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## Using social media to enhance stakeholder engagement in the fashion industry: the case of Inditex

El uso de social media para mejorar el compromiso de los *stakeholders*  
en el sector de la moda: el caso Inditex

L'utilisation des medias sociaux pour améliorer l'engagement des parties prenantes dans  
le secteur de la mode: l'affaire Inditex

### **Juana Alonso-Cañadas<sup>1</sup>**

Professor and Researcher, Department of Business and Economics, Universidad de Almería, Spain.  
e-mail: jac630@ual.es

### **Federico Galán-Valdivieso<sup>2</sup>**

Professor and Researcher, Department of Business and Economics, Universidad de Almería, Spain.  
e-mail: fgalan@ual.es

### **Laura Saraite-Sariene<sup>3</sup>**

PhD (C) and Researcher, Department of Business and Economics, Universidad de Almería, Spain.  
e-mail: ls703@ual.es

### **María del Mar Gálvez-Rodríguez<sup>4</sup>**

Professor and Researcher, Department of Business and Economics, Universidad de Almería, Spain.  
e-mail: margalvez@ual.es

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### **Abstract**

There is no doubt that Inditex Group has had an impact on fashion retailers' industry, with this company group being considered as one of the trendsetters in such industry. Based on that, the objective of paper is twofold: the first is to analyse the different levels of online engagement reached by the Inditex Group via social media, and the second is to analyse the main characteristics that cause the online participation reached, focusing in the online engagement that motivates giving a feedback. For this purpose, the Facebook pages of the eight retail brands of this group have been analysed. Results show that, in the context of fashion retailers' industry, social media activity does not nec-

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<sup>1</sup> Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management, PhD in Accounting, Universidad de Almería, Spain.

<sup>2</sup> Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management, Universidad de Granada, Spain; PhD in Finance, Universidad de Málaga, Spain.

<sup>3</sup> Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance, Master's Degree in Accounting and Finance, Universidad de Almería, Spain.

<sup>4</sup> Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management, PhD in Business Management, Universidad de Almería, Spain.

essarily entail higher levels of stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, topics should be focused on new collections and tutorials or tips of beauty and fashion to engage stakeholders in commenting posts. Likewise, the content should be presented using diverse formats in order to provide complete and entertaining information. Finally, and regardless of the target segment, publications should be made during the week and outside of working hours.

**Keywords:** Online interaction, Fashion, Zara, Online participation, Social networking sites, Bidirectional communication

## Resumen

El impacto que el Grupo Inditex tiene en la industria de distribución minorista de textil es indudable, ya que este grupo empresarial es considerado como uno de los líderes que marcan tendencias en el comportamiento de dicha industria. Con base en este contexto, el objetivo del documento es doble. En primer lugar, analizar los diferentes niveles de compromiso en línea alcanzados por el Grupo Inditex a través de las redes sociales. En segundo lugar, analizar las características que provocan la participación en línea lograda. En particular, el compromiso en línea que genera comentarios. Con este fin, se analizaron las páginas de Facebook de las ocho marcas minoristas de este grupo. Como principales conclusiones, en el contexto de la industria de distribución minorista de textil, la actividad de las redes sociales no se corresponde necesariamente con niveles más altos de participación de las partes interesadas. Del mismo modo, para involucrar a los interesados en dar comentarios a las publicaciones, los temas deben centrarse en nuevas colecciones y tutoriales / consejos de belleza y moda. Asimismo, el contenido debe ser presentado utilizando diversos formatos para proporcionar información completa y entretenida. Finalmente, con independencia del segmento objetivo, las publicaciones deben realizarse durante la semana y fuera de las horas de trabajo.

