



THE VIRAL

How can start-up streetwear brands in London promote themselves in a new age of digital marketing?

PATH

DYLAN LIAM DIXON RESEARCH FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT CREATIVE DIRECTION FOR FASHION 2 0 2 3

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Fig 2. Photography by Palace



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How can start-up streetwear brands in London promote themselves in a new age of digital marketing?

**“CULTURE MOVES AT A
CRAZY PACE.”**

- Virgil Abloh

KEY TERMS

SENSORY SEEKERS

Consumers who want to get back in-store again, they're looking for new experiences and high-sensorial moments.

GUERRILLA MARKETING

An advertisement strategy in which a company uses surprise and/or unconventional interactions in order to promote a product or service.

VIRALITY

A phenomenon wherein content, products, or ideas spread rapidly and widely through online platforms, such as social media, email, and websites.

FASHION COMMUNITY

A group of people with similar morals and beliefs who unite through their love for a certain style of clothing or brand.

IRL

An abbreviation meaning 'In Real Life'.

Fig 3. Photography from Carhartt WIP FW23



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

How can start-up streetwear brands in London promote themselves in a new age of digital marketing?

I decided on this question for two reasons. Firstly, I've always had an interest in marketing and brand strategy. I am always intrigued to see how brands use their own marketing materials to find and engage with their audiences. I was lucky enough last year to take part in an internship on the brand team of London based fashion brand, Ahluwalia. This experience taught me the importance of brand image, particularly on social media. I feel like I could see myself operating inside the brand design space once I've left university.

Secondly, the world of streetwear ignited my initial love for fashion. I'm a frequent reader of publications like Hypebeast and Highsnobiety and take a lot of inspiration for my own practice as a graphic designer and photographer from the streetwear sector.

I remember being sixteen and conceptualising our own brand of streetwear with me and my friends, it never materialised into anything more than a few sketches of track jackets and camera straps but I saw this project as an exciting

opportunity to find out what challenges would've awaited us had we decided to pursue the concept further.

My favourite streetwear brands are primarily based in NYC but after seeing the waves made by London based brands like Palace and Corteiz, it made me realise that London had a place in streetwear that I had to explore more.

Who are the brands leading London's streetwear scene?

How are these brands coping in a new, digitally-driven world?

Where is London's streetwear scene headed?



ENQUIRY DOCUMENT

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PART ONE | CONTEXT

RATIONALE

Fig 5. Photography by AboveGround



Throughout this project, I intend to widen my understanding of the current streetwear scene in London. I intend to study secondary resources, such as videos, imagery, articles and other forms of literature to get a better idea of how successful streetwear brands have utilised the digital space, in particular social media, to widen and discover their audience.

I also wish to get a better understanding of the difficulties in owning or starting a streetwear brand in London. I will gain this understanding by interviewing people who are currently undergoing the task of running a brand. As well as this, I will refer back to my experience on the Ahluwalia brand team to further inform my research question.

I will use both primary and secondary research in the hope of developing three foresights that I feel not only reflect the future of streetwear but also the future of branding and content creation.

DRIVERS

OVERSATURATED MARKET

PRICEY PRODUCTION

CONTENT OVERLOAD

INSIGHTS

POWER OF THE COMMUNITY

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS CHANGED MARKETING

FLEETING ATTENTION SPAN

FORESIGHTS

RISE OF THE SENSORY SEEKERS

THE FALL OF THE BIG PLAYERS

THE VIRAL PATH

DRIVERS



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DRIVER ONE | **OVERSATURATED MARKET****THE PARTY IS PACKED!**

Starting and promoting a streetwear brand has become incredibly convenient thanks to social media. It has empowered creators to connect directly with their audience and foster brand growth through content creation and digital marketing. Initially, this might seem like an advantage for London-based fashion brands. However, **the ease of online posting has led to a saturated digital fashion market, presenting a new challenge.**

How does a brand get its voice heard in such an overpopulated space?

This is a real struggle for new brands that lack a large marketing budget or publicity in the mainstream fashion world.

It is more important than ever to create cost-effective yet engaging content for your audience to raise the profile of your brand.

Fig 7. Photography by AboveGround



DRIVER ONE | OVERSATURATED MARKET

“Brands that have not been in the streetwear sector for many years will struggle to connect with their customer base. Streetwear consumers generally possess a deeper appreciation for the history of the market and brand positioning.”

- Streetwear Impact Report, HypeBeast

I feel that this quote perfectly illustrates the importance of standing out in an oversaturated streetwear market. The giant's of streetwear still have a firm grip on the majority of the market and smaller brands **don't have the budget to help illustrate their legitimacy in the space.**

There are very few streetwear giants but there is an abundance of small streetwear brands. **If the smaller brands are unable to position themselves correctly they will struggle to reach a consumer base big enough to compete.**

[< BACK TO BLOG HOME](#)

The Growth of Streetwear Isn't Slowing Down

By [Isis Darks](#) — 5 years ago in [Trends](#)

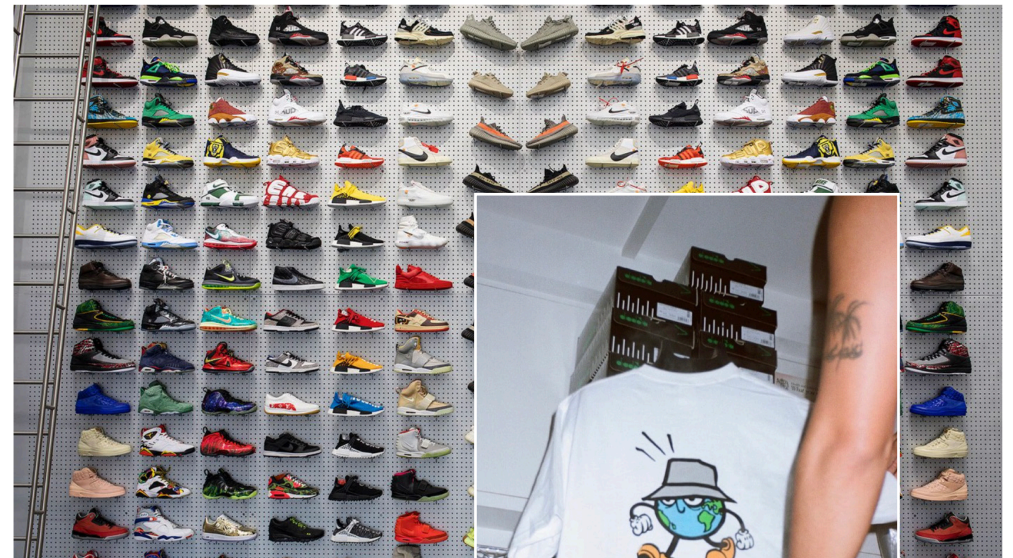


Fig 10. Photography by Palace



DRIVER TWO | PRICEY PRODUCTION

MAKING CLOTHES IS EXPENSIVE!

There's no money left for marketing.

An article from Vogue Business describes how clothing production costs in 2023 'Could Ruin Us All' showing that, for some brands in the current economic landscape, **marketing has become an afterthought of production.** After all, there's no point promoting what you are selling if you don't have anything to sell.

However, it is more crucial than ever that brands cause a buzz online, current day examples like Corteiz, Palace and Aime Leon Dore show how a well thought out **digital marketing strategy can be the catalyst for mainstream success.**

DRIVER TWO | PRICEY PRODUCTION

“I had a London based manufacturer but it didn’t work out because it was too expensive for a start-up...”

“Other than the manufacturing challenges, a big challenge I’m facing is not having a huge following and not having a network of influencers that other competing brands have.”

- Extract from my interview with David Oades

This quote details how manufacturing challenges often come alongside the challenge to promote your brand effectively.

(APPENDIX 2.1)

DRIVER THREE | CONTENT OVERLOAD

ARE YOU REALLY GOING VIRAL?

The average internet user spends nearly 7 hours online daily. Apps like Tik Tok and Instagram have designed their UI and algorithm to try and pack as much different content into those 7 hours as possible.

Amidst the vast sea of millions of posts, small streetwear brands face a challenge in creating a buzz and maintaining positive exposure. Consumers now decide in a split second whether they engage with content, making it more critical than ever for brands to establish an instant connection.

The internet space has changed, “going viral” is no longer some kind of supernatural phenomenon. TikTok, in particular, rewards content creators, allowing many small accounts to accumulate over a million views on their posts. However, these numbers no longer reflect the same level of success as they once did.

The world is becoming numb to numbers as it seems it is now easier to get a million views than 1000 genuinely interested followers.

Globally, people spend two hours, 31 minutes on social media every day, up 2% YoY with 4.76bn users logged on, representing 59.4% of the total population. It's clear that lives are increasingly moving online, where lifestyles are intertwined with platforms, rewriting how users view and exist in the world.



Need to know: consumer attention spans are shrinking, with the average internet user spending nearly seven hours online, when they are bombarded with ads. Shoppers are looking for spaces they can experience genuine connection rather than mindless scrolling; 70% of UK Gen Z seek community for a sense of belonging to combat loneliness.

