Tendency to scandal as a marketing strategy in textile fashion: the Zara case

Tendencia al escándalo como estrategia de marketing en moda textil: el caso Zara

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Abstract

Marketing strategies aim to increase consumption or brand visibility of a desired product or service. In the last decade, various unorthodox tactics have gained prominence, notably the use of scandal. This article seeks to demonstrate the existence of a tendency to scandal as a marketing strategy developed by the Zara brand during the decade from 2014 to 2023, and demonstrate that it is correlated with increased sales. Using a mixed methodology, a case study is carried out based on content analysis by designing a database on ten Zara launches, at the rate of one product per year in the last decade. These launches stood out for their countercultural advertising aimed at certain consumer segments. Furthermore, the multivariate correlation between sales and scandal factors was calculated. The results show the trend towards the brand's annual scandal through tables and data triangulation, supported by graphs that represent the level of annual sales, the volume of followers on social networks, news of scandals and geographical distribution. The study concludes that the Zara brand used controlled scandal as a marketing strategy in the last decade. This tactic is characteristic of the network society, which bases its decisions on recommendations or events rather than on traditional advertising, thus achieving a high effectiveness ratio.

Keywords

Marketing, fashion, communication, advertising, consumption, clothing, digitization, countercultures.

Resumen

Las estrategias de marketing tienen como objetivo elevar el consumo o la visibilidad de marca en un producto o servicio deseado. En la última década, diversas tácticas heterodoxas han ganado protagonismo, destacándose entre ellas el uso del escándalo. Este artículo busca demostrar la existencia de una tendencia al escándalo como estrategia de marketing desarrollada por la marca Zara durante la década de 2014 a 2023; y demostrar que está correlacionado con el incremento de ventas. Mediante una metodología mixta, se realiza un estudio de caso basado en el análisis de contenido mediante el diseño de una base de datos sobre diez lanzamientos de Zara, a razón de un producto anual en la última década. Estos lanzamientos destacaron por su publicidad contracultural dirigida a ciertos segmentos de consumidores. Además, se calculó la correlación multivariable entre ventas y factores de escándalo. Los resultados muestran la tendencia al escándalo anual de la marca a través de tablas y triangulación de datos, apoyadas con gráficos que representan el nivel de ventas anuales, el volumen de seguidores en redes sociales, noticias de escándalos y distribución geográfica. El estudio concluye que la marca Zara utilizó el escándalo controlado como una estrategia de marketing en la última década. Esta táctica es característica de la sociedad en red, que basa sus decisiones en recomendaciones o eventos más que en la publicidad tradicional, logrando así un gran ratio de efectividad.

Palabras clave

Marketing, moda, comunicación, publicidad, consumo, vestuario, digitalización, contracultura.

Introduction

Fashion is a complex sociocultural phenomenon and its representation as an economic activity has reached exponentially high levels with respect to aggregate demand (Fontana and Miranda, 2016). In this sense, fashion has meant a milestone of economic relevance in the development of countries that has generated changes in the culture of their societies, having evolved from a protoindustry between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Torró, 2019) to a changing and advanced industry (short segments, unique designs) that favorably influences the growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the generation of employment (Economically Active Population, EAP) on a global scale. Consequently, industries also evolve in the field of innovation and technology from a neo-Schumpeterian theory point of view,

raising productivity through intensive use of technology (Fernández, 2015). On the other hand, marketing must be oriented, both to the positioning of a brand and to its sales (Toca, 2013); so that the current socioeconomic environment adds a high degree of complexity to the constant evolution of the technique or marketing discipline (Gázquez and Jiménez, 2009). According to Schauerte *et al.* (2023) marketing in one way or another will enjoy a relevance around the business administration.

In the framework of the sociology of consumption, the fashion industry has not been aliened to the use of commercial marketing strategies that allow to increase the consumption of its products, whose essential focus has been the brand (Ceballos and Villegas, 2014). According to Ripamonti (2023), marketing, through advertising actions, allows the creation of value; and, consequently, the increase of sales. In addition, marketing, as a technique of issuing information, is essential for achieving business competitiveness, seeking strategies that allow differentiation from other competitors; and, thus, achieve the loyalty of the final consumer (Ballester *et al.,* 2021).