**Palabras clave:** Interacción *online*, Moda, Zara, Participación *online*, Plataforma *online*.

## Résumé

L'impact du groupe Inditex sur le secteur de la distribution de textile est indéniable, ce groupe étant considéré comme l'un des leaders qui définit les tendances dans le comportement de cette industrie. Sur la base de ce contexte, l'objectif du document est double. Premièrement, il faut analyser les différents niveaux d'engagement en ligne atteints par le groupe Inditex via les réseaux sociaux. Deuxièmement, analyser les caractéristiques qui mènent à une participation réussie en ligne. En particulier, l'engagement en ligne qui crée des commentaires. À cette fin, les pages Facebook des huit marques de détail de ce groupe ont été analysées. Comme principales conclusions, dans le cadre du commerce de distribution de détail textile, l'activité des réseaux sociaux ne correspond pas nécessairement à des niveaux plus élevés de participation des parties prenantes. De la même ma-

nière, pour impliquer les personnes intéressées à donner des commentaires sur les publications, les thèmes devraient se concentrer sur les nouvelles collections et les tutoriels, conseils de beauté et de mode. De même, le contenu doit être présenté sous différents formats pour fournir des informations complètes et divertissantes. Finalement, quel que soit le segment cible, les publications doivent être effectuées en semaine et en dehors des heures de travail.

**Mots-clés:** Interaction en ligne, Mode, Zara, Participation en ligne, Plateforme en ligne.

## 1. Introduction

The appropriate use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is becoming increasingly important in the fashion industry to react quickly to market changes and remain competitive (Martínez and Jiménez, 2006; Hernández, 2013; Alonso, 2015).

Reaching higher levels of engagement stands out among the objectives pursued through a better communication between the company and its interest groups or stakeholders (Leal-Morantes, 2012). Sashi (2012) defines engagement as an essential part of long-term relationships with stakeholders, a necessary aspect for the company to operate properly. Taylor and Kent (2014) indicate that encouraging engagement facilitates the creation of relationships and the generation of human capital. In this sense, a higher stakeholder engagement contributes to consumer retention and loyalty, helps to improve brand reputation, to develop different business strategies, and to strengthen relationships with key stakeholders (Sashi, 2012; Chikandiwa, Contogiannis and Jembere, 2013).

Strategic communication tools are needed to encourage stakeholder engagement. There is no doubt about the impact and popularity of social networks or social media nowadays, mainly because the possibilities that these technologies offer for bidirectional communication in real time. As a result, stakeholders interact, generate, create and disseminate information, rather than being mere observers (Cerrillo-i-Martínez, 2012). Therefore, stakeholders' interactions via social media are called "online commitment" or "online engagement" (Lehmann, Lalmas, Yom-Tov and Dupret, 2012). This new way of

linking stakeholders involves a number of advantages to the organization (Taylor and Kent, 2014): 1) provides a quick feedback, avoiding misunderstandings; 2) helps make decisions that benefit the participants; 3) promotes the union of society. Moreover, online engagement is very useful for community managers when developing and managing brand strategies faster and at a lower cost (Leal-Morantes, 2012; Hernández, 2013).

Previous literature on social media mainly focuses on its benefits, such as providing a quick feedback, improving transparency, enhancing reliability, cost reduction, increasing customer satisfaction and quality both in the public sector (Bertot, Jaeger and Hansen, 2012; Picazo, Gutiérrez and Luna, 2012; Bonsón, Torres, Royo and Flores, 2012) and private sector (Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy and Skiera, 2010; Kasavana, Nusair and Teodosic, 2010; Ruiz-Molina, Gil-Saura and Moliner-Velázquez 2011; Velázquez, Blasco and Saura, 2015). There are also many studies about the use of social media to improve communication strategies (Caldevilla, 2010; Martínez, 2011; Hernández, 2013; Bonatto, 2015; Alonso 2015), but only a few analyse users' engagement and even less the causal factors, such as the time of publication by the firm, the time of participation by the online user, or stakeholders' main characteristics, among others (Pletikosa and Michahelles, 2013; Valerio, Herrera-Murillo and Rodríguez-Martínez, 2014). Studying the case of Inditex, one of the main fashion distributors worldwide (Agulló, 2012), can provide an overview about trends in social media interaction in the fashion industry.

Thus, this work presents two main objectives. First, different levels of online engagement reached are analysed in each of the brands Facebook pages of the Inditex group. Second, factors related to online engagement are also analysed, in particular the type of content published by the firm, the format and the precise time of participation, and in addition, the degree of feedback provided (number of comments received, type positive, negative or neutral- and moment of participation).

Thereby, the results of this study aim to

help those firms wishing to improve their relationship with stakeholders via Facebook, allowing them to know the moment of the week in which posts generate a greater impact, the most interesting topic for their fans or the importance they give to firm transparency, among others.