DRIVER THREE : CONTENT OVERLOAD

“Endless scrolling and subscriptions, non-stop media, 24/7 connection, the pressure to hustle and grind. Things do not “go viral” anymore, everything is viral by nature.”

- Thomas Gorton,
Editorial Director, Parley for the Oceans

PART TWO | FINDINGS



INSIGHTS AND FORESIGHTS

DYLAN LIAM DIXON

RESEARCH FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT

CREATIVE DIRECTION FOR FASHION

2023

INSIGHT ONE | FLEETING ATTENTION SPAN

MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE?

In today's London, social media reigns supreme, fueled by platforms like Instagram and TikTok that **thrive on visual content and shorter attention spans.** This shift is actually beneficial for London-based startups.

Gone are the days of expensive TV ad campaigns. A simple five second long video featuring a product, a catchy tune, and a relatable caption can outperform costly TV ads.

Yet, in this era of fleeting attention, brands must consistently engage their audience to avoid slipping into obscurity.



“Gen Z loses active attention for ads after just 1.3 seconds—less time than any other age group.”

- A study by Yahoo and OMD Group

“Attention must be earned in an instant.”

- Paul Verna,
Marketing Analyst, Insider Intelligence



INSIGHT TWO | SOCIAL MEDIA HAS CHANGED MARKETING

MARKETING IS DIFFERENT NOW.

The streetwear world thrives on defying norms. **In the digital age, standing out in this saturated space is crucial.**

Guerrilla marketing has proven highly effective for London's streetwear scene. **It's community-focused, cost-efficient, and involves creatively utilizing the audience's environment.** This approach suits budget-conscious fashion brands, cultivating a sense of exclusivity among their audience.

For instance, when Corteiz offered cargo trousers for just 99p (which you could buy from a secret location if you brought payment in exact change), it triggered a social media sensation. People eagerly searched London for these exclusive items, **sparking curiosity among the uninitiated and fostering a strong sense of community among existing followers.**

Corteiz's marketing strategies define streetwear coolness. It's all about exclusivity and sending a message of 'if you know, you know'.

If you're not familiar with Corteiz, it might be by design.

INSIGHT TWO | **SOCIAL MEDIA HAS CHANGED MARKETING**

London's emerging streetwear startups can draw inspiration from Corteiz's innovative and budget-friendly "performance art" campaigns to shape their own marketing strategies.

Guerrilla marketing, at its core, revolves around leveraging one's surroundings to gain exposure. Brands could do something as simple and cost effective as creating provocative QR code stickers and strategically placing them around the city in an attempt to generate website visits or they could take the concept further, putting on sample sales or creating a pop-up store to **engage with and find new consumers.**

"DA GREAT BOLO EXCHANGE PROVES CORTEIZ DOES RULETHEWORLD."

- Stella Hughes for Culted

Miatta Coomber

Why Corteiz's Bolo Exchange Was Modern Day Performance Art [Featured Article]



INSIGHT TWO | SOCIAL MEDIA HAS CHANGED MARKETING

“I actually feel grateful for the digital landscape because I think with the money and resources that I have I wouldn’t have been able to do it without social media.”

- Extract from my interview with Neve Cherry

This quote details the opportunity that social media presents to small London-based fashion brands.

(APPENDIX 3.1)

INSIGHT THREE | **POWER OF THE COMMUNITY.****CONSUMERS ARE SEEKING BELONGING.**

The increasing emphasis on diversity in the fashion industry has led to a more niche-oriented consumer landscape. This shift may be one of the factors contributing to the decline of streetwear giants like Supreme and Stussy, as smaller independent brands gain ground.

While large brands aim to cater to a broad audience, the diverse nature of streetwear consumers has driven many to seek out smaller labels that offer a more individualistic voice and a community that better aligns with their own personality.

Establishing a strong brand ethos that resonates with people and garners their support is essential.

Today's most successful brands uphold genuine values and maintain clear aesthetics. **During my internship with the London-based fashion brand Ahluwalia, I learned the importance of creating content focused on our community rather than just our products.** To succeed, your brand must cultivate a distinctive brand personality, recognizing that the brand's overall image transcends the garments it produces, forming a vital connection with consumers. **Social media provides a significant opportunity to express and communicate this brand personality.**



INSIGHT THREE | A WALK AROUND SOHO (ETHNOGRAPHY)

Soho, London is an epicentre for streetwear, with retail spaces for Axel Arigato, Supreme, Stussy and Aime Leon Dore all being in the area. The reason why I'm placing this ethnography in this section of the document is because walking around the area provided me with evidence that I felt backed up my insight on the importance of carving out your brand's community.

Stussy, Supreme and Palace all had queues waiting out the front of their stores, I took note of the amount of people I could see wearing baggy cargos and skate shoes as I went past. I estimated that it was around 70% of the consumers in line. It was clear that these people were connected, not only

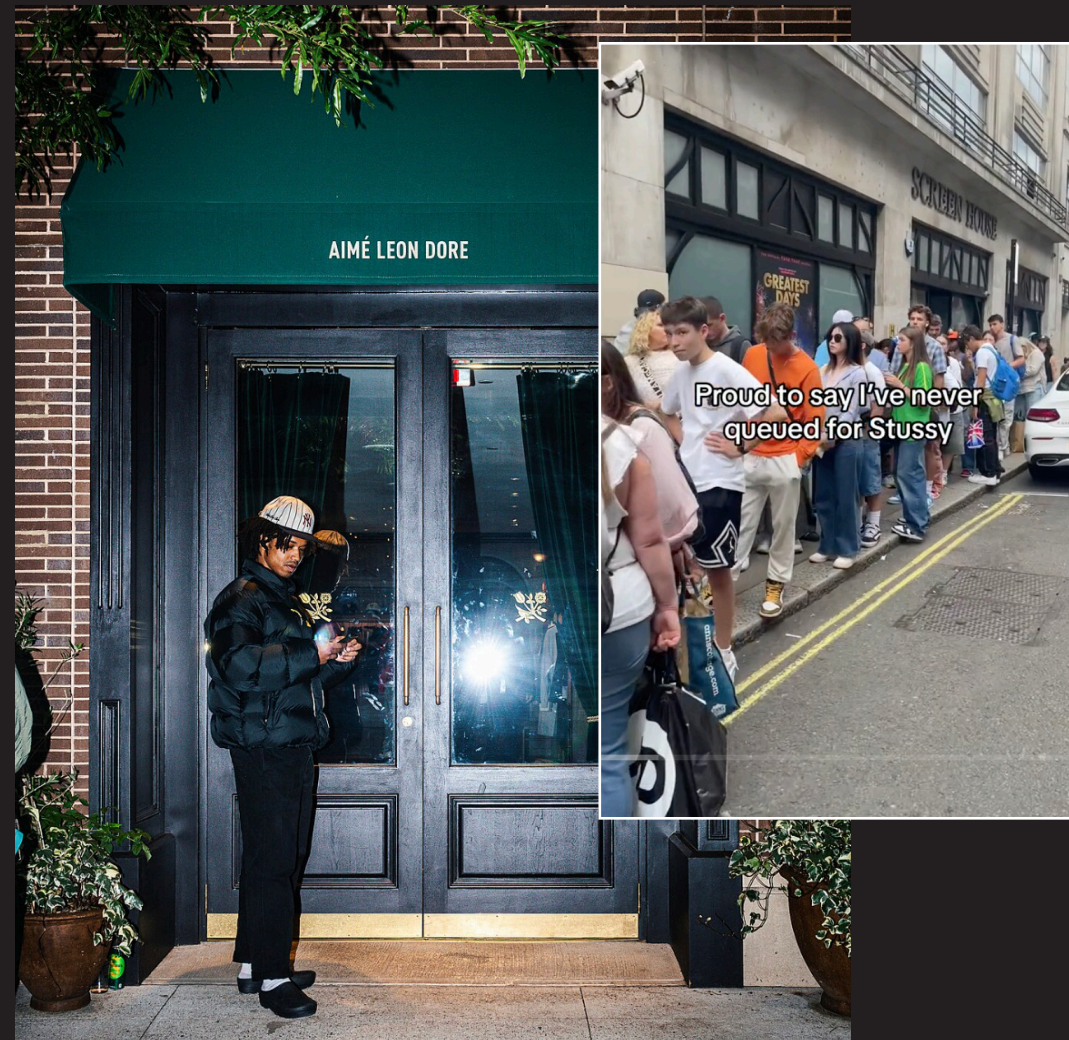
by a lust for exclusivity and high-end garments, they were also linked by their aesthetics and interests.

Aime Leon Dore on the other hand had no line outside of their store but instead, a line outside of their coffee shop 'Cafe Leon Dore' that is connected to the space. The sense of community here felt incredibly strong, 90's hip-hop music was playing in the background as young people wearing trousers, loafers and New York Yankee baseball caps sipped from ALD green coffee cups.

