

StitchFix Digital Marketing Analysis and Strategy

Marketing Brief

The target market for this social media campaign is Gen Z, especially those at the older end of that generational spectrum. Our objectives for this campaign include claiming the majority share of voice on Instagram, increasing engagement among Gen Z by 5%, and growing awareness of brand values by 10% on target platforms. We hope to accomplish these goals over the next six months.

To accomplish these goals, we intend to increase messaging around StitchFix's brand values of inclusivity and environmental responsibility, both of which resonate strongly with our target demographic.

Deliverables will include an improved brand voice that incorporates humor and references that Gen Z will find relatable and engaging. Additionally, there will be an increased focus on long- and short-form videos that can be edited and shared on multiple platforms. To help build StitchFix's share of voice on Instagram, we'll recommend increased use of User Generated Content (UGC) along with takeovers from relevant personalities. There will be a particular emphasis on educating consumers about the brand's values, as this has been notably absent from its social media up until now.

Based on our market research, we were able to develop an ideal marketing persona. We've also included a sample content calendar to help illustrate our plan. Finally, we've created a SWOT analysis table that briefly summarizes the current market landscape.

This strategy report comprises the elements necessary to launch a social media marketing campaign that will increase engagement from the desired demographic, a commanding share of voice on Instagram, and increased awareness of StitchFix's brand values.

Introduction

Gen Z is an untapped market for StitchFix. As we'll explore when we dive into our market research, this demographic has significant buying power in the fashion industry and a desire for personalized, individual looks. This fits in beautifully with StitchFix's curated, stylist-picked clothing selections, as well as its availability of products in a range of budgets.

Gen Z's interest in and allegiance to retail brands that support sustainable and environmentally-friendly initiatives also fits into business practices that StitchFix already has in place. Unlike some brands that could be accused of "greenwashing," which is the deceptive practice of branding a company as environmentally-friendly without adopting legitimate, sustainable operations" (Jahns, 2021), StitchFix truly walks the walk when it comes to its stated values.

The purpose of the strategy we've developed is to increase awareness of StitchFix both as a style brand and as an organization that shares the values embraced by Gen Z. We expect that with time this awareness will also surface potential brand ambassadors from this market who can further demonstrate StitchFix's dedication to inclusivity and equity.

The KPIs we intend to measure include engagement across Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat. We aim to increase overall engagement among Gen Z by 5% over the next six months. This growth is somewhat ambitious, but as these are the platforms and types of content this demographic tends to consume, it is achievable.

We also hope to increase awareness of the brand's stated values of equity and sustainability. Ideally, we'd like to see mentions of related keywords increase by 10% over six months.

Finally, we have a goal of claiming the majority of share of voice on Instagram. Currently, one of StitchFix's competitors, DAILYLOOK, is dominating on that platform. Again, we feel six months is a reasonable timeframe for this goal given the plan we've developed.

This marketing plan comes about at an exciting point in the lives of Gen Z as they navigate not only the start of their careers but also life in what is hopefully the post-pandemic United States. There is also a lot of attention focused on social issues such as diversity, mental health, body positivity, climate change, and sustainability concerns. Additionally, like most young professionals, money is a concern and even more so in the current uncertain economic climate.

Furthermore, it's a time of change for StitchFix itself, as it has begun to incorporate direct buying into its services in an attempt to "appeal to an even larger audience," according to founder Katrina Lake. After a rough second quarter in 2020, the brand is also reassessing its overall marketing strategy (Deighton, 2020).

Socially and Environmentally Positive Values

StitchFix's purpose is to "change the way people find clothes they love by combining technology with the personal touch of seasoned stylists." The brand aims to offer an online clothing shopping experience that is not only easy and convenient but entirely curated and personalized based on an individual's style, lifestyle, and budget.