This work is divided into six sections: this introduction is followed by a literature review on social media and the fashion industry. After that, third section is devoted to the characteristics of engagement, fourth details the sample and methodology, fifth section includes the results and finally the last section shows the main conclusions.

## 2. Social media in the fashion industry

The last decade has witnessed a rapid technological and communication development, fostered with the rising of social media, which allows interconnection between individuals, online content creation and greater dissemination of information (Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Leal-Morantes, 2012; Hernández, 2013). Today's society shares information for most of the day, making massive use of social media, instant messaging apps, blogs and webpages. This is the main cause for firms to be more present in social media, in order to publicise themselves, allow consumers to participate in product design, and analyse their generated content (Richter, Riemer and Brocke, 2011).

In the field of the fashion sector, authors like Lee, Park and Han (2008), Delorme, Huh and Reid (2009) and Hernández (2013) point out that the emergence of new technologies has caused firms to focus their efforts on developing different strategies. On one hand, paying attention to develop content that attracts the attention of social media users. On the other hand, finding out the factors favouring the communication with these users in order to make them "followers" of the firm. In this sense, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2012) suggest that bidirectional communication must be rooted on authenticity, transparency and honesty. Therefore, most companies massively use social media, decentralising the production system, showing increasing performance at a minimum cost, and focused

on customer proximity through an instant feedback (Castillo, Mendoza and Poblete, 2013). This leads the company to make a continuous communication effort, which in turn provides a competitive advantage since the main stakeholders, such as the customers, identify with firm's actions (Hernández, 2013).

Social platforms stand out among social media in textile and fashion industries to inform repeatedly about new collections, promotions, proposals, brand-promoting celebrities, events or photocall's (Alonso, 2015). Within the social media strategies, firms use content strategy, that is employing videos, graphics and other multimedia elements to tell stories that can resemble their audience, and thus connecting better with different stakeholders (Alarcón, Lorenzo and Constantinides, 2013; Roca, 2015). This type of communication has a great ability to persuade and engage stakeholders, since it conveys greater credibility and reliability (Needleman, 2007; Hernández, 2013). In this sense, Spanish firms do not fall behind, relying increasingly on the benefits provided by social media to reach business success (Alonso, 2015).

Since the use of social media has become fundamental in business, Facebook has become one of the most popular social platforms (Lanz, Fischhof and Lee, 2010; Kasavana et al. 2010), with 1.65 billion people using it each month, 1.09 billion each day and a growth of almost 200 million users per month (Facebook, 2016). Besides being the most attractive social platform for organizations in the use of marketing strategies (Cortado, Chalmeta and Ntim, 2016), Facebook is characterized by facilitating the greatest online engagement of stakeholders through the thanks to the range of direct interactions offered (Pletikosa and Michahelles, 2013). In this sense, Palmer and Koenig-Lewis (2009) state that the organization can find out the needs of consumers using feedback from fans, and even encourage them to participate to a greater extent in the creation of value by generating new ideas.

Regarding social media, previous research has focused on setting a theoretical framework to the concept (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Berthon, Pitt, Plangger and Shapiro, 2012). Furthermore, different

perspectives were adopted to expand the knowledge in the private sector, such as analysing the structure of the network (Caci, Cardaci and Tabacchi, 2012), users' characteristics (Karl, Peluchette and Schlaegel, 2010; Bhattacharyya, Garg and Wu, 2011), factors influencing customer loyalty to the brand (Jahn and Kunz, 2012), comparisons between the posts published by companies on Facebook and online advertising (De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012), or privacy and information disclosure (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn and Hughes, 2009; Krasnova, Gunther, Spiekermann and Koroleva, 2009). Regarding the public sector, several studies analyse whether a greater engagement of citizens in social media improves transparency and increases confidence in the government (Snead, 2013; Sáez-Martín, Haro-de-Rosario and Caba-Perez, 2014, 2015).

Although there is previous literature focused on the Internet as a distribution channel in the textile industry (Martínez and Jiménez, 2006, Martínez, 2011) and, specifically, social media as a two-way communication channel (Hernández, 2013; Alonso, 2015), few studies analyse the stakeholder engagement and the reasons that stimulate participation in social media to a greater or lesser extent. This gap in the literature motivates this work, in which it is carried out an analysis of the Facebook profiles of Inditex brands, as a tool that can increase stakeholder engagement and likely to have an impact on improving the image of the organization. Inditex is the largest textile group in Europe and second worldwide (Deloitte, 2016).