The 21st century has registered the emergence of social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, among others, which channel the daily events of the companies among their customers (followers) in a way that creates a brand awareness with a communal, emotional, sentimental way, where word of mouth plays a fundamental role (Rubalcava *et al.,* 2019). This reveals that all economic sectors have had to adapt to new technologies, including the fashion and textile sector. Companies, in general, have opted for orthodox marketing strategies; however, there are also heterodox methods, contrary to the usual culture. These are countercultural positions that stand out and create notoriety, either by creating intense reactions, both in favor and against, which are contagious, both through the traditional word-of-mouth factor and electronic viralization, the latter being the most influential (López and Sicilia, 2013).

As for Granell (2020), the counterculture consists in the practice of ideas opposed to the regime of values and dominant traditions in a society, generating sensitivities, characterized by rebellion against the established order. In this sense, aspects that make up the countercultural are derived from this term, such as cultural discrimination that is based on reasons of values, customs, ethnicities and traditions that identify a sector of society (Hernández and Maya, 2016); sexism or gender discrimination that is based on the creation of stereotypes that encapsulate male and female roles (Arnoso *et al.,*

2017) as well as physical discrimination that refers to the marginalization of the body of people (Méndez and Rico, 2018); and aspects of health non-compliance that can generate a detriment to the health of people (Romaní and Sepúlveda, 20) 05), thus shaping ideas of today's society in which discrimination of any kind is prohibited and there are norms, in general, both at the health, cultural and gender level.

Zara and digital marketing strategies in textile fashion

Spain consolidated in 2014 as the ninth exporting country in the clothing industry (Minian *et al*., 2017), being the main exponent the Zara brand of the Inditex Group that has focused on fast fashion with competitors such as H&M and Forever 21. Their target audience is different from traditional *ready-to-wear* brands (Calvin Klein or Tommy Hilfiger type) because the fast fashion consumer rewards novelty. In this sense of creativity, Zara imposes on its immediate competitors in the segment by the proportion of standard garments or wardrobe bottom of the latter, much greater than the originality of the designs of Zara that does play the sense of unique garment. The culture that Zara transmits is reinforced by its communication policy, which has competitive advantages based on information and communication technologies (Martínez, 2008).

Traditional marketing strategies are characterized by advertising in typical media (television, newspapers, radio), creation of promotional campaigns, among other types of strategies whose common characteristic is that they do not have such an effective penetration in the age of the Internet for certain types of public (Brogdon, 2024). However, new strategies arise every day, such as the use of social networks, *influencers,* the use of digital marketing with KPI, digital consumer segmentation, among others, being especially relevant the scandal and its relationship with networks. Hence, the volume factor of web traffic will be decisive in the digital marketing strategy to be used for positioning in networks (Ye *et al.,* 2024).

From 2014 to 2023, Zara is a brand that has been involved in controversies characterized by the tendency to the countercultural, i.e., by the violation of the sensitivity of various sectors segmented according to their country, culture, sex, religion, among others. In contrast to what Pellicer (2018) mentions regarding ethical advertising, Zara has opted for using controversies that may be contradictory with current ethical standards, in search of a mar-

keting strategy aimed at the consumer from a digital approach. It considers the convergence between consumption and technology following consumer-expressed behavior (Masrianto *et al.,* 2022). However, it should be noted that advertising is related to freedom of expression; and, the latter, as a right, is not absolute (Collí, 2015), which is why the controversies could be illegal. In this sense, the countercurrent to the usual constructions of community of a brand that are based on conscience, moral responsibility and traditions is revealed (Casaló *et al.,* 2013).

As for the textile or clothing sector as such, marketing has characterized by the impact on networks and the sustainability of clothing (Hoon and Young, 2020), the latter aspect that has not been considered in the advertising scandals of the brand. Likewise, Zara, like other brands in the textile sector, has successfully joined what is currently called the digital era (Cho *et al*., 2023), in search of contactless marketing, i.e., in network. This implies the adaptation of this sector, in recent years, to information technologies, not only in the aspect of the same organization as Kwame *et al.* (2024), but also in marketing.

The brand has incorporated to the rhythm of the expansion of the Internet, providing a word-of-ear approach (Matute *et al.,* 2015; Belanche *et al*., 2013), which has allowed the controversies caused to have registered high rates of expansion of web traffic (viralization). This strategy generates both cognitive and affective effects in the recipient, with high levels of brand recall; and, also, it causes a diversity of emotions in the public (Navarro *et al.,* 2009). This effect of its communication strategy is part of its general strategy in which Zara has incorporated information and communication technologies into its organizational model to raise its capacity for innovation in the market and evolve its management model in the world of the textile industry towards a global, diverse and diversified public (García, 2015).