The brand's two core values, Sustainability and Equity, are detailed on a prominent and dedicated page on their website, labeled "Social Impact." There, the company's vision statement is listed: "We create, deliver, and work toward a more sustainable and equitable world--inspiring and driving change across our industry and communities through our resources, influence and innovation." Below is a list of the actions StitchFix takes to uphold these values:

- Sustainability
 - Continually evaluates the employee working and environmental impact conditions of their vendors
 - Sources sustainable materials for their private label (for example, using cleaner cotton and recycled polyester)
 - Belongs to the 1% for the Planet initiative, in which a percentage of each purchase goes to charity
 - Uses a data-driven inventory management system to reduce product waste
 - Transitioned to 100% sustainable packaging

- Equity
 - Has a female founder and CEO; women make up 38% of technical roles, 62% of leadership roles, and 63% of the company's board
 - Is committed to increasing BIPOC members on the board and recently released comprehensive data on its company-wide representation
 - Dollar-for-dollar pay equity regardless of gender, race, or age
 - Offers universal parental leave and creation of Employee Relief Fund for staff struggling from effects of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Partners with and supporting charitable organizations such as the Atlanta Women's Foundation and Baby2Baby, as well as founded a grant mentorship program for BIPOC entrepreneurs in fashion

Both of these brand values, but especially sustainability, are critical to the new social/mobile strategy we propose in this report. We'll discuss how and why the brand should use these values in its strategy in that section.

In-Depth Market Research

Market Sketch

According to a recent Statista report, as of February 2017, most consumers with an active clothing subscription were Millennials, making up 28% of the market share (Shahbandeh, 2020). However, we feel that StitchFix has an opportunity to capture a younger generation of customers, specifically Gen Zers in the 18 to 24 age bracket. Given that the group reportedly commands \$143 billion in buying power-- nearly 40% of all consumer shopping--they make for an attractive target audience for StitchFix (The Shelf, 2020).

This demographic is very focused on aligning their purchasing decisions with the ethics of the companies they deal with. As McKinsey partner Bo Finneman explained in a company podcast last year, Gen Z shoppers are “looking beyond tangible products and actually trying to understand what it is that makes the company tick. What’s its mission? What’s its purpose? And what is it actually trying to build for us as a company?” (McKinsey Podcast, 2020). As such, StichFix’s dedication to sustainability and inclusivity should tick all of the boxes for this demographic.

Gen Z shoppers are also known to expect and be highly motivated by personalization. According to a Center for Generational Kinetics and WP Engine study, 75% of Gen Zers said they are more likely to buy a product if they can customize it (Aghadjanian, 2020). They are also more conscious of price and are likely to favor budget-friendly options. Jason Dorsey, a Gen Z consultant and researcher, notes that “they are very fiscally pragmatic and practical with their money. They are looking for value” (Hanbury, 2019). Not only does StitchFix’s service offer

consumers the ability to personally tailor and co-create their shopping experience, but it also does so at a relatively affordable price-point.

It also appears that last year's global health crisis might have created a situation that a brand like StitchFix could benefit from. A survey by Sitecore and Advanis found that 80% of Gen Z consumers are more willing to try new brands online since the COVID-19 pandemic. Since StitchFix is a purely web and app-based shopping experience, it's likely to appeal to these consumers.

This demographic frequently uses TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram as far as social media usage. In fact, about 22% of all TikTok users fall between the ages of 20 and 29 (App Ape, 2021). Generally speaking, individuals within this group also spend a lot of time consuming video content. A 2018 survey from Nielsen found that 18 to 34-year-olds watch about 90 minutes of online video weekly.

Given that peer acceptance heavily directs Gen Z's purchase habits--81% reportedly consider their friends' opinion to be a primary influence--generating positive conversation and peer reviews on social media would be essential to StitchFix successfully launching into a new category (Fromm, 2019).

According to a survey conducted by IRI, only 31% of female-presenting respondents from Gen Z stated that TV advertisements are likely to persuade them to buy a product. Print, radio, and billboard advertising were ranked even lower than this, which came in at 14%, 6%, and 4%, respectively (IRI, 2021). Furthermore, when it comes to discovering new brands, a study from Bloomberg found that 52% of respondents from Gen Z credit social media (Bloomberg, 2019).

Industry Challenges

StitchFix does have several existing competitors when it comes to styling services. Probably the most notable of these is Trunk Club which Nordstrom owns. According to the Trunk Club website, this subscription service is functionally similar to StitchFix, but there are some notable differences. First, the clothing selection is a bit more limited as only Nordstrom brands are represented in the service. Items are also significantly more expensive, ranging from \$50 to \$100. There also is no discount for keeping an entire trunk, which is something offered by StitchFix. Trunk Club also has a much different social audience than StitchFix, with about 80% of them being male and nearly 24% falling into the 18 to 24 age bracket (Trunk Club Social Audience Report). Compare this to StitchFix, whose social audience is comprised of nearly 90% females, most of whom are between 25 and 44 (StitchFix Social Audience Report).