ALD rejected the concept of a traditional retail space to ensure community stayed at the centrepiece of their brand.

“With Aimé Leon Dore, Teddy Santis has created a clubhouse, only there's no password needed for entry.”

- Mike Destafano for Complex



**70% of UK Gen Z seeks community
through social media, spending
nearly 7 hours online daily.**

- WGSN Insights Team

FORESIGHT ONE | **RISE OF THE SENSORY SEEKERS**

THERE'S A DESIRE FOR THE DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL TO MERGE.

WGSN noticed a rising trend in consumers seeking an IRL shopping experience. This could be an effect of the inside isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic or due to us spending more time than ever in the digital space.

They define these consumers as 'Sensory Seekers' and I believe this audience is one that streetwear brands should look to engage with.

We have seen examples of the digital space being used in harmony with the physical many times already. Corteiz and Supreme have both used social media to "leak" passwords or locations that then lead consumers to IRL activations and outside of the streetwear world, many London-based musicians have used social media as a way of letting fans know about secret performances happening in the city.

There is definitely a call for brand activations like pop-ups, sample sales, panel talks etc. but it is also more important than ever that these activations are **out of the box ideas, niche and most importantly "instagramable"**.

If an activation can involve some kind of product or imagery fit for social media, whether this be a complimentary branded coffee cup, a pack of stickers or some other kind of 'gift' for those who attended, they will see an even bigger overall engagement as **many consumers will photograph the gift and put it on their socials, creating organic brand exposure.**



FORESIGHT ONE | RISE OF THE SENSORY SEEKERS

HOW DOES THIS HELP START-UPS IN LONDON?

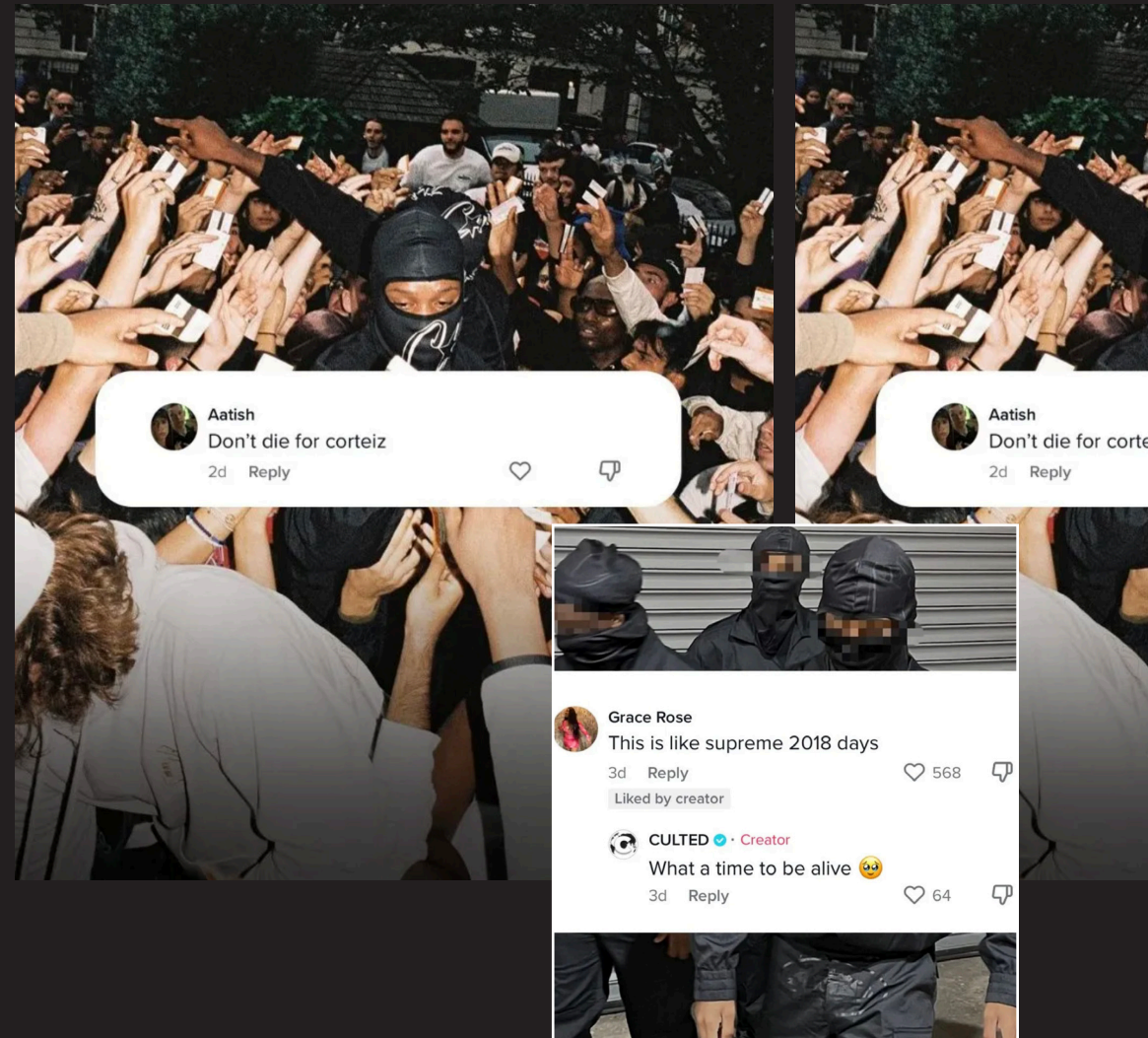
IRL activations don't have to be absurdly expensive. If branded correctly, you can make a very big impact on a small budget. Corteiz gave out just 50 pairs of cargo trousers for 99p at an IRL activation and **received over a million online impressions as well as significant blog coverage from big names like Complex and Highsnobiety.**

This is a very worthwhile investment and even if a brand isn't in the financial position to give out garments for free, it is at least proof that if an activation is unique and branded well on instagram it can have a hugely positive effect on overall brand engagement. As well as this, it ensures that you are reaching real people. Often, small brands can throw a lot of money into generating numbers on social media but **high numbers does not equate to high numbers of genuine followers.**

IRL activations ensure that you are reaching a genuinely engaged audience.

“London has become a hub for IRL events and experiences that bring communities together.”

- WGSN Insights Team



FORESIGHT TWO: THE FALL OF THE BIG PLAYERS

WE WANT OUR INTERESTS TO BE REPRESENTED.

There is two things about potential streetwear consumers that may affect the big players in streetwear. **One is a desire to be represented as part of a specific niche-interest group**, (Indeka, LSN) the other is a new found **desire for transparency and a sustainable, well-paid supply chain.**

Small brands can capitalise on this shift in consumer mentality by showcasing the process behind their garments, **not only does this make for great social media content but gives consumers an insight into your brand's ethos.**

It's also more important than ever for streetwear brands to have a **clearly defined target audience** that they're trying to connect to. The big brand's are already catering to those who want to be part of the majority.

“Streetwear's business model can adapt to a culture that cares less about novelty with short lifecycles and cares a little bit more about sustainability.”

- Isabelle Jones, Junior Strategist, Highsnobiety



FORESIGHT TWO | THE FALL OF THE BIG PLAYERS

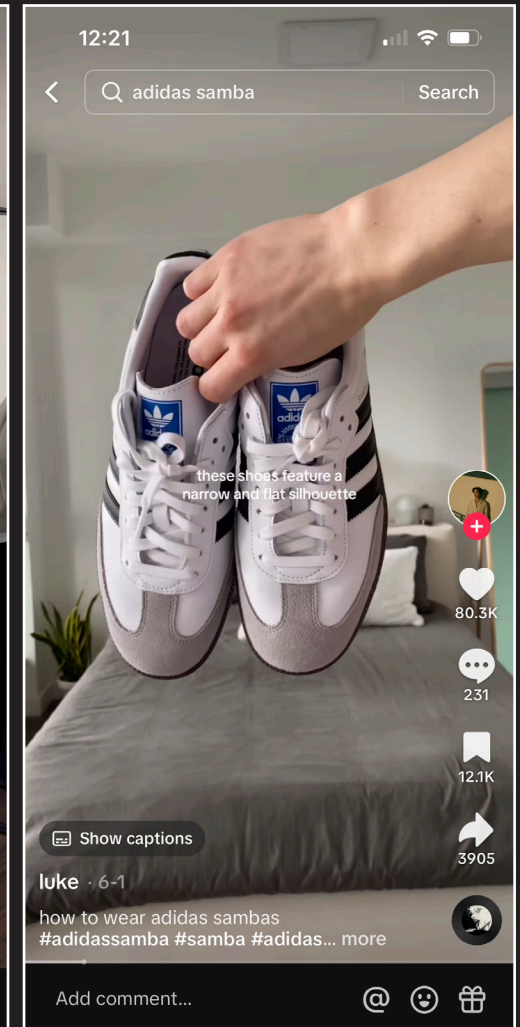
Although the big players appear to be falling victim to the **hype and transparency generated by smaller brands**, it's worth pointing out that only a few streetwear brands have stood the test of time and been consistently followed for decades.