Objectives of the research

- General objective: to demonstrate the existence of a tendency to scandal as a marketing strategy developed by the Zara brand from 2014 to 2023.
- Specific objective: to demonstrate that there is a correlation between the trend towards scandal and the increase in sales of the brand from 2014 to 2023.

Materials and method

A mixed methodology of double focus: qualitative and quantitative (Singh and Swaroop, 2020) has been used to adequately understand the phenomenon investigated, enriching the data analysis and its corresponding interpretation, also using the quantitative approach by calculating the correlation of variables. This will explain each of the approaches in the following paragraphs.

In this case, fast fashion is a type of fashion closely linked to social networks, therefore, a qualitative technique called *volume analysis of followers on social networks* will be used.

On the proposed objectives (one general and one specific), which guide this article, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

> *H.1.* There is a tendency to scandal as a marketing strategy developed by the Zara brand from 2014 to 2023.
> *H.2.* The trend towards scandal as a marketing strategy is correlated with the increase in sales of the Zara brand from 2014 to 2023.

A qualitative approach was used, which as for Lucchese *et al.* (2023), aims to understanding and developing concepts from the data to analyze from the observation of the context, carrying out for this an explanatory case study (Muñoz *et al.,* 2023) that allows to verify the tendency to scandal for a whole decade. To do this, we proceeded designing and elaborating a database of news about ten launches of Zara, at the rate of an annual product in the last decade, whose advertising meant a counterculture position towards certain consumer segments. In this regard, the following is indicated on sampling:

- The selection of the news was made by the criterion of appearance and SEO traffic in Google News (and for the case of the impact news in China, the search engine Baidu was also used). The uniform keyword algorithm was used in Spanish, English, German, French and Chinese, matching the search criteria of other languages. The keywords for the news search have been placed in each advertisement of table 1 in Spanish (except *Love your curves*) and the translations have been used, although they do not appear detailed in that column. These Spanish terms and their translations were used together and separately to verify the totality of the news. In all cases, the keyword Zara was used to show the distinction.

- • The time interval for news search was from January 1 to December 31 for each year from 2014 to 2023. We used the advanced search tool by temporal and term filter of Google News and Baidu. It is important to point out that the news queried are secondary sources of information that are available in the aforementioned languages and that focus on the description of the advertising. The exclusion criterion was news reposted from other news, i.e., that the same body of the news is not repeated, giving a different appreciation in each of the news.
- • The selection of Zara scandals was made based on the inclusion criterion when the scandal is related to the product. The scandal corresponds to the criteria of appearance and SEO traffic of the news that were selected from Google News and Baidu. In addition, the launch of products in regions where Zara has physical stores, and which represent a high percentage of sales for the Inditex Group was considered. As an exclusion criterion, it applies when the advertising or news does not focus on the product.

The figures presented in the research have been developed with Microsoft Office Excel and Microsoft Office Word software, both in the 2021 version, by using the Graphic tool in the Illustrations section of the second program, incorporating the data through the first program. As for the tables, they were developed with the same software, specifying that, for the correlation of the variable, the option of data analysis was used by customizing the configuration of options and enabling add-ins in Microsoft Office Excel.

Next, we begin by factoring in the qualitative phenomenon of the scandal's marketing strategy. It seeks to determine what common factors prevail in all cases and how they work when successful, as well as what can be done so that such scandals do not increase sales or brand visibility. In this way, through a quantitative approach (Del Canto and Silva, 2013) qualitative factors are converted into possible quantitative indicators. Thus, the variance of both the variables considered objective (sales) and subjective (visibility of the brand product of the scandal) is calculated, so that, subsequently, we can calculate *strictu sensu*, the multivariable correlation between sales and the factors of the scandal that we have previously converted into indicators.

The scandals that are the subject of the sample are factored by means of table 1, with the name type of advertising of the products, year of launch, country of launch, amount of SEO news (search engines optimization) and

advertising image that fomented the controversy. In addition, the keywords used for the search in the secondary information sources that constitute the news in the different portals of Google News and Baidu have been indicated.