Customer Persona



Name
Hannah

Job Title
PR Associate

Age
18 to 24 years

Highest Level of Education
Bachelor's degree

Industry
Public Relations

Biography

Hannah enjoys the experience of shopping, which has been upended by the pandemic. Not being able to try on clothes before committing to a purchase has made shopping somewhat challenging. While online shopping is the obvious solution, she misses being able to actually touch fabrics or see the vivid red of a dress against her particular skin tone. She does have disposable income, however, she's still just starting out and is hesitant to tie up cash ordering multiple sizes or colors of any one item with the intent of returning those she doesn't need. Additionally, because she has been working from home more and going out less, she has found that she has less of a need and can't always justify getting new items before it is absolutely necessary.

Hannah has specific values and tries her best to be a conscientious consumer, especially when it comes to social justice and environmental issues. When doing business with a brand for the first time, she'll often do some research into company values and the actions it takes to uphold them. She appreciates and is more likely to support brands that are transparent, genuine, and inclusive. The company website is often her first stop for this, or she may scan its social media pages to see if the information is readily available there.

In addition to values, she also appreciates when a brand treats her as an individual. She's savvy and recognizes when she's being sold to. She sees herself as unique and is at a point in her life where she is crafting her personal style. Perhaps even more than choosing brands that align with her values, she wants to work with brands that enable her to achieve her goal of expressing her truest self through her wardrobe, makeup, and overall style.

To accomplish this she often looks to friends and influencers on social media. She is generally quite active on multiple platforms, including Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and TikTok. She may even mix and match style inspiration from across her social network, never failing to put her own unique spin on it.

Goals or Objectives

- Building a professional and personal wardrobe that still reflects her unique personality and individual aesthetic.
- Giving her business to brands whose values align with her own.
- Wants the styling/shopping process to be relatively easy and convenient.
- Finding and following fashion and style influencers around her age whose tastes resonate with hers that she can borrow and draw inspiration from.
- While she follows some mega influencers, she prefers micro-influencers as she feels they're easier to engage with.
- Having her style choices validated by sharing on social media and receiving likes or positive comments in response.

Biggest Challenges

- The pandemic has made shopping a more difficult and distanced process.
- Limited disposable income.
- Wanting to align her shopping with her values, but not always being able to do extensive research.
- Wanting help with new inspiration and style suggestions, but concerned about it not being a collaborative process. It's important to her that her voice is heard and that she feels represented by what she's wearing.

Strategy

Following an audit of StitchFix's current social media content and strategy, it became apparent that the brand will need to make some adjustments to its approach to capture the Gen Z demographic. Specifically, the brand needs to focus on developing more content that highlights its core beliefs and improves interaction and engagement with consumers. StitchFix should diversify its content across channels to ensure optimization for the platform.

While StitchFix has made solid efforts to demonstrate its commitment to diversity and body positivity in its social media content--values that are important to this new target demographic--there has been minimal emphasis on the actions it takes to promote and contribute to sustainability in the fashion industry. This is a huge missed opportunity in terms of attracting and marketing to the Gen-Z audience, which is known to favor brands that support environmental responsibility. Per a 2020 report by First Insight, "73% of Gen Z consumers surveyed were willing to pay more for sustainable products, more than every other generation. And, despite being the younger cohort with many still in school, they were willing to spend the most in added costs, with 54% saying they would pay more than a 10% increase in price for a sustainably made product" (Jahns, 2021).

This audience's desire to support a brand based on its ethics was also reflected in interviews conducted with members of the demographic. One subject noted, "I generally feel better paying more money for a product coming from a business with which I identify or support." At the same time, another commented, "I like to do my own research to be sure. I prefer companies that support LGBTQ+ community and POC."