### 3. Levels and characteristics of engagement

#### 3.1. Like, share, comments and responses

The primary objective of any company in the use of social media is to achieve a greater engagement of its stakeholders, that is, to achieve a solid, stable and lasting relationship through constant interaction (Sashi, 2012). Therefore, organizations should keep in mind that it is important to know the impact of posts on stakeholders, in the sense of finding out what kind of reactions cause the

information shared by the company, as well as the characteristics that stimulate greater participation.

Thus, it is necessary to analyse the different levels of online engagement that companies are achieving in their social media. In line with the literature, three levels of participation can be identified according to the level of effort and time invested by the user in the use of social media (Gorry and Westbrook, 2011, Bonsón and Ratkai, 2013).

The first level encompasses the actions involving less effort, i.e. just a “click”. In the case of Facebook, it concerns the “like” and “share” actions received. Although “likes” involve less commitment, they exert a multiplying effect because of its simple execution, since with a simple “click” the opinion is shown in the list of friends of each user (Bonsón and Ratkai, 2013). In addition, at the end of 2015 Facebook incorporated a series of reactions to the button representing different emotions (like, love, laugh, amazement, sadness and anger), so as to offer users to express better their opinion regarding a post. In this way, it has been possible to better conclude the type of reaction that each fan has shown about the published information.

“Share” action implies greater implication than “like”, giving Facebook the chance to directly share the publication, and also writing an attached comment. The sharing action also shows that the user likes the company / brand and wants to make it known among their Facebook friends. Therefore, there is a viral effect since the shared information is disseminated not only among the contacts of the sender but also among the contacts of the person who has decided to share this information among their friends (Phethean, Tiropanis and Harris, 2015).

The second level considers the number of comments and the number of people who comment. To make a comment, stakeholders dedicate much more effort and at the same time more time than in the first level actions. Therefore, a comment is more relevant when effectively measuring the impact of each publication on stakeholder engagement (Bonsón and Raktai, 2013).

Regarding the third level, it includes the

number of conversations that have arisen between the company-fan and/or between the different stakeholders. The emerged feedback makes this stage the most relevant, in which companies increasingly try to maintain a direct contact with their audience through conversations in the publications. This type of bilateral communication has a relevant and positive impact for the organization since the public feels welcomed, cared for and empowered (Gorry and Westbrook, 2011).

### 3.2. Content, format and moment of participation

The set of characteristics that enhance higher levels of online engagement are another important point to take into account. In this line, Pletikosa and Michahelles (2013) show that achieving will depend largely on factors such as the content published, the format of the publication or the time of publication.

In regard to the content, Falkinger (2008) points out that content creators have to develop strategies focused on capturing the attention of the navigators. In addition, the content must be adapted according to the channel of dissemination, since it is different to publish on the company official website than in social media (Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015). In this sense, community managers are in constant interaction with online users, facilitating resource optimization, since he/she can identify the public needs and develop an adapted and specific content strategy (Guzmán, del Moral, González and Gil, 2013, Valerio *et al.* 2014).

Authors such as Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, (2011) point out that content topics influence the levels of online engagement. In particular, the issued information must be valuable, illustrative, exciting and entertaining, and therefore becoming the organization in a content socializer that positively affect stakeholder engagement (Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015).

The format used, such as text, video, photo or link, is also an important factor to consider in promoting interactivity in social media (Pletikosa and Michahelles, 2013). However, not all formats seem to have the same

**Table 1. The eight Inditex brands and segmentation market**

Brands	Offerings	Target age	Year of foundation
Zara	Highly imitative fashion trends at affordable prices.	Global market, including, woman, man and child.	1975
Pull and Bear	Young urban fashion.	Men and women from teens to early 20'.	1991
Massimo Dutti	Stylish and sophisticated clothing.	Men and women from 30 upwards.	1991
Berksha	More daring and provocative urban fashion than Pull and Bear.	Mainly women from 13 to 25.	1998
Stradivarius	Informal cutting-edge design.	Women from 16 to 30.	1999
Oysho	Casual outerwear, accessories, and sportswear.	Women from 10 to 30.	2001
Zara Home	Updated home décor and linen reflecting the latest trends.	Men and women from mid-20's onwards.	2003
Uterqüe	Premium accessories and elegant top-quality women's clothing.	Women from 22 to over 40.	2008

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Vincent *et al.* 2013.

influence on online engagement. Previous authors state that some texts negatively affect the level of online participation when they reach a certain length. However, those posts with images tend to be more effective in awakening active participation in social media (Valerio *et al.* 2014).