Table 1

Empirical Measurement of the Phenomenon:
Zara Scandals from 2014 to 2023

Item	Advertising	Year	Type	Country	Keywords	Google News*	Image
1	Striped and Jewish pajamas	2014	Direct	Israel	Zara Scandal Jewish Jews	64	
2	Slave Sandals	2015	Direct	Germany	Zara Slave	8	
3	Dead animal in a dress	2016	Indirect	Spain	Zara Scandal Rat Rats Rodent	61	
4	*Love your curves*	2017	Direct	Global	Zara Scandal Love your curves	32	
5	Melania Trump and the Parka	2018	Indirect	United States	Zara Scandal Melania Trump	161	
6	China and Freckles	2019	Direct	China	Zara Scandal China Freckles	73	
7	Market Bag	2020	Direct	Mexico and Spain	Zara Scandal Market Bag	42	
8	Mexican cultural appropriation	2021	Direct	Mexico	Zara Scandal Mexico Culture	34	

Item	Advertising	Year	Type	Country	Keywords	Google News*	Image
9	Sexism and skiing	2022	Direct	Spain	Zara Scandal Skiing	23	
10	Gaza	2023	Direct	Global	Zara Scandal Gaza Palestine	303	

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from the search for news related to the scandals, through its profiling. Added the results of the Chinese search engine Baidu for item 6*.

Table 1 considers direct advertising when the scandal is generated by the brand itself, while indirect advertising is referred to that carried out by the work of third parties who, voluntarily or involuntarily, participated in the scandal and made it more visible. Also note the "Google News" column in Table 1, which records the amount of digital media news that was reported on each of the scandals analyzed.

Finally, the profile of each scandal is defined in Table 2, i.e., what it consisted from a content point of view. In addition, the counter-cultural aspect that characterizes it is pointed out, together with the respective advertising image, in order to determine the essential aspects of the scandal. As explained above, countercultural aspects have been delimited as cultural discrimination, health noncompliance (in the understanding of health), physical discrimination and gender discrimination (Hernández and Maya, 2016; Arnoso *et al.,* 2017; Méndez and Rico, 2018; Romaní and Sepúlveda, 2005).

Table 2
Profile of the Zara Scandals from 2014 to 2023:
Contents and Countercultural Aspects

| Advertising	Content	Counter-cultural aspect
	Launch in Israel of a product similar to Jewish uniforms in concentration camps at the time of the Holocaust.	Cultural discrimination

Advertising	Content	Counter-cultural aspect
	Launch in Germany of sandals with the name in German slavenque, which means slave.	Cultural discrimination
	Appearance in Spain of a dress with a rat's foot at the seams, which generated an allergic reaction to the buyer.	Health Non-Compliance
	Product launch with contradictory advertising campaign: thin models and message for plus sizes.	Physical discrimination
	Melania Trump's use of Zara's parka in a Mexican immigration detention center that indicates *I really don't care. Do you?*	Cultural discrimination
	Launch in China of products with a Chinese model with freckles, contrary to the standard of beauty of that country where the skin has no brands.	Cultural discrimination
	Launch in Spain and Mexico of bags similar to the Latin American market bags at an excessive price.	Cultural discrimination
	Launch of products through cultural appropriation of Mixtec and Zapotec people in shorts, dresses and blouses, using design patterns of such communities.	Cultural discrimination
	Launch in Spain of ski clothing products with female models with little coat and male models with a lot of coats.	Gender discrimination
	Worldwide launch of products with similar publicity to the destruction of Gaza in Palestine, representing the deceased and their bereaved.	Cultural discrimination

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from table 1.

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Results

Figure 1 presents the level of sales of the Inditex Group and Zara worldwide from 2014 to 2023, in millions of euros. It should be noted that, according to Inditex (2024), this business group has the following brands: Zara, Zara Home, Stradivarius, Massimo Dutti, Pull&Bear and Bershka. In Figure 1, Inditex Group's turnover for the period, of which Zara represents on average more than 60% of the total invoiced, shows an increasing trend line in the level of sales during the decade. Likewise, there is a decrease in 2020, a situation that was the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant a halt in economic development worldwide; however, this did not prevent Zara from exceeding pre-pandemic turnover levels as early as 2022.