Supreme, Stussy and BAPE have been big names in the space for over 25 years, an abnormally long time in the streetwear sector where fast changing trends can kill a brand's momentum.

Small brands are finding their feet through capitalising on or creating internet fashion trends, for example Birkenstocks and Adidas Sambas have been having a moment in the spotlight. 'Streetwear influencers' have been going viral, showcasing how they're styling their shoes within their outfits. Smaller, independent brands have found success by showcasing how their garments look when paired with these shoes.

Although this method has definitely created success for many brands it forces the question: **Can a small brand generate longevity off of capitalising on short term trends?**

SMALL STREETWEAR BRANDS IN LONDON CAN FOLLOW TRENDS TO FIND SUCCESS BUT THEY NEED TO TRANSCEND THEM TO FIND THE KIND OF LONGEVITY THAT BAPE, SUPREME AND STUSSY HAVE.



A new wave of independent brands are taking over, such as London-based 'Corteiz', Ghanaian brand 'Free The Youth' and Dutch label 'Daily Paper'.

- LSN Global, The State of Streetwear 2023 Report

FORESIGHT THREE | THE VIRAL PATH

The path to success is a path paved by virality.

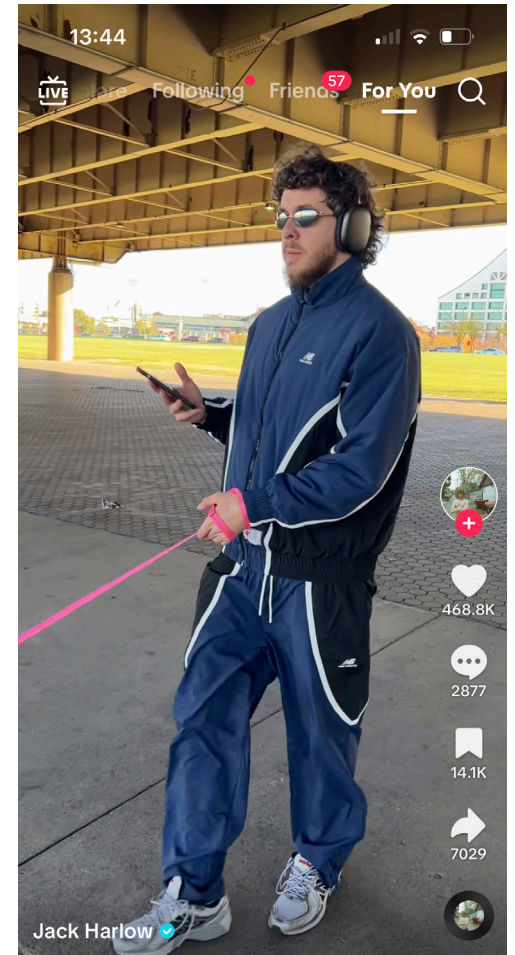
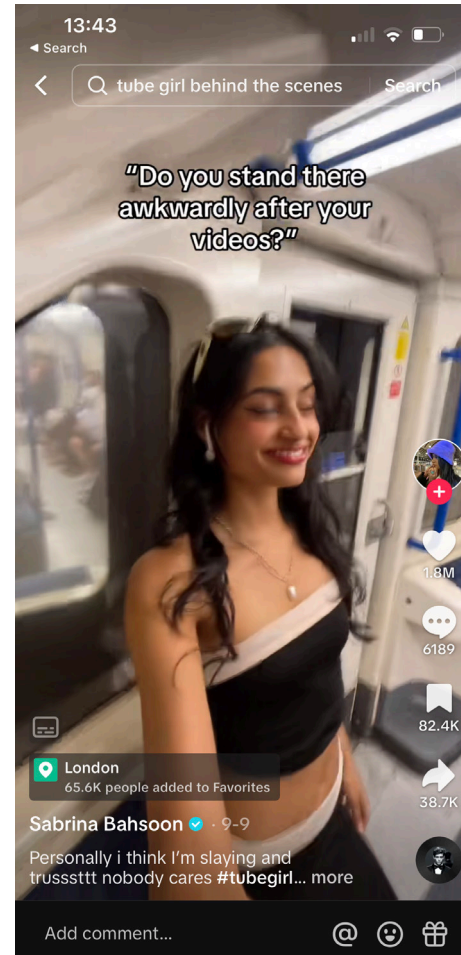
This foresight is my most abstract but it is perhaps the most important to note.

The key to successful brand promotion lies in the digital domain, where social media stands as the ultimate marketing powerhouse. People constantly devour social media content, and the platforms' algorithms are growing increasingly sophisticated.

Before Tik Tok emerged, **the Western world believed it had all the bases covered in the social media game.** Snapchat provided short videos, YouTube handled long-form content, Instagram showcased images, Twitter hosted thoughts, WhatsApp connected people, and Facebook served as the central hub. **No one could have predicted the profound impact of the Chinese rebrand from Musical.ly to Tik Tok on the social media landscape and internet culture.**

“TikTok’s success can simply be attributed to how it flips what we think of as social media on its head, while at the same time returning us all to roots of the original appeal—the ability to go viral.”

- Tom Taulli, Forbes



FORESIGHT THREE | THE VIRAL PATH

My foresight is that if Tik Tok could completely change the social media sector, another app could do it again.

There are articles hypothesising that there will be a rise in **niche-orientated social media platforms or even decentralised brand-owned platforms**. I am unsure to the legitimacy of these claims as of yet but one thing is for certain:

Small brands must stay up to date with changes in the social media world in order to capitalise on them as quickly as possible.

Many brands are kicking themselves that they didn't foresee Tik Tok's success before it became the highly saturated space it is today. **Small brand's need to try and make sure they don't shy away from expanding into new platforms.**

FORBES > INNOVATION > CONSUMER TECH

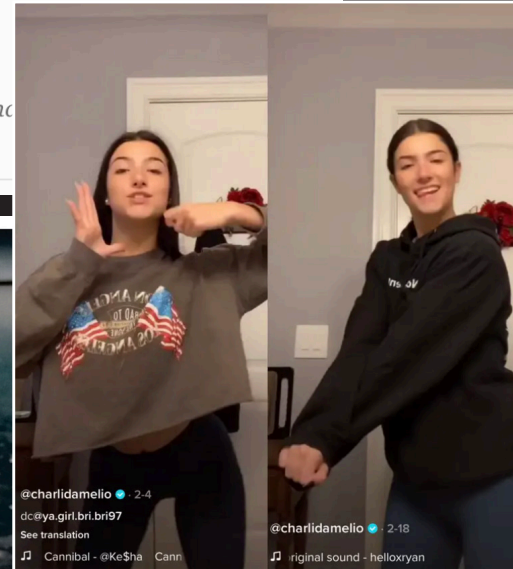
The Future Of Social Media Will Be Special Interest Focused

Tim Bjarin Contributor

I write about tech industry's impact on the PC and markets.



Elon Musk, the man who paid \$44 billion so more people would look at his memes. Via Wikimedia Commons



What is Mastodon, and could it really be the 'Twitter killer'?

FINDINGS ANALYSIS

Through my research a few things stood out to me in particular, one was that **the streetwear space is more diverse than ever before**. The digital space is aiding in this diversification and therefore, it's more important than ever for small start-ups to find their community within this space.

To succeed in the digital space, smaller brands must create engaging content. They need to create unique marketing strategies in order to create buzz over the bigger players who have a grip on the majority of the streetwear market in London.

Brand activations that merge both the physical and digital spaces have had a very positive effect on engagement for a number of London based brands. The concept of merging both spaces is something that should be explored further.

Finally, in a world with so many niche-orientated communities there comes a call for **niche-orientated brands**. Small brands will find success through showcasing their **individuality and defining a clear aesthetic**.

Successful brands will evolve around their community and then find their community will evolve around their brand.