Finally, it is also worth noting the time of participation in a publication, because if the organization publishes at a time when users do not usually connect, it can lose much visibility, and therefore reduce the possibilities of interaction (Hyder, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to know some other aspects, such as the time and day of the week in which the target stakeholders are more conducive to interact with the company (Valerio, *et al.* 2014).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Sample

This study is focused on the Inditex Group, which is one of the world's leading and fastest growing fashion producer and retailer. In line with Fashion United Top 100 Index<sup>1</sup> Inditex Group is the third largest listed company within the apparel and fashion industry. Being a large industry influencer, the findings of this study could help to

identify possible trends in the textile sector regarding stakeholders engagement in social media (Mazaira, González and Avendaño, 2003; Tudó, Hernández and López, 2013; de Jorge and Rojas, 2016).

As shown in Table 1, Inditex Group holds eight retail brands that target different customer segments. Hence, by analysing this business group, it could be possible to observe how different public target (different age, groups and fashion styles) engage with social media of fashion companies.

A study period of one month was considered suitable for this analysis in line with similar studies focused on social media information (Nah and Saxton, 2013). Specifically, the study was conducted in March 2016. The month was chosen randomly as there was no specific political or social situation affecting Inditex Group politics when the research process began.

### 4.2. Descriptive analysis: levels of online engagement and characteristics

The first goal of this study is to analyse the different levels of online engagement attained by the Inditex Group via social media. To this end, secondary data were used from Facebook pages, as well as the classification shown in the literature review (Section 3.1).

<sup>1</sup> <https://fashionunited.com/i/top100/>

Table 2: Total and average values of online engagement

VARIABLE	BRAND																
	Zara		Pull&Bear		Massimo Dutti		Bershka		Stradivarius		Oysho		Zara Home		Uterqüe		
	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	
	<b>8</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>25</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>31</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>15</b>		
	<b>Posts</b>																
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	Like	16,804	2,101	6,824	227.47	17,919	716.76	7,922	565.86	51,217	1,652.16	3,807	1,269	5,864	977.33	1,397	93.13
	Love	338	42.25	84	2.80	309	12.36	219	15.64	949	30.61	163	54.33	152	25.33	40	2.67
	Amazement	16	2.00	6	0.20	12	0.48	4	0.29	8	0.26	2	0.67	2	0.33	0	0.00
	Laugh	30	3.75	4	0.13	9	0.36	9	0.64	44	1.42	3	1.00	12	2.00	1	0.07
	Sadness	1	0.13	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	0.33	0	0.00
	Angriness	12	1.50	4	0.13	1	0.04	5	0.36	7	0.23	1	0.33	1	0.17	0	0.00
	Share	764	95.50	189	6.30	1,380	55.20	158	11.29	985	31.77	65	21.67	751	125.17	54	3.60
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	No of comments	465	58.13	231	7.70	248	9.92	134	9.57	511	16.48	43	14.33	97	16.17	14	0.93
	No of commentators	450	56.25	234	7.80	240	9.60	141	10.07	565	18.23	54	18.00	108	18.00	14	0.93
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	Company-Fan	71	8.88	19	0.63	6	0.24	58	4.14	94	3.03	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.07
	Fan-Fan	29	3.63	16	0.53	15	0.60	12	0.86	87	2.81	2	0.67	17	2.83	1	0.07

Source: Author's own elaboration.

In particular, the “likes” and “shares” were classified within level 1, the “comments” and “commentators” in level 2, and “replies”, both from the organization and from stakeholders, in level 3. Monthly total values and average values for each post were analysed in Table 2.