Figure 1

Level and trend of Inditex Group and Zara
*sales revenue from 2014 to 2023*
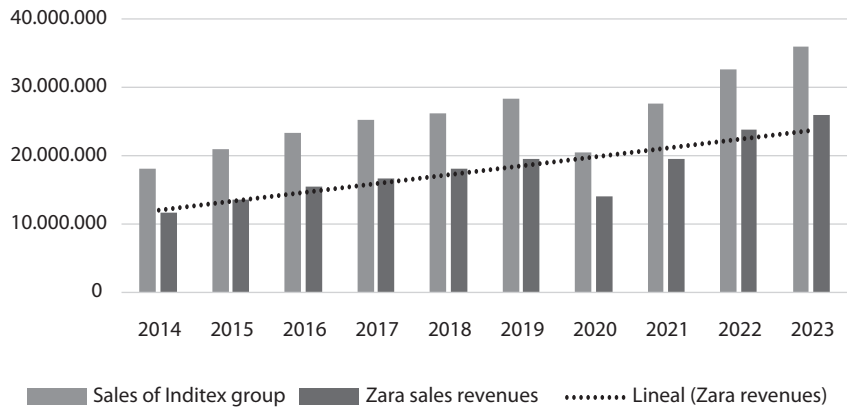
Note. Own elaboration (2024) based on the Inditex Group's annual reports from 2014 to 2023. The data are in millions of euros and worldwide.

As shown in Figure 2, Inditex Group's sales were distributed in five major markets: the Americas, Europe (excluding Spain), Spain, Asia and the rest of the world (the latter two markets being grouped for chart purposes). Again, for the period 2014 to 2023, an information cross between the corresponding scandal annually and the country of impact is made. The trend in Asia and

the rest of the world is decreasing in percentage as in Spain, while in Europe (without Spain) there is an increasing percentage trend. In the Americas, it is showing an increasing trend, with a reduction of only 0.4% in the last year compared to an increase of more than 2% per year in previous years. It should be noted that the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic mainly affected the Inditex Group in the Americas, generating a 2.30% reduction in sales from 2019 to 2020. However, the market recovered rapidly in 2021.

Figure 2

Percentage distribution of sales by regions worldwide of the Inditex Group from 2014 to 2023
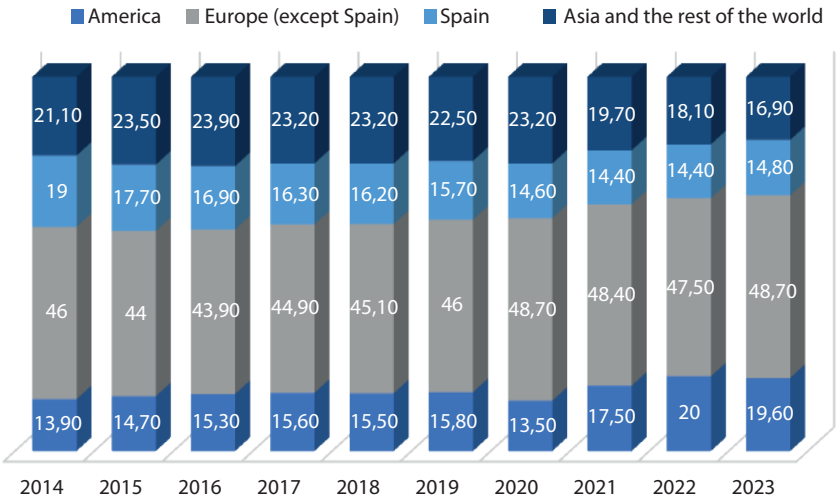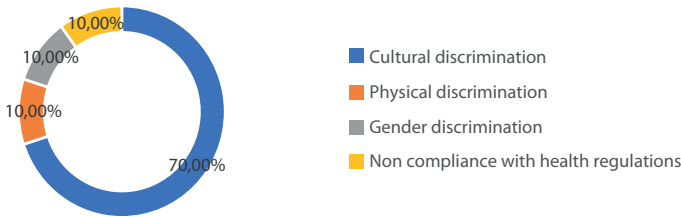

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from Orús (2024).

However, in Table 1, the scandals, their type, date, among other factors were outlined. Table 2 defined the content of each of the scandals and their distinctive countercultural aspect to identify the priority features that make up their impact.