As such, we propose launching a social media content strategy centered around celebrating StitchFix's established brand values, with a particular emphasis on their sustainable

practices. Following this approach will appeal to this new, desirable target market and, importantly, help establish consumers' trust in and loyalty for the brand. This strategy embraces transparency, which is key to assisting consumers in developing brand trust. Per research by Reach Solutions, "58% of consumers don't trust a brand until they've seen 'real-world proof' that it's kept its promises" (Agius, 2019). StitchFix has already done the work as a company to act on and incorporate these values into business practices. Promoting them will not come across as inauthentic or performative but instead act as proof of authenticity.

This strategy aims to target women and men at the older end of the Gen Z spectrum who are beginning to enter the workforce and have slightly more disposable income to invest in their personal style. Although the brand has had a presence in the U.K. market since 2019, this strategy will be launched in the U.S., where the brand was founded in 2011.

To provide additional cultural and social context, according to a report from the Pew Research Center, this demographic is "already the most racially and ethnically diverse generation,". They care deeply about racial equality and climate change, and are considered "digital natives who have little or no memory of the world as it existed before smartphones" (Parker, Igielnik, 2020). The young professionals targeted in this strategy will include individuals who identify as sustainably conscious and environmentally friendly, as well as members of the BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and size-inclusive communities.

Platforms

StitchFix will launch this strategy across Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. As noted in the market research, these are the platforms on which this new target audience is most active. Each of these channels allows the brand to create the kind of engaging, entertaining short-form video and image-based content that Gen Z consumers gravitate towards. These

platforms are ideal for their ability to foster connectivity and easy, quick communication and encouraging users to express their creativity and individuality. All of these characteristics are important to this target market. Per social media expert and USC professor Karen North, “these apps' ongoing appeal is users can not only send texts and direct messages but also express themselves through videos and photos” (Collins, 2021).

Content

Of course, it will be important to ensure that content is designed for the specific platform on which it is published. For instance, YouTube is ideal for creating video content that is more educational and skills-building (i.e., “Fashion 411: Everything You Need to Know About Sustainable Materials,” or “5 Ways to Make Your Style More Eco-Friendly”). Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok are better for encouraging user engagement (i.e., interactive stories with polls and quizzes), creating a sense of community and individual connection (i.e., brand-generated hashtags), and promoting user-generated content (i.e. joining in on viral “challenges”).

In practice, this might involve creating an Instagram post featuring an entirely private label-styled outfit with text that reminds consumers how StitchFix sources the materials and the quality of the partners it works with. The post could introduce the hashtag #FixingFashionForTheFuture, and prompt consumers to share their favorite StitchFix private label looks or how they incorporate sustainability into their personal style.

On TikTok, the brand could participate in the “Same Style, Different Size” challenge, featuring models with two different body types wearing the same outfit to show the brand’s dedication to inclusivity and promoting body positivity.

Additionally, StitchFix may want to deploy slightly different content tailored to different regions of the United States. After all, when sweater weather has arrived in the Northeast, many people in the South are still in bathing suits and cutoffs.

Regarding the tone presented in the messaging, the brand voice should be fun, display a sense of humor, and come across as genuine and human. According to a National Retail Federation and IBM Institute for Business Value study, Gen Z tends to “value more cool and fun brands,” are “significantly more likely to believe their brands understand them as individuals,” and “wish to be actively engaged with brands” (p. 8). Additionally, as Portal et al. note in their paper on the role of brand authenticity and trust, “ascribing humanlike attributes to brands (brand anthropomorphism) has been found to enhance the perception of authenticity and the consumer’s ability to recognise the brand’s inherent values” (p.715).

This new direction would be a slight departure from the current tone being used in StitchFix’s social media, which can be categorized as light and friendly, but also conservative and business/sales-focused. During the social media audit, it was discovered that the brand does not engage much with consumers beyond responding to complaints using wording that seems canned and repetitive. This approach will have to change and become much more active and personalized to attract the Gen Z demographic.

It’s worth noting, too, that this strategy is not intended to be a complete overhaul that might alienate the brand’s current audience. In some cases, it will be possible for the brand to retain familiar post formats, such as asking consumers which among a selection of outfits they prefer for a given activity. But instead of the activity being “date night” or “brunch with the girls,” it could be something more Gen Z-centric, like going to a local music festival or craft show.