Regarding the second objective of this paper, the analysis of characteristics that stimulate the engagement generated in the social media of Inditex Group was carried out via content analysis. This content analysis was based on those publications that received a comment and thus reached a second level of online engagement. Content analysis is based on the literature review available in Section 3.2, in particular regarding the content published by the company, the format used and the moment when the post is published. Likewise, in order to go further on the type of reaction received, the feedback received is analysed using three responses (positive, negative and neutral), in line with Labianca and Brass (2006), as well as the moment of engagement (Table 3).

Data collection was performed mainly using a software developed ad-hoc, which allows to extract data available from Facebook pages by using queries based on Power Query M language to Facebook Graph API. Nevertheless, the post contents were analysed using two coders and an inductive content analysis. The differentiation between the types of responses was carried out by the same researchers. In order to avoid coding ambiguities, several meetings were carried out among coders and the rest of researchers of this study.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Levels of online participation

Table 2 presents the results concerning the levels of online participation, with 184 posts analysed. Focusing on each of the brands that encompasses the Inditex group, it can be noticed that Stradivarius, Pull & Bear and Massimo Dutti show higher levels of activity in their social media profiles, publishing almost one post per day. In contrast, Oysho, Zara Home and Zara display the lowest values.

Regarding the first level of online engagement, and analysing the interactions via “likes”, results indicate that, in general terms, it is the most used interaction, clearly surpassing other types of interaction. Results also seem to indicate that the highest engagement obtained at this level is not related to greater post activity. For instance, Stradivarius has received 1,652 likes on average in its 31 posts, whereas Zara gets 2,101 likes per post with very low level of activity (8 posts during the analysed month). Similar figures can be found in the other variable of this level, “share”. Posts from both Zara Home and Zara are shared by a greater number of followers (125 and 95 times per post respectively) despite their low level of activity (6 and 8 publications respectively), compared to 31 times on average in the case of Stradivarius. This could be due to the fact that Zara has a wider market segment than the other brands of the group (women and men of different ages, as well as children). Besides, it is the first brand created by Inditex, it has been longer in the market the longest and therefore its posts have a greater impact.

Concerning the second level of online engagement, Stradivarius again receives the largest number of comments and involves the largest number of stakeholders (511 comments and 565 people commenting). However, the largest online participation for each post, on average, is achieved by Zara, with 58 comments and 56 commentators. Pull & Bear or Massimo Dutti figures are remarkable, since both brands do not reach higher levels of engagement at this level even though publishing a greater number of posts. Again, the interest generated by Zara is evident due to its extensive range of products for an equally broad target audience. Likewise, the higher engagement achieved by Stradivarius in global terms could be due to the fact that its target audience consists of adolescent and young women. This collective daily use web technologies on a daily basis and hence it seems that they use Facebook as a place to write about their experiences with such brand.

Finally, at the third level, where the conversations generated between the company and its stakeholders or between stakeholders are analysed, it could be