As shown in Figure 3, the priority factors for the scandals have been 70% related to countercultural aspects, i.e., cultural discrimination, values, customs, identities and other aspects related to the culture of a community (Israel, Germany, Mexico, China, United States and Palestine), 10% physical

discrimination, 10% gender discrimination and 10% non-compliance with health regulations.
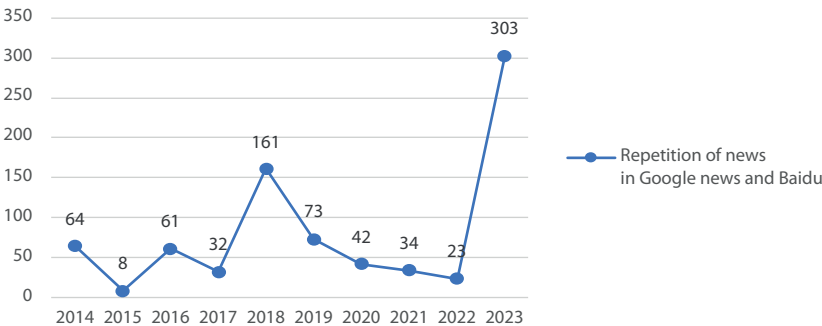
Figure 3

Distribution of typology of Zara scandals from 2014 to 2023

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from table 2.

Figure 4 shows the repetition trend of news related to scandals from 2004 to 2023, both in Google News and Baidu (specifically in 2019 due to segmented advertising). The trend is for the impact of the scandal to grow exponentially in two years (2018 and 2023), with the highest peak, while the lowest impact scandal was in 2015. It should be noted that the 2023 scandal generated the most web traffic, with a significant peak.
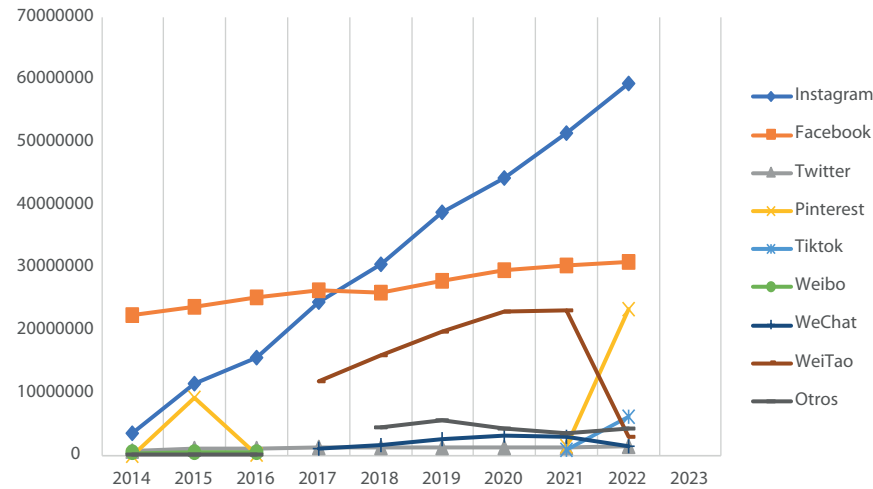
Figure 4

Trend of repeated news of scandals in Zara from 2014 to 2023

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from data in table 1. In 2019, the Chinese search engine Baidu was included due to the Asian segmentation of the consumer to whom the advertising was directed*.

Figure 5 presents a statistic of millions of followers on social networks exclusively of the Zara brand, observing a trend that depends on the social network analyzed. The results show a growing trend on Facebook and Instagram, with Instagram showing exponential growth versus neutral growth on Facebook. As for Twitter, there has been a non-significant increase. From 2021 to 2022, there was a fan investment in Pinterest and WeiTao. No data is available for some years in the case of TikTok, as the account did not exist before 2021, and in the case of Weibo, due to its move to the 'others' section from 2017. WeChat and WeiTao were ranked in the 'other' section from 2014 to 2016, as was Pinterest from 2017 to 2020. It is specified that the total followers of Zara for 2023 was 142 900 000 but that year in the graph is left blank because there is no segmentation available for networks.

Figure 5

*Zara social media trend globally from 2014 to 2022*

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from the annual reports of the Inditex Group.

As shown in Figure 6, the relationship between sales, followers on social networks and the volume of online news that repeats or viralizes each scandal suggests a direct relationship between sales growth, follower growth and the appearance of scandals. Zara's peak sales boom coincides with the biggest scandal.

The findings determine that the use of the scandal on an annual basis is directly proportional to the increase in sales, except for the year 2020 that meant economic recession worldwide as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, the degree of immediate recovery of the brand from 2020 to 2023 is observed, growing exponentiall especially in 2023, registering its historical sales peak.