COLLECTION OF RESEARCH

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RESEARCH FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT

CREATIVE DIRECTION FOR FASHION

2 0 2 3



PART THREE: CASE STUDIES

SAM YOUKILIS

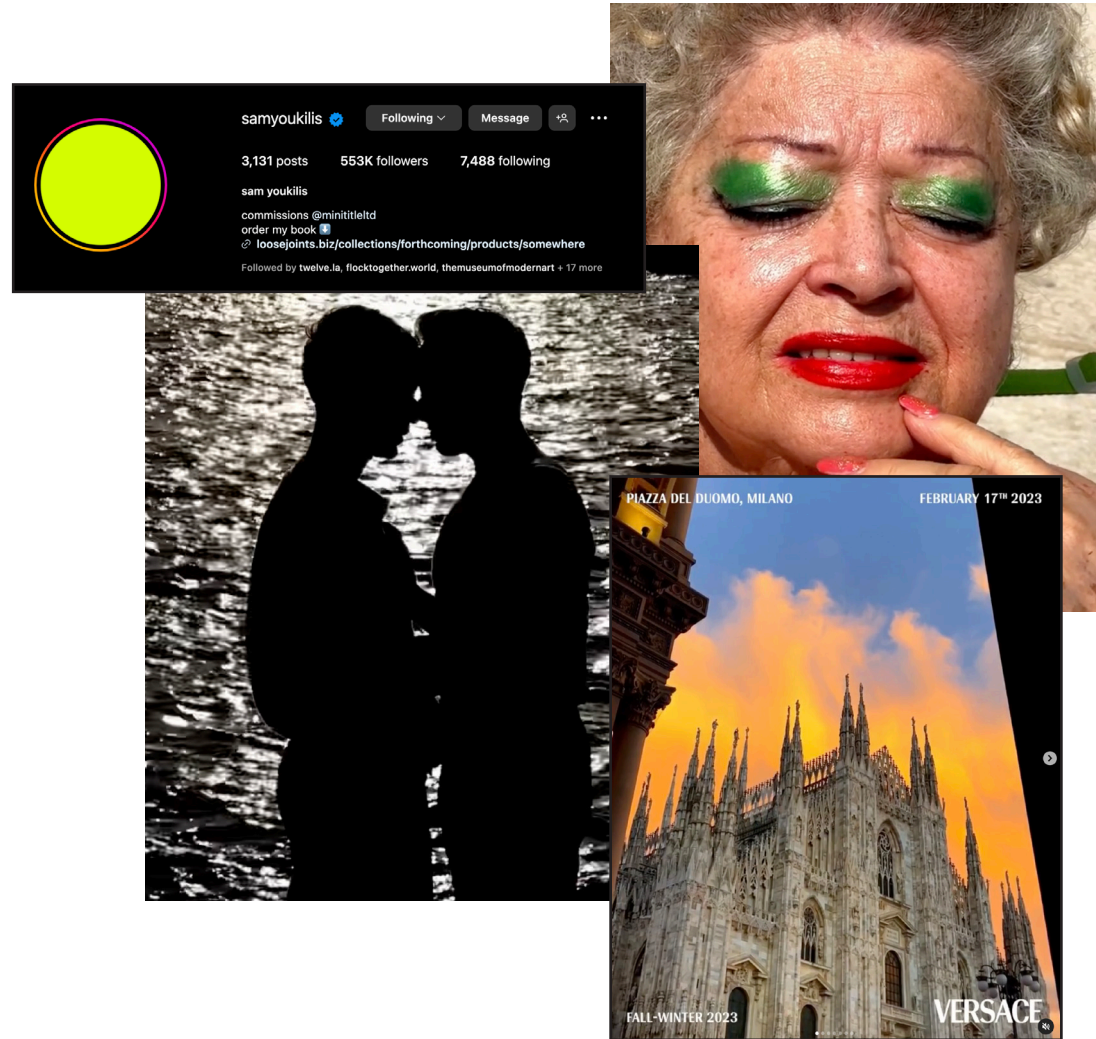
THE KEY TO TOP QUALITY MARKETING MATERIALS IS IN YOUR POCKET.

Sam Youkilis is a photographer with over 500k instagram followers. He has worked with huge brands like **Jaquemus** and **Versace** as well as created an extensive portfolio of personal work.

What makes Sam Youkilis so special and what is his relevance to this document?

Everything he shoots, he shoots with nothing more than an **iPhone**. Youkilis is proof that creating high quality, industry-level content doesn't always have to require an enormous budget. His following has been built over six years of creating beautiful 10-15 second short videos, all captured on his camera-phone.

Small streetwear brands should take Youkilis' effortless approach to content creation as inspiration when developing their own marketing materials. Many creatives become demotivated due to a lack of resources and fail to acknowledge how the tools that are already in their possession can be used to achieve success.



WALID LABRI

HELPING TO DEVELOP ONE OF THE STRONGEST BRAND AESTHETICS IN LONDON.

Walid Labri is a film director and photographer currently working for streetwear giant Corteiz. **He has worked with musicians like Central Cee and other fashion brands like Aime Leon Dore.**

He, along with Clint149 has taken inspiration from **the grittier side of London to help form one of the strongest brand identities in the streetwear scene.**

Walid Labri shows the importance of having a narrative around your product. A brand is bigger than just the garments it sells. **The visuals have to symbolise a bigger message in order to connect with their target community.**

Labri's visuals, often influenced by rap videos, graffiti and football, help to inform the viewer what Corteiz is about before they've even seen a piece of Corteiz clothing.

This ability to story tell through branding is crucial for smaller brands to create a connection with consumers.



PALACE LONDON

A LONDON BASED BRAND CREATED IN 2009 IS NOW A DIRECT COMPETITOR TO BRANDS TWENTY YEARS IT'S SENIOR

Palace is now a juggernaut in the streetwear scene despite only **being founded around 14 years ago**. For context, it's primary competitors Supreme and Stussy were founded in the eighties and nineties.

The brand stands out despite the crowded market. Palace's iconography is extremely recognisable, the garment's are often logo heavy. **Their rejection of normal product descriptions in place for humorous instagram caption-like descriptions demonstrate that the brand has and cares about it's personality.**

Like many streetwear brands they have tapped into two key followings to achieve their success: **Hip-Hop and Skating.**

The founders themselves are deeply entrenched in skateboarding culture, which may explain their swift acquisition of trust and respect among their followers. They are not merely corporate entities seeking to exploit youth culture. Instead, the audience can see a part of themselves in the very essence of Palace's founders.





PART FOUR: APPENDICES



AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: AHLUWALIA

DYLAN LIAM DIXON RESEARCH FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT

CREATIVE DIRECTION FOR FASHION

2023

MY AHLUWALIA BRAND TEAM EXPERIENCE (AUTOETHNOGRAPHY)

During my year-long internship with London-based fashion brand 'Ahluwalia', I worked as a member of the 'Brand Team.'

Our primary objective was to elevate the brand's image and drive public engagement through strategic content creation, which we distributed across various social media platforms. Despite facing budget constraints, we embraced the challenge by developing resourceful and innovative approaches that allowed us to effectively reach a broad and diverse audience.

One of my main responsibilities at Ahluwalia was planning the weekly social media content and completing graphic design based tasks to ensure all our content was "social-ready".

It became evident through this planning process that we were very reliant on our PR agency to supply our social media content. (Editorial shoots, celebrities wearing our garments etc.) With a small team and limited equipment, it felt as though we couldn't produce high quality content in house. This was an issue we consistently brought up as

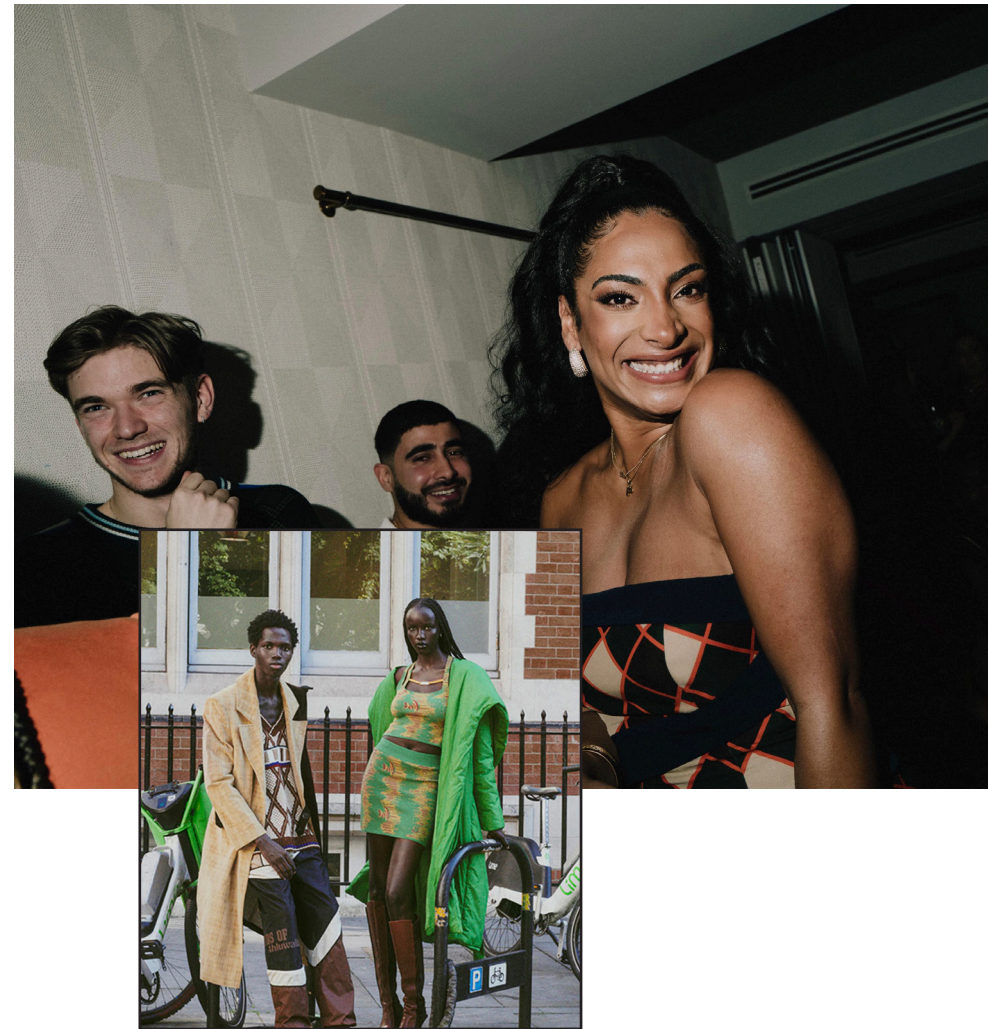
most brands that had a successful social media presence were producing their own content.