Table 3: Analysis of the engagement online characteristics

Post publication	Zara		Pull&Bear		Massimo Dutti		Bershka		Stradivarius		Oysho		Zara Home		Zara Home	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
	8		30		25		14		31		3		6		15	
<b>Content</b>																
Sales	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	9.68	0	0.00	4	66.67	0	0.00
Tutorials	2	25.00	5	16.67	7	28.00	3	21.43	23	74.19	1	33.33	2	33.33	0	0.00
Draws	0	0.00	1	3.33	0	0.00	2	14.29	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Participation	0	0.00	1	3.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>New collections</b>																
Woman	3	37.50	11	36.67	8	32.00	5	35.71	4	12.90	2	66.67	0	0.00	12	80.00
Man	1	12.50	5	16.67	4	16.00	1	7.14	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Child	1	12.50	0	0.00	2	8.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Others	1	12.50	7	23.33	4	16.00	3	21.43	1	3.23	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	20.00
<b>Format</b>																
Text	1	12.50	29	96.67	25	100.00	14	100.00	31	100.00	3	100.00	4	66.67	13	86.67
Link	6	75.00	26	86.67	21	84.00	14	100.00	30	96.77	3	100.00	3	50.00	13	86.67
Video	0	0.00	7	23.33	2	8.00	2	14.29	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Photo	8	100.00	23	76.67	23	92.00	12	85.71	30	96.77	3	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
<b>Time of publication</b>																
Weekdays	5	62.50	28	93.33	18	72.00	14	100.00	22	70.97	2	66.67	4	66.67	12	80.00
Weekend	3	37.50	2	6.67	7	28.00	0	0.00	9	29.03	1	33.33	2	33.33	3	20.00
<b>Comments on posts</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Type of comment</b>																
Positive	212	45.59	200	86.58	162	65.32	111	82.84	467	91.39	39	90.70	88	90.72	13	92.86
Negative	114	24.52	17	7.36	36	14.52	10	7.46	23	4.50	2	4.65	1	1.03	0	0.00
Neutral	139	29.89	14	6.06	50	20.16	13	9.70	21	4.11	2	4.65	8	8.25	1	7.14
<b>Moment of publication</b>																
Weekday	348	74.84	216	93.51	173	69.76	92	68.66	409	80.04	7	16.28	61	62.89	11	78.57
Weekend	117	25.16	15	6.49	75	30.24	42	31.34	102	19.96	36	83.72	36	37.11	3	21.43
In the morning (9 <sup>00</sup> -13 <sup>00</sup> )	54	11.61	19	8.23	32	12.90	11	8.21	73	14.29	13	30.23	26	26.80	2	14.29
In the afternoon (13 <sup>00</sup> -21 <sup>00</sup> )	212	45.59	107	46.32	105	42.34	58	43.28	189	36.99	15	34.88	33	34.02	6	42.86
Night (21 <sup>00</sup> -9 <sup>00</sup> )	199	42.80	105	45.45	111	44.76	65	48.51	249	48.73	15	34.88	38	39.18	6	42.86

Source: Author's own elaboration.

noticed that there are few responses to the comments from stakeholders. Regarding the conversations started by the company with its stakeholders, Zara stands out on average (almost 9 per post) and Stradivarius at the global level (94). On the contrary, Oysho or Zara Home do not respond to the stakeholders' comments. Among the conversations initiated by its stakeholders, those that interact on the Facebook of Zara, Stradivarius and Zara Home stand out, with about 3 media conversations per post.

Uterqüe exhibits the worst values in all levels of engagement. The youngest brand of the Inditex Group has not managed that women from 22 to over 40 years old dare to publish their thoughts on what they feel or think about this accessories brand.

## 5.2. Characteristics of online participation

In order to meet the second goal of this work (Table 3), results from content, format and moment of publication of the post have been explored. Then, the results derived from stakeholders' participation, namely the type of comment and the moment of participation, have also been analysed.

Five topics have been identified to differentiate the content of the posts that generate a level 2 of engagement. Among them, publications with new women's collections and tutorials are stakeholders' preferred topics when choosing to engage in the social media of Inditex companies. In particular, Zara, Pull & Bear, Massimo Dutti and Bershka dedicate around 30% of their publications to this kind of content. The case of Uterqüe is striking, since almost every post is centred on the announcement of new women's collection (80% of the post analysed). To a lesser extent, tutorials also arouse some interest. In the case of Stradivarius, tutorials account for more than 70% of its content, in contrast with 20-30% in the rest of the companies. Hence, the results show that despite the fact that men's fashion is included in the segment market targeted of Inditex, the brands that attain higher levels of stakeholders' online engagement are those that devote their posts to women's fashion. In particular, the posts with level 2 interactions are those that publish new woman collections and tutorials and tips of beauty and fashion.

Since February is the month just after January sales, another topic identified in the publications with level 2 online engagement was "sales". In this regard, it is worth noting that only Stradivarius and Zara Home announce the offers that remain available. This finding could be due to the low purchasing power of Stradivarius's client profile, mainly teenagers and young women. In the case of Zara Home, they continue with the offers after the sales period, since home décor could be a secondary preference after other personal needs (clothes, footwear, accessories...).

Concerning the format, different types can be found combining in the same publication. Results show that texts accompanied by photographs and links have been the most successful formats, which usually lead to the webpage of the firm. Videos are the least chosen option in the posts that have received a level 2 of engagement. As can be observed in Table 3, it could be highlighted that Pull & Bear that devotes 23% to this format in its published posts. Therefore, it seems that, regardless of age and fashion style, online users participate in the social media of fashion brands when the information is sent using various formats and thus being as complete as possible.