Figure 6

Contrast of sales revenue, social media followers
and impact of scandals on Zara news from 2014 to 2023
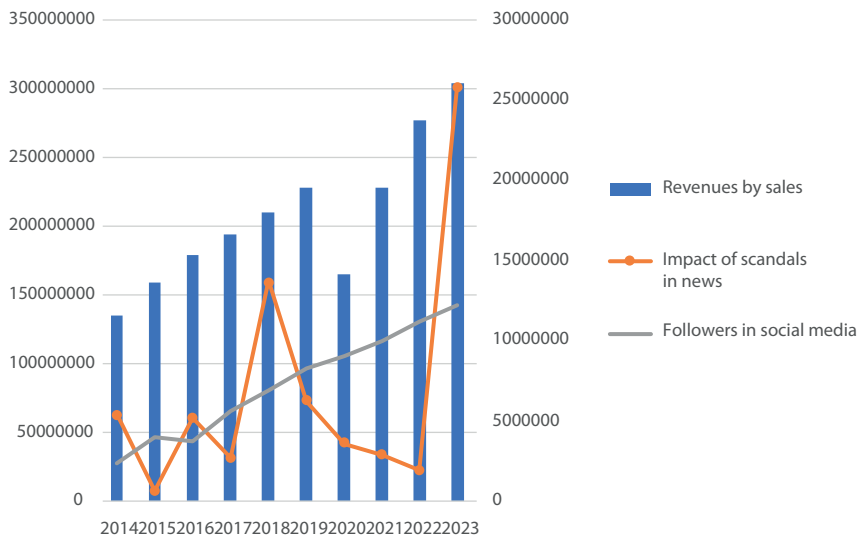
Note. Own development (2024). The impact of news scandals has been transformed into millions to show results proportional to the trend of sales revenue and followers on social networks.

We proceed to calculate the multiple correlation, modeling the phenomenon appropriately (Taylor and Bodgan, 1992), being the dependent variable the turnover or sales volume (v) and the independent variables, the volume of followers in the networks (s) and the volume of scandals (e) measured according to the amount of news that repeated them (gave visibility or helped to viralize it). An equation is created that would respond to a bivariable correlation estimate, with epsilon (€) being the possible margin of error or residue and omega (Ω) the value acquired by the independent variable sales (v)

when the dependent variables followers (s) and scandals (e) are null or equal to zero. Sometimes, statistically, it can happen that there is an autonomous value that functions as an explanatory variable in the absence of score, data or values of the independent variables. This is the case, for example, with the neo-Keynesian consumption function in macroeconomics. It should be noted that this equation modeling the aggregate consumption of all families is: C = Co + C1Yd where Co is autonomous consumption, i.e., what the subject consumes when he/she has no disposable income (Yd = 0).

In this case, the target audience type is middle class, upper middle class and upper class in all their national markets, so it will be assumed that $\Omega = 0$, So, the explanatory or independent variables that are modeled are two: the number of followers (s) and the number of scandals (e) regarding sales:

$$v = f(s, e)$$
$$v = \Omega + \alpha s + \beta e + \text{\texteuro} = 0 + \alpha s + \beta e + \text{\texteuro}$$
$$v = \alpha s + \beta e + \text{\texteuro}$$

From the data (values) adopted by each of the three variables grouped in table 3, the calculation of the correlation was processed using Microsoft Office Excel. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 3

Data for the three variables: sales (v), followers (s) and scandals (e)

Year	Sales EUR million)	Followers on social networks (millions)	Repeated news of scandals
2014	11,594	27.85	64
2015	13,628	46.60	8
2016	15,394	43.54	61
2017	16,620	65.50	32
2018	18,021	80.30	161
2019	19,564	96.31	73
2020	14,129	106.17	42
2021	19,586	116.20	34
2022	23,761	130.79	23
2023	26,050	142.90	303

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from Figure 6.

Table 4 crosses the three categories of data (variables), so that the respective correlation coefficients can be understood.

Table 4
Correlation coefficients

Correlation coefficient	Sales (million euros)	Followers on social networks (millions)	Repeated news of scandals
Sales (€ million)	1.00	-	-
Followers on social networks (millions)	0.86	1.00	-
Repeated news of scandals	0.57	0.41	1.00

Note. Own elaboration (2024) from the Correlation Calculation in Excel of the data included in Table 3.

The statistical result for the decade analyzed (2014 to 2023 included) confirms that news of scandals increases the number of Zara followers on networks by 41%. These network followers are linked to sales increases of 86%. Hence, whether they buy in store or online, there is a strong relationship between the interest of followers regarding the launches and new garments observed on the network, and the final sales. It is concluded that the repetition of news about scandals could be correlated with a 57% increase in sales.