It was at this point that I really had to start brainstorming cost effective ways to achieve high-level video and imagery.

We were fortunate enough to be working out of 180 The Strand, a building associated with Soho House. The building was aesthetically pleasing and let in a lot of natural light. We would often shoot content in the office on iPhone or polaroid to avoid the expense of paying for a studio and transporting the garments elsewhere.

Shooting and editing these videos opened my eyes to the power of the iPhone and it's downloadable editing apps. The content we shot was clean, well-lit and we could colour grade it in apps on our phones. The result was content that didn't look out of place on an instagram grid of editorial photoshoots and professional model shots.

I see my brand team experience as one of the most rewarding and educational experiences I've ever had.





INTERVIEW ONE: DAVID OADES

WILCO
FITTING BAY

DYLAN LIAM DIXON RESEARCH FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT

CREATIVE DIRECTION FOR FASHION 2023

INTERVIEW ONE ANALYSIS:

DAVID OADES is a designer and photographer from Surrey, UK who's streetwear start-up SkinSuit, sees London as a primary target market.

This interview helped inform and back-up both my drivers and insights as David expressed difficulty to navigate the world of social media and expressed the huge challenge of production costs and how this has affected his business model and forced him to make compromises he didn't previously want to make.

Although he didn't see conquering the social media space as a top priority for his brand, instead caring more about the design process and having fun with his brand, he did acknowledge that having a network of influencers or a big social media following leads to a far easier promotion process.

David also expressed the importance in forming a community through his brand, further backing-up my insight that it's more important than ever for brand's content to be community driven.



INTERVIEW WITH DAVID OADES - FULL TRANSCRIPT

Can you describe your brand and what makes it unique in London's fashion scene?

Skinsuit is an athletic and performance-wear brand. Built around life in the UK, of course, the weather's always changing, the seasons are so different here, I wanted to create a brand that's heavily focused on life in the UK.

To me, I wanted to make the brand as unique as possible, in every single aspect, because I thought, there's so many brands right now. I've had a lot of experience designing for brands and creating content for other brands. I suppose it's given me a chance to see how similar a lot of the brand's core values and core principles are. I want to have fun with my brand and showcase how unique the UK and London is.

I want to allow people to have fun with fashion again. Fashion is in a bit of a stale position where brands just wanna make the clothes to sell it. Instead of that I would love to create a brand centred around community, having fun and being united through clothing.

I've got a plan to do video game style challenges, I have this idea to do a challenge like "who can take a photo in their garments at the highest point". Really I just want to inject fun into the brand.

What are the main challenges you've faced while building your brand in London?

The main challenges I've faced are really in the manufacturing stage.

I've been manufacturing this one jacket for just under a year now. Before that I really wanted all my production to be based in the UK. So I had a **London based manufacturer but it didn't work out because it was too expensive for a start-up.**

I tried manufacturers in Leicester and Birmingham but they couldn't produce the designs I wanted. In the UK a lot of the methods are very traditional so they were unable to create the complex and fun designs I was talking about without it resulting in extortionate pricing.

One of the hardest parts was finding a manufacturer that I could build a lasting relationship with, whilst also adhering to environmental factors and making sure that the workers are well looked after.

Now, I've found my manufacturer, based in China. Which, in itself, is a challenge due to timing. It takes a while to ship stuff back and forth. The most environmentally conscious option is shipping by sea, but that can mean it takes nearly a month to receive the garments.

Other than the manufacturing challenges, a big challenge I'm facing is **not having a huge following and not having a network of influencers** that other competing brands have. A lot of brands that I've worked with send their products to 10 or so of their mates, who all have 30k followers

and the rest is history. **They'll see the followers come in, it's great exposure. I feel I'm working from the ground up.**

I'm in a unique position, the brand is more of a side quest. I just wanna get some designs out there, have fun with the marketing and see where it goes.

How has the changing competition in the fashion industry affected your brand?

In terms of changing competition, especially in London and the South, there is a lot of leaning on your network to see how far you can progress. **Social media plays a massive part now, it's all about who's liking your brand, who's reposting your brand?** It's those things that make a massive difference.

But, I wouldn't like to think those things are affecting my brand. I'm not in a rush to force engagement. Especially if it's people who don't actually support my brand. **I'm comfortable with waiting five to ten years for an organic following to build who share my stuff cos they like it.**

How has the digital landscape changed the way you market and sell your products?

The digital landscape happens to be at the forefront of my brand at pretty much all times because **I like to think the brand will be very future-facing.**

For example **at the moment I can only adhere to social media platforms and my website for any promotional content,** but I have huge hopes to enter the NFT space with digital replicas of garments and personal avatars for each user. Again, I'm really hoping to create a brand that is super fun and enjoyable for the customer, not just a brand that sells products, and I'm hoping to **use digital touch points to do this as they're really accessible and inclusive.**

What challenges have you encountered when seeking funding and resources for your brand?

In terms of funding, I have applied for around 4 grants and funding schemes targeted towards young British businesses, but unfortunately had no luck. **It was a huge shame because I really wanted to start my brand manufacturing in the UK, something that would have only been possible with a large amount of investment to begin with.**

Although some of my key reasons for requesting funding was that I needed monetary support to make the company as environmentally sustainable as possible and to champion UK businesses and economy (e.g, having additional funds to use UK factories and purchase fabrics made from UK mills), I was still rejected which was a shame because now this will only be possible in the future once the brand has enough money coming in to make the switch to UK manufacturing.

I'm very fortunate that I'm knowledgeable in many aspects of operating a brand, such as garment design and manufacturing, videography, photography, graphic design and of course creative direction. So I'm able to save a lot of time and money by doing these things myself without having to outsource my budget to external creatives.

How do you envision the future of London-based fashion brands, and what opportunities do you see?

From what I've experienced in recent years and seeing how a lot of the brands around me are evolving, **I think a lot of the power is going to fall into the hands of the consumer.** I feel like brands are missing a great opportunity to build really strong foundations for themselves by not acknowledging **the importance of community within fashion, especially in London** where people love to support new and upcoming brands.

I also feel like brands are going to come out of their shell a bit more, for example we see a lot of brands playing it safe in terms of garment designs and branding, **but the market has become so saturated that brands might have no option but to take risks you know?**



INTERVIEW TWO: NEVE CHERRY

DYLAN LIAM DIXON RESEARCH FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT

CREATIVE DIRECTION FOR FASHION

2023

INTERVIEW TWO ANALYSIS:

NEVE CHERRY is a designer currently residing in Tulse Hill, London. Her recently formed brand, **Miss Cherry** is primarily a knitwear and crochet brand with streetwear influences.

What struck me after interviewing Neve was the striking similarity between her and David's responses, despite their involvement in entirely different facets of the streetwear genre. They both encountered similar manufacturing challenges, struggling to strike a balance between creating and promoting their garments due to financial constraints.

Both of them acknowledged the invaluable qualities that social media offers. Neve went as far as saying that running her brand without it would be impossible, but she also highlighted the negativity she encounters online.

Both my interviewees have mixed feelings about social media. They agree on the benefits of easily promoting their brands in the digital realm, but they can't ignore the occasional toxic undercurrent that accompanies the pursuit of online popularity.



INTERVIEW WITH NEVE CHERRY - FULL TRANSCRIPT**Can you describe your brand and what makes it unique in London's fashion scene?**

My brand is visually crochet knitwear with alternative materials. It's all about being authentic, being truthful, and right now, it's about uniting the hard materials with soft materials and trying to find like a beauty in like two opposing forces. **I think what makes it unique is the way that I would like to run it is very socialist.**

As soon as the brand starts making money I have plans to make it a community and make sure everyone is on the same level and and kind of run it in a way that everyone has choices on what the brand does and the directions that goes.

I was inspired by this girl that I met in Naples. She is from Paris and she was a costume designer and she explained to me the way they work in their business and they basically have like a socialist structure so I think that makes it unique and it's something that I haven't seen before so I know that it's going to be unique.

What are the main challenges you've faced while building your brand in London?