The moment in which the company decides to send the publication is of great relevance, since it will depend on the availability of its stakeholders so that they can participate actively in the information published by the company. The results show that companies are more active during the week, with publications exceeding 60% in general terms. Weekend posts are less in number and remain around 30%. In this sense, it can be seen that Bershka has not followed the policy of publishing on weekends during February, and Pull & Bear has done so but in a much smaller proportion compared to the total of the posts, making 7% of the postings on the weekend. Apparently, Inditex brands consider that their target audience is more active in social media during the week than in the weekend, and therefore, they use their communication strategy during working days.

Analysing post comments it can be stated that these tend to be positive, exceeding 45% of the total comments. Specifically, Zara is

in the lower limit, getting a 25% of negative comments, and being the extreme thinness of the models and child labour in Asia the most controversial issues. Comments have classified as neutral when Facebook users name other users to see the publication. As can be observed, the viral effect produced by citing a friend to see the publication only benefits Zara with 30%, followed by Massimo Dutti with 20% neutral comments. The rest of the brands obtain results below 10% in this regard. Again, Zara's online activity encourages a higher number of all kind of comments, since its customer base is widely diverse.

Regarding the moment in which stakeholders participate, findings show that working days are the most active, since almost all companies, except Oysho (16% vs. 84%), exceed 60% of participation. Even so, it is worth highlighting the case of Massimo Dutti or Zara Home, which experiment higher levels of participation throughout the weekend, possibly because the user profile (male and female adult clients) use social media to a greater extent in their free time than as a tool for daily communication.

Finally, relative to the part of the day, evenings and nights are the preferred moments to interact in the Facebook profiles, leaving the morning with the least participation.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

In this study we analyse the communication practices carried out by the Inditex group brands through their Facebook profiles. On the one hand, it is intended to determine what is the level of online engagement attained by the different companies that integrate the group and, on the other hand, what type of content, format and in what moments of time brands reach higher levels of stakeholder participation. The purpose of these study is to identify possible trends in the use of social media in the fashion sector.

With respect to the different levels of participation analysed, it is worth noting the company's greater online activity does not necessarily entail the highest levels of engagement. This study supports previous results from similar studies but focused on

the public sector (Bonsón, Royo and Ratkai, 2017) and non-profit entities (Nah and Saxton, 2013). A good example could be the case of Zara. With only 8 posts, the brand has managed to achieve, on average, the highest values of engagement in all the levels studied. However, it must be considered that Zara's target market encompasses large and different segments, which makes it possible to communicate with many stakeholders in social media, and thus achieve greater participation.

On the other hand, it is observed that the contents about new collections of women clothing and the tutorials are the topics that arouse more interest, referred to the higher level of effort used by stakeholders (via comments and responses). Therefore, despite the fact that the Inditex group addresses both men and women in its target audience, it seems that female fashion is the one that generates the greater online engagement.

Regarding the format, the obtained data indicate that users demand publications with text accompanied by a photograph and a link to the website of the firm. The benefits of combining different formats is in line with previous studies that indicate that an entertaining and informative content enhance engagement (Muntinga *et al.* 2011; Pletikosa and Michahelles, 2013), and that the information offered by the organization has to instruct, thrill and offer value (Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015).

Finally, it is shown that, in general terms, the greatest interaction occurs during the days of the week and in night hours, regardless of the age and fashion style. Thus, coinciding with similar studies focused on colleges and universities (Golder, Wilkinson and Huberman, 2007) and fast-moving consumer goods (Pletikosa and Michahelles, 2013), people tend to participate more proactively in social media once work/study day is over. However, the community managers of fashion stores that address an audience from forty upward should also be attentive to the weekends' publications.

This study has several limitations, which provide directions for further research. To this respect, an online survey on the fans' perceptions about the content and the time of publication could be considered. Likewise,

it would be interesting to support the results obtained empirically, including another type of external factors that could exert an influence on engagement, such as the political, economic and cultural context of the firm's headquarters country or region, or even where its manufacturing facilities are placed. Another interesting branch of research could be to carry out a comparative study between the Inditex group and any other smaller group in the sector, to analyse the results and determine whether the Inditex group guidelines lead the communication trends on social media in the fashion sector.

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