Conclusions and discussion

There is evidence of a tendency to scandal as a marketing strategy in textile fashion by the Zara brand from 2014 to 2023. The triangulation between sales revenue, scandal impact and number of followers measured year by year verifies a uniform growth trend from 2014 to 2023 and facilitates the deduction of its correlation.

The findings of this research allow us to demonstrate the starting hypotheses: the correlation between sales revenue, digital scandals and the number of followers. This is in contradiction with what Febra *et al.* (2023), mention, who indicate that the reputation is already known in advance by the investor or consumer. Therefore, the company should promote a trend of more reputation in all its elements. As seen, Zara's reputation manifests itself in the product; however, it can turn out to be a deceptive strategy in relation to social

networks. What the brand does coincides with what Ding *et al.* (2024) mention in relation to word-of-mouth advertising in an electronic form, which is reflected in each scandal and in the increase in the repetition of web news in internet traffic. Therefore, the phenomenon studied reveals the existence of a network society, in which the consumers will be the protagonist of advertising by acting as a disseminator of information and showing their commitment or rejection against the brand (Miranda *et al.,* 2015).

It is important to note that in contrast to Caro and Sicily (2013), although there may have been negative emotions, they did not distort the consumption pattern of buyers, "Controlled scandals" or "low intensity" that attract attention, but the company has never been attacked by a segment affected by the scandal that would lead to a boycott of its products or something similar. Thus, Zara has increased the level of sales annually, except in 2020 due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scandal is a digital marketing strategy that does not necessarily seek to generate a positive reaction in the followers. This shows that while the average Zara consumer can talk about the scandal and share it on social media, they are not actually negatively influenced by news related to the scandal. Rather, these types of events function as a brand relaunch between regular followers and potential new followers (captured by the wave of popularity generated). This is in line with De Obesso *et al.* (2012) regarding the fundamental role played by consumer loyalty to the brand. It also coincides with what López and Clemente (2023) demonstrated regarding the fact that the consumer satisfaction of Zara is fulfilled by the brand, highlighting the climax of satisfaction when the garment catches their attention. Hence, the product is ultimately what motivates consumption, while the scandal continuously positions the re-launch of the brand in the focus of the networks.

In that sense, over a decade, the scandal has served Zara to maintain consumer expectations, according to Del Olmo (2022). The brand has an audience that is loyal to its industry, but it requires to be the focus of attention regarding innovation, change, rupture. To achieve this, it is crucial to develop a strategy that involves identifying the ideal context (physical, temporal and cultural) using this advertising resource. In the networked society, the informative immediacy becomes a central axis in the distribution of the controversy. This is reflected, for example, in campaigns such as 2023, where Zara took advantage of the armed conflict between Israel and Gaza at the end of that year from a countercultural perspective, coinciding with the publicity preparation. In addi-

tion, a campaign was launched during the resumption of the armed conflict in December to demonstrate the use of controversial tactics with various approaches and distribution criteria depending on the scenario in which it takes place.

However, there are other types of audiences in which the scandal, although it puts the brand in everyone's focus, will represent a decrease in sales, as was the case in Asia, where after the launch of Chinese countercultural advertising in 2019, sales fell until 2023 by 6%. However, this slight cut may also have been largely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We agree with Margarida and Martins (2014) in the fact that the focus of the Zara brand should continue to be the use of social networks and web traffic for loyalty and not only for brand diffusion, in order to avoid further falls in followers.

It is suggested that a similar methodology (social network analysis) be applied to the study of other qualitative phenomena in the field of digital marketing, factorizing the qualitative variables; and using indicators, modeling the impact of the same on sales, as we have methodologically faced in these few pages, analyzing an eminently qualitative (sociological) phenomenon such as the marketing strategy of the scandal, developed on the network by Zara, belonging to the Inditex Group.

Fashion is a social construct in the original sense of the term coined by Berger and Luckman (1966) because it is a sociocultural phenomenon linked to identity, group membership and self-expression. It does not exist naturally, it is a collective construction with a cultural cut, it is not only clothing, accessories, makeup, hairstyle, etc. Fashion reflects the collective and individual tendencies of our own beliefs, values and positions in front of the collective; therefore, culturally rupturistic attitudes such as scandal as a marketing strategy in a fast fashion company has been worked so hard and methodologically in this article, because it leads to the questioning of reality, beyond the apparent limitations of the empirical experience.

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