The main challenges I've found are **toxicity, money and capitalism** haha. I think the toxicity of the industry of people getting opportunities and kind of gatekeeping them is difficult, and I also think the lack of money that I've had and **having to work just to support myself and buy materials has been hard.**

INTERVIEW WITH NEVE CHERRY - FULL TRANSCRIPT**How has the changing competition in the fashion industry affected your brand?**

In terms of competition I think when I see other brands like sewing a similar motif pushes me in a way to get even more creative about what I'm making but **it's also really hard to find that balance between commercial and a collection that's really creative.**

I have to compromise a lot and the way I do that mainly is I think about the structure the silhouette and the kind of materials I'm using. I think that knowing the level of simplicity is really important, that's what I've learned over the years.

How has the digital landscape changed the way you market and sell your products?

I actually feel grateful for the digital landscape because I think with the money and resources that I have I wouldn't of been able to do it without social media and I had someone helping me with social media which was really nice to teach me engagement and things like that, and basically everything I do is online, like I do send a lot of emails and contact a lot of people. **Everything is online and everything I market is online.**

I've done a couple pop-up shops but that was all marketed online so I think the digital space is really helpful actually **for people that wanna start a brand and don't have money, I think it's essential.**

INTERVIEW WITH NEVE CHERRY - FULL TRANSCRIPT**What challenges have you encountered when seeking funding and resources for your brand?**

Resources in terms of net where it's like a fine line between, I will make sample garments from very cheap wool **I will always try and thrift wool**. I've decided to make one-off pieces now because I don't wanna have to keep buying acrylic wool which is basically plastic and keep reproducing that so I've chosen to do **one of one which I think is much more sustainable but in terms of resources it's really hard to find cheap good quality wool**.

In terms of funding, I would say I haven't really received any funding everything that I've done is off my own back and I know that there is British fashion Council but it's very hard to get hold of them so yeah I would say everything I've done has just been my own funds.

How do you envision the future of London-based fashion brands, and what opportunities do you see?

The future of independent brands I think will be a lot more conscious and I think a lot of it is chance and faking it till you make it. I think that these brands coming up in the art schools will always have that sustainable, diverse element naturally. I feel like the future of London brands are incredibly unpredictable and I think there will be a lot more collectives because the space is so convoluted. **There are so many new independent brands, I think that there will be a rise in good community collectives where people help each other.**



PART FIVE: ANNOTATED RESOURCES

THE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC: A WGSN ARTICLE

*“Young consumers are experiencing a loneliness epidemic – UK Gen Z for example are **27% more likely to report feelings of loneliness than their Millennial counterparts.**”*

*As consumers turn to IRL and URL communities to combat this newfound loneliness and find like-minded thinkers, **another door opens to combat the challenges found by budget-conscious fashion brands.***

IRL = IN REAL LIFE.

URL = UNIFORM RESOURCE LOCATOR (WEB ADDRESS) BUT, IN THIS CONTEXT, URL DESCRIBES BEING INSIDE THE DIGITAL SPACE.

SENSORY SEEKERS (Key Terms) have created an IRL opportunity.

There is a demand for physical activations. In recent years successful IRL events from Corteiz (Da Great BOLO Exchange), Adidas Originals and Moncler have **engaged consumers that crave offline experiences.**

London is a hub for these activations and therefore I feel it would be greatly beneficial for budget conscious brands to brainstorm IRL aswell as URL opportunities to **“tap into subcultures and consumers that align with their ethos and tailor an event that brings their consumers together.”**

Brand Strategy

Marketing Toolkit: Community-Building

Consumers are turning to IRL and URL communities to share interests with like-minded peers. This report provides brands with a guide for building community as a marketing strategy to drive brand engagement and sales

Elizabeth Tan
08.30.23 - 10 minutes

Impact Score

Track | Explore | Test

Trend is in its early stages – worth monitoring for future investment | Trend is being observed across multiple categories – this is likely to grow | Moderate investment case – evidence suggests this trend will impact your brand

1

THE STATE OF STREETWEAR: A LSN:GLOBAL ARTICLE

“Where the lucrative but crowded category is headed.”

Although this research primarily delves into budget-conscious fashion brands in London, it’s no secret that the **predominant wave of growth in the last five to ten years has been witnessed within the streetwear category.**

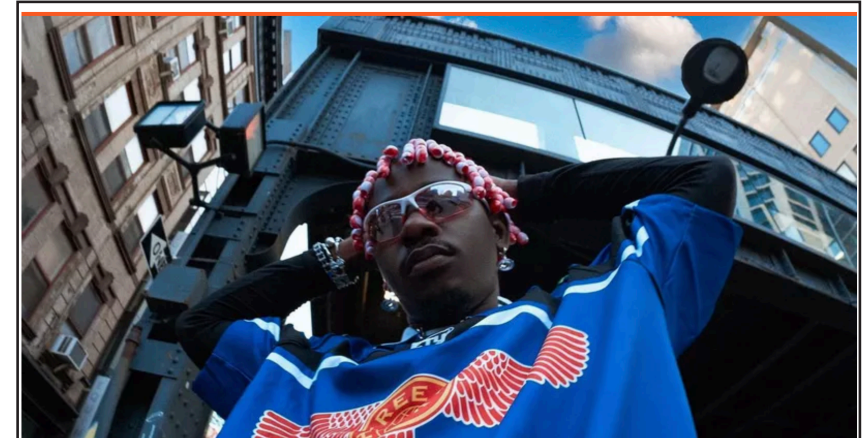
What captures the most attention in the current streetwear scene is the **remarkable ascent of independent labels** like Corteiz, Daily Paper, and Free The Youth. This article describes a profound market shift, with **consumers gradually veering away from industry giants such as Supreme and Bape.**

Instead, they’re increasingly drawn to niche interest groups, fostering the **creation of devoted cult-like followings.**

“In a shifting streetwear scene, authenticity and community are emerging as common denominators of success – not novelty drops or brand collaborations”

A theme that has consistently emerged in my research underscores the critical role of brand community.

For brands operating beyond the mainstream with limited financial resources, it becomes essential to meticulously define their target audience and **place a primary focus on the creation of content that centers around building and nurturing their community.**



Free The Youth, Ghana

Fashion : Luxury : Youth 06.10.2023 Behaviours : Markets

The State of Streetwear

LS:N Global unpacks the state of streetwear and where the lucrative but crowded category is headed.

2

VIRGIL MENTORS PHYSICAL NOVEL : YOUTUBE VIDEO

Before he passed, Virgil Abloh did three filmed mentoring sessions with aspiring designers who owned small brands. One of these brands, Physical Novel was creating avant garde streetwear and was already designing on a high level.

Virgil expressed the importance of having a unified brand vision and presence across all online platforms. As well as the importance of being an out of the box thinker and having recognisable iconography.

The video was full of extremely useful insights from debatably the most influential streetwear designer of all time. Seeing Virgil pick apart small brands and correct the small mistakes

that the owners were making simply due to lack of experience helped to inform this research as it was a perfect example of **a streetwear giant taking budget and time constraints into account whilst aiding in the development of a start-up streetwear brand.**



3

STREETWEAR RETAIL, SHIFTS AND STRATEGIES : A WGSN ARTICLE

This article aligns with my sensory seekers foresight as it explores the changes within physical retail spaces, as brands invest more resources into their 'real life' stores.

In recent years brands have been encouraged to be more creative and unique by reimagining in-person shopping experiences and brand activations.

Despite the rise of online shopping, many individuals still seek out IRL experiences. In an increasingly digital age, going to the shops can allow consumers some much needed detachment from the online world. Physical shopping functions as a low cost "day out" for many.

This resource supports the idea that traditional shops, are not dying, and the future is not purely digital.

"Department stores are still looking to streetwear to drive footfall and create hype."



4

GEN-Z MALE STREETWEAR PROFILES : A WGSN ARTICLE

This article gave evidence to the fact that the streetwear wave is far from over. Instead, it's evolving.

“The streetwear market is expected to soar to \$429bn in sales by 2025.”

It also provided insights into how the consumer profiles for male streetwear are diversifying. The article references sub-genres of streetwear varying from the sophisticated “swaggy gentlemen” (who they say take their style inspo from brands like NOAH and Abasi Rosborough) to the boxy fitted Fauxbois (where the main reference is Martine Rose.)

The main thing I took from the article was how brands can have their aesthetic

connected to a niche community or aesthetic.

The importance of tapping into a niche community is something I’ve referenced throughout this document.



5

A HISTORY OF PALACE SKATEBOARDING : HYPEBEAST

This resource helped inform my Palace case study and my 'Fall of the Big Players' foresight.

Although Palace are now a "big player" in the streetwear genre themselves, they're also the first in over two decades to seriously disrupt the space.

Their brand is built on the essence of community and passion for skating. It's a brand for a specific genre of youth and it's ability to carve out it's audience has placed it in the same realm as Stussy and Supreme.