In theory, the shift to focus more on sustainability and equity shouldn't cause much, if any, conflict with the existing Millennial audience. While their purchases and brand choices may not be as directly motivated by values the way Gen Z's are, these certainly aren't issues they're opposed to. The additional content from this new strategy stands to benefit both audiences, as the audit revealed that the brand's current social media content model was too repetitive and not as broad and robust as it could be.

In launching this strategy, it would benefit the brand to remember the rule of thirds and the important best practices principle to not make the content too much about oneself. Yes, this strategy is about promoting the brand's values and practices, but it should strive to do so by incorporating the voices of others and consumers as much as possible.

Some specific tactics we suggest are:

- Engage with the audience to develop a genuine relationship.
- Use social polls and quizzes to ask followers how they feel about sustainable fashion or find out what they do to incorporate it into their personal style.
- Create a video that spotlights how StitchFix sources sustainable materials, and shout out a couple of other fashion brands doing good work in this area.
- Share a post or video about the brand's Elevate program, which supports early-stage BIPOC-owned apparel companies, and allow grant winners to host a content takeover on a brand channel.

Needed Resources

Ideally, the team directing this strategy will include some members from the target generation, as well as representation from diverse racial, gender, body type and lifestyle backgrounds. In the interest of keeping the strategy messaging authentic and genuine, and again,

establishing brand trust, it is essential that its developers accurately reflect the values that are being promoted by the brand. In fact, a direct link between brand authenticity and brand trust was found in a 2018 study by Portal et. al.

Naturally, the team should include social media and marketing professionals who specialize in customer engagement, brand awareness, brand trust, video editing and production, and social listening. Additionally, it could benefit the brand to take a more holistic approach to strategy development and deployment, sourcing input from different departments throughout the business who might have unique perspectives because they see and experience customers at different touchpoints along the purchase journey. This could include insight from the customer service team, UX designers, data analysts, and stylists.

In terms of additional resources, the brand will need to enlist the help of micro-influencers to promote the strategy launch. While StitchFix does currently feature “real people” ambassadors and stylists in their social content, it will be important to specially recruit Gen Z talent who are established and trusted for their perspectives on sustainability, equity, and diversity.

Goals and KPIs

The brand will also need to use Hootsuite and Brandwatch. We’ll be using these tools, among others, mainly native metrics from each platform, to monitor progress on our goals and KPIs. The impact of this strategy will be tracked using a combination of tools and techniques:

- We’ll be tracking engagement, including likes, shares, and comments, using the discrete platforms’ native analytics. We’ll also take advantage of Hootsuite’s monitoring capabilities and report generation to fill in any gaps in the data. These metrics will help us measure progress toward our 5% increase in engagement among Gen Z.

- Brandwatch’s social listening feature will be integral to monitoring our progress toward overtaking DailyLook on Instagram. Our goal here is to have the majority share of voice on this platform.
- Finally, we’ll use Hootsuite for social monitoring to determine our success in increasing discussion around brand values by 10%.

Sample Editorial Calendar

Below is a sample social/mobile editorial calendar for StitchFix implementing the above-mentioned new strategy. Note that this is not intended to reflect the entire weekly calendar for the brand on these channels, but rather how content supporting this new initiative could be incorporated into the existing calendar. This sample shows two weeks’ worth of potential ideas, but the aim is for content supporting this strategy to be introduced on a regular, ongoing basis.

It should also be noted that this content is primarily intended to be featured on the primary StitchFix account for that channel if there are multiple pages. For example, on Instagram, this would mean mostly posting to the main StitchFix page, rather than the StitchFix Men’s subaccount, unless the content is appropriate for that page. As much as possible, the talent featured in these strategy-driven posts should reflect the target consumer (i.e., Gen Z and diverse in terms of style, lifestyle, ethnicity, and gender).

	Title/Message	Platform	Topic	Day/Time
Wk. 1				
	How to Make More Sustainable Fashion Choices - presented in trending/viral video challenge format	Instagram Reel	Sustainability	Tue. 2PM
	“Same Style, Different Size”: 5 Favorite Fall Festival Looks for Men and Women	TikTok	Equity/Body Positivity	Sun. 8AM

