and

reliability in those contexts in which individuals and institutions share information with each other and their interests are not aligned.

Within the scientific literature it is possible to find different definitions of blockchain, which however share the fact that they highlight the distinctive factors of the same, such as transparency, immutability, the typical structure in blocks arranged in chronological order. These factors determine its attractiveness by companies that take it into consideration for supply chain management.

A non-fungible token is a token or digital asset that links ownership to unique physical or digital objects, such as art, music, video, etc. and a license to use the resources for a specific purpose. It is a unique, non-interchangeable unit of data that is stored on a digital ledger platform called the blockchain that provides the NFT with verified and public proof of ownership. A non-fungible token provides a certificate of authenticity that guarantees its uniqueness and immutability. An NFT is built on a digital ledger platform, i.e. blockchain which is also the technology behind cryptocurrency. Due to the principles of cryptography, an NFT can never be changed, regulated and stolen and this makes the blockchain unique. To develop understanding of NFTs,

Fungible Objects: These are the elements that can be interchanged because they are identical and their values define them rather than their unique properties.

Many brands in the fashion, food and beverage sectors have already experienced the potential of NFT marketing: shortly after the first spread of NFTs, towards the end of 2019, they had coined their NFTs, decided their goals and developed a strategy.

Among the first to welcome and use this innovative form of marketing, there were brands such as Gucci, Adidas, Coca Cola Mc Donald's, Ray-Ban or Mattel, just to name a few.

Through NFT marketing plans these brands have undertaken important initiatives carried out for different purposes, but all united by the great results achieved in terms of profit and branding, thus attesting the value that NFT marketing strategies are able to bring to brands.

NFTs represent an ever-growing trend as early as 2021, as is also shown by the Google Trends chart below. What are the main reasons behind this constant growth?

Wanting to summarize the reasons that could explain the success of NFTs, we can list three main reasons: the technology behind NFTs (blockchain); the support of NFTs received from some of the largest and most innovative brands in the world; the link of NFTs to the common unconscious need in human beings to belong and be part of a community by expressing their person through their possessions, physical or digital.

Gamification is establishing itself decisively in the field of digital marketing. On the other hand, if realities like Nike, Starbucks, McDonald's, Coca-Cola have implemented complex projects (marketing and more) through gamification, obviously this is not a superficial phenomenon. The legitimate question of why a practice based on play and playful dynamics is taken so much into consideration can be faced with a simple but inclusive and complete answer: "because downstream of a correct design, a balanced game balancing and a 'effective operational implementation, gamification works ".

It goes without saying that gamification should be thought of not as something that replaces the entire strategy, but as a multiplier of the benefits originating from a good design and implementation of the same and as a catalyst capable of making the technology more engaging. Implementing a gamification system means doing a difficult job of balancing art and science. On the one hand, in fact, it presupposes "emotional concepts" such as motivation, fun and happiness, on the other hand it requires a measurable and sustainable system to achieve concrete business objectives. In the rest of the chapter, the strengths of gamification will be presented, i.e. the main ideas and concepts

that are the basis of its success and, subsequently, the key principles, fundamental to conceive a strategy aimed at a specific business objective, will be exposed. .

the validity of a gamified strategy, especially in the case of marketing, comes from a careful analysis of the relationship between play and the human mind. Having clear the importance of general strengths, the goal here is to get more specific into this relationship by identifying the key principles of gamification. The "core drives" that allow to reach the motivation, the fun and the happiness of the user are listed in a Framework of one of the pioneers of gamification, the American of Asian origin Yu-kai Chou (2014). The latter, after having studied the phenomenon for years, has identified the eight key principles that are presented below in a work entitled "Octalysis".

"Gamifying" a process is certainly not a simple thing since there are no predefined formulas, recipes or standards and moreover, as already mentioned, it is a complex work of balancing art and science. According to scholars, the discipline that bridges the artistic and scientific dimensions is design, where a good design process blends creativity and structure to combine people's needs with technical feasibility. The operational process underlying gamification is delicate and requires precise steps that should not be underestimated. In fact, if the strategy is reduced to inserting only points or badges, without a precise idea, a poor result is obtained, of little success and with little value for the user, therefore with a high tendency to abandon. In other words, it is not enough to grasp some notion of game design and transfer it to a business environment to obtain the results that gamification promises, also because, in this case, we would no longer speak of gamification but of pointsifaction or badgeification, which can be defined as derives or degeneration of it. The doctrine assimilates a correct design of a gamification strategy to a 6-step process: Define business objectives; Outline target behaviors; Describe your players; Devise activity cycles; Don't forget the fun; Deploy the appropriate tools. which can be defined as the drift or

degeneration of it. The doctrine assimilates a correct design of a gamification strategy to a 6-step process: Define business objectives; Outline target behaviors; Describe your players; Devise activity cycles; Don't forget the fun; Deploy the appropriate tools. which can be defined as the drift or degeneration of it. The doctrine assimilates a correct design of a gamification strategy to a 6-step process: Define business objectives; Outline target behaviors; Describe your players; Devise activity cycles; Don't forget the fun; Deploy the appropriate tools.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, marketing is one of the important factors in the success of any business. Adjusting your strategies according to changes and new trends is therefore essential for long-term growth.

In reference to the new trends, NFTs certainly represent the one to pay more attention to at this time given the constant growth recorded in the last year.

As proof of this there are also the big leading brands in the food and beverage or fashion sector that are riding the wave always obtaining great results. Consequently, considering an NFT Marketing plan for each company is certainly recommendable and not only for the possible profits that can be obtained, but also for a branding project whose results are visible in the short and long term.

With regard to the best strategies to use for marketers in the perspective of an optimal NFT Marketing, you have the opportunity to observe initiatives and successes completed by big brands from which to take inspiration, but the best way is always to experiment with something innovative. , just as innovative is this new trend.

However, the ultimate goals behind NFT marketing will have to be to create unique brand experiences, increase brand awareness and encourage interaction.

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