This article was particularly interesting as it spoke to one of the co-founders of Palace, Gareth Skewis. He described how a brand formed in 2009 can form a

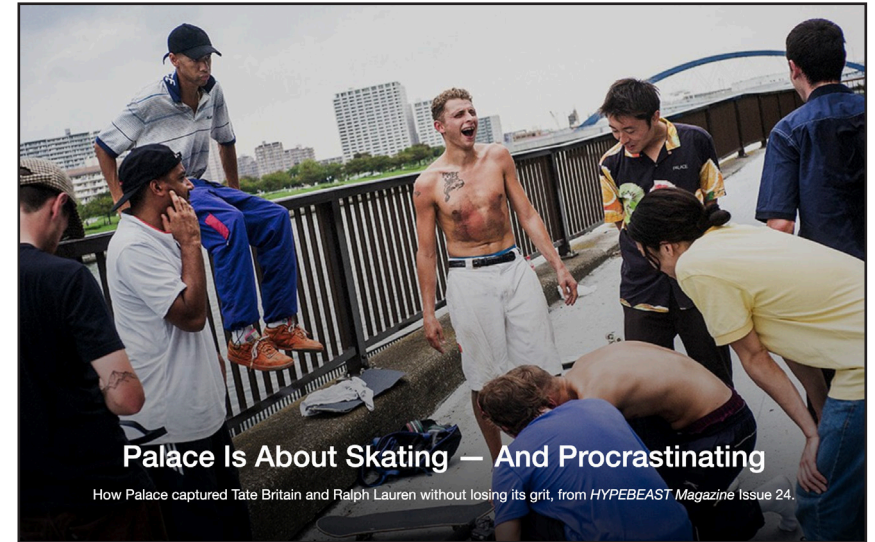
relationship with industry giants like Jurgen Teller and Ralph Lauren.

He describes London as a hub for collaboration and a space where creatives can come together.

Small start-ups should always be looking for opportunities to collaborate to aid them on their journey.

"I think it comes from just living in London and being interested in other things, You'll always cross paths with really talented, creative people."

- Gareth Skewis



Palace Is About Skating — And Procrastinating

How Palace captured Tate Britain and Ralph Lauren without losing its grit, from HYPEBEAST Magazine Issue 24.

6

CAFE LEON DORE : A HIGHSNOBIETY ARTICLE

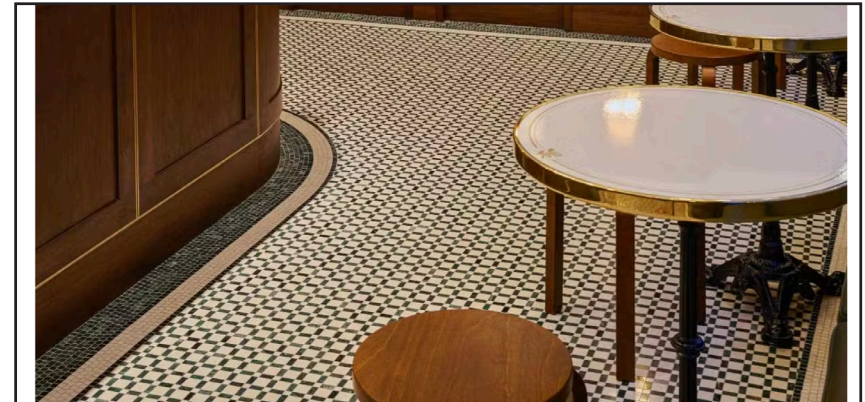
This article backed up my two of my findings. **Firstly, that there is definitely still a place for IRL activations in the fashion industry.**

Cafe Leon Dore actually receives more foot traffic day to day than Aime Leon Dore connected to it. **It's the perfect example of a luxury brand using a physical space to allow everyone to engage with the brand. Even if the garments are out of your price range.**

Secondly, Cafe Leon Dore reinforces the importance of putting community first when building your brand. ALD have seen huge success online as their community have shared the hashtag 'cafeleondore' over 24 million times.

“In short, Café Leon Dore provides the most affordable method of buying into Aimé Leon Dore aspiration.”

Through Cafe Leon Dore, Teddy Santis hasn't just created a coffee shop **but a community hub for his target consumer.**



© AIME LEON DORE

THE ONLY THING MORE POPULAR THAN AIMÉ LEON DORE? CAFÉ LEON DORE

3 MONTHS AGO IN CULTURE
WORDS BY JAKE SILBERT

7

SUPREME IS DEAD : A HIGHSNOBIETY ARTICLE

This article helped to inform my “fall of the big players” foresight. **In early 2023 the words ‘supreme is dead’ were circling the internet.**

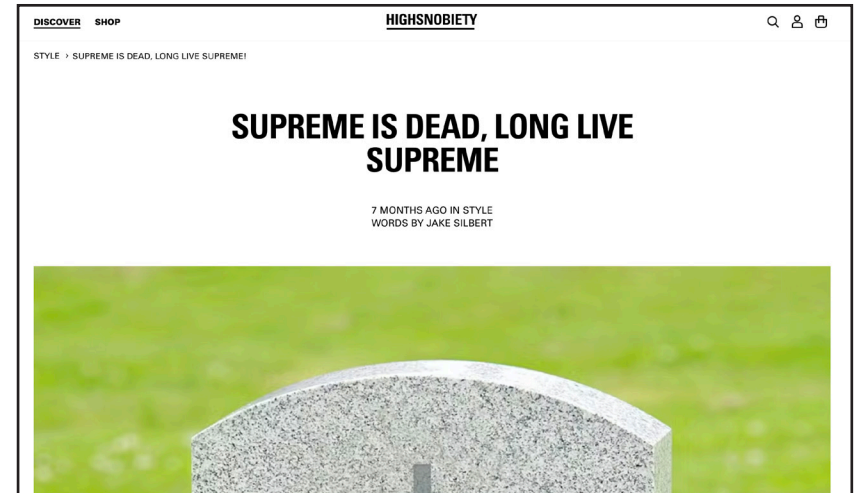
The word ‘dead’ is referring to a brand that was previously extremely popular but is now experiencing a dip in sales.

Although Supreme’s dip in sales is most probably just a phase, it’s important to note that the **mystique and exclusivity that once made Supreme the most desirable brand on the market may have disappeared for the foreseeable future.**

Independent brands seem to be gaining more traction currently, it’s unclear whether this is due to the audience

wanting something completely new, more transparency or they just feel they currently identify better with the smaller labels. **One thing is for sure, the big brands are currently behind in the clout race.**

“Supreme’s decline is tangible: not in the quality of its product, not in the power of the branding, but the lack of buzz around what was once the buzziest brand in the world.”



8

WHAT THE ALGORITHM MEANS : A VOGUE BUSINESS ARTICLE

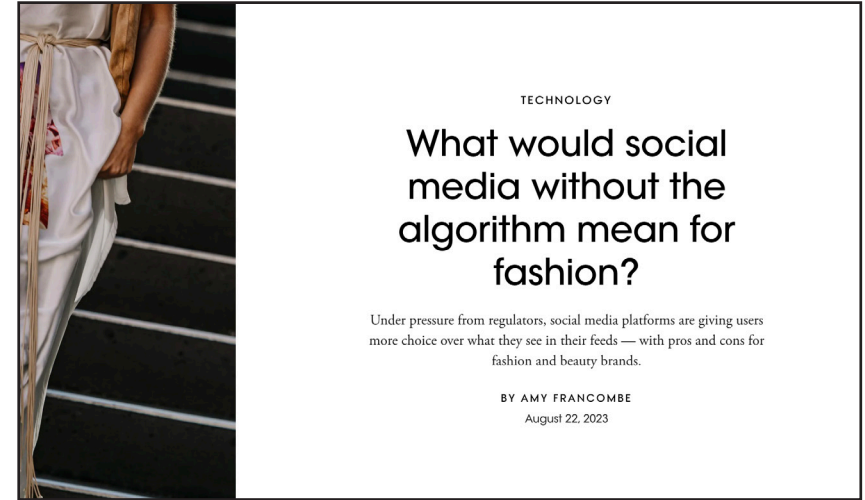
This article discussed how the **social media algorithms have shaped modern day marketing strategy**. I used the article to help shape both my ‘Social Media Has Changed Marketing’ and ‘The Viral Path’ findings.

Vogue notes the power of the algorithm, referencing streetwear brand **‘Broken Planet’ who credits the Tik Tok algorithm as the main catalyst in boosting the brand’s popularity**. Just before the brand’s launch, one of their Tik Tok’s went viral, **gaining them 10,000 instagram followers and 30,000 Tik Tok followers**.

It would be hard for brands to market in an algorithm-less digital space as there would no longer be a script to follow

Currently, you don’t need to take risks in your content output to be successful. If you follow the internet trends, trying to stay as ahead of the curve as possible chances are you will receive good levels of online engagement.

“If you’re not creating the trends, jumping on them quickly is the only way to stay relevant online.”



9

TIK TOK CHANGED FASHION : A VOGUE ARTICLE

This article from 2020 provided context into how social media evolved alongside the fashion world and also how **COVID-19 played a part in speeding up this evolution.**

“While we were all stuck at home this year, TikTok became the outlet for self-expression”

As I noted in my drivers and insights, social media has changed marketing and Tik Tok changed social media.

Covid-19 was without a doubt partially responsible for our decline in attention span and increase in social media addiction.