	Announcing discount on private label items, explain proceeds giveback program, introduce branded filter	Snapchat	Sustainability/ Promo Code	Wed 12AM
	Behind the Unboxing: What Goes into Sustainable Packaging	YouTube	Sustainability	Fri 12PM
Wk. 2				
	Show us your favorite SF private label pieces! UGC, explain how private label is made (materials, production)	Instagram Story	Sustainability/UGC	Thur. 11AM
	“My Style Journey”/”What’s in My Closet” with BIPOC, Plus-Sized micro-influencer	TikTok	Equity/Body Positivity	Tue. 9AM
	#SustainableSaturdays: 7 Fabrics We’re Obsessed With	Snapchat	Sustainability/Brand Show/Q&A/Polls	Sat. 10PM
	Behind the Scenes with Elevate Grant applicant	YouTube	Equity	Mon. 3PM

Bigger Picture

StitchFix does run several television ads. However, based on our market research, we don’t think this is the best way to reach Gen Z. As discussed, this demographic is far more likely to gather information on a brand through its social media presence.

However, one tactic that StitchFix should consider is including information about its environmental efforts on its shipping boxes. According to the Sustainability section of StitchFix’s website, the size and weight of its boxes have been reduced by as much as 25%. In addition, the packaging is made with recycled materials. Paper supply chains are also free of material from Ancient and Endangered forests. Unfortunately, these sustainability efforts aren’t called out in the current packaging.

Key Issues

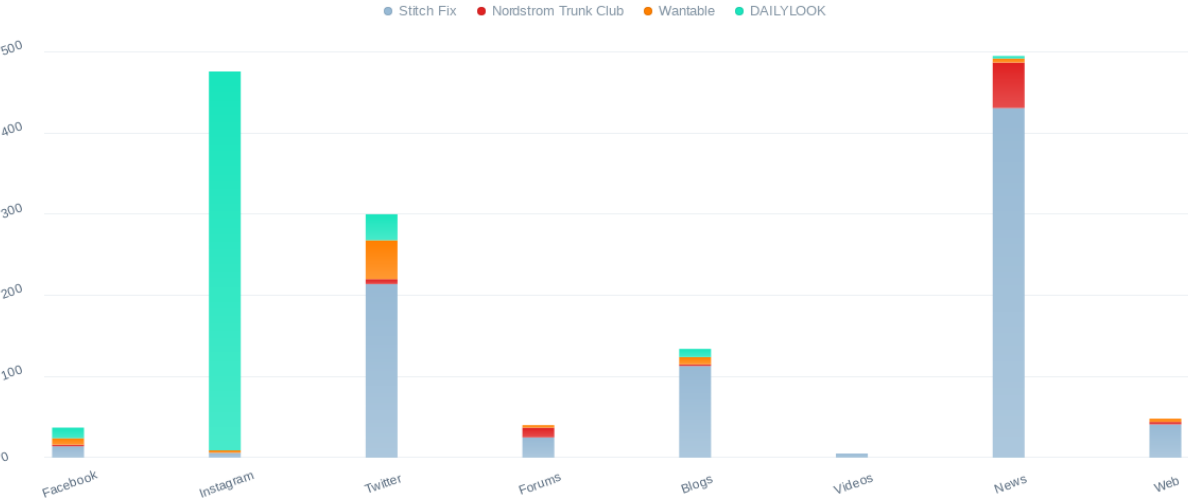
Internal Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strong social and environmental values● Relatively affordable and flexible in comparison to competitors	Internal Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lack of variety across social media posts and platforms● Little strategic discussion of brand values on social media platforms
External Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">● COVID-19 pandemic has created a necessity for new ways of shopping● Gen Z commands significant buying power● Competitors have also been slow to embrace video content, which Gen Z frequently consumes	External Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Competition from Nordstrom TrunkClub, Wantable and DAILYLOOK● DAILYLOOK has a commanding foothold on Instagram (see Appendix A).

Conclusion

To conclude, Gen Z presents an untapped opportunity for StitchFix to expand into a new market while simultaneously showcasing its dedication to inclusivity and sustainability. The appeal of this values-driven strategy is that it positions the company to capture a share of the substantial buying power this demographic holds without rebranding or adjusting business practices and alienating its current audience.

Introducing its social impact efforts into its social media marketing will help the brand foster deeper trust and a sense of community with its consumers. It establishes the company as a transparent and authentic leader in the online fashion retail industry, which will lead to increased success and growth in the future.

Appendix A



Social media mention sources from June 23 - July 22, 2021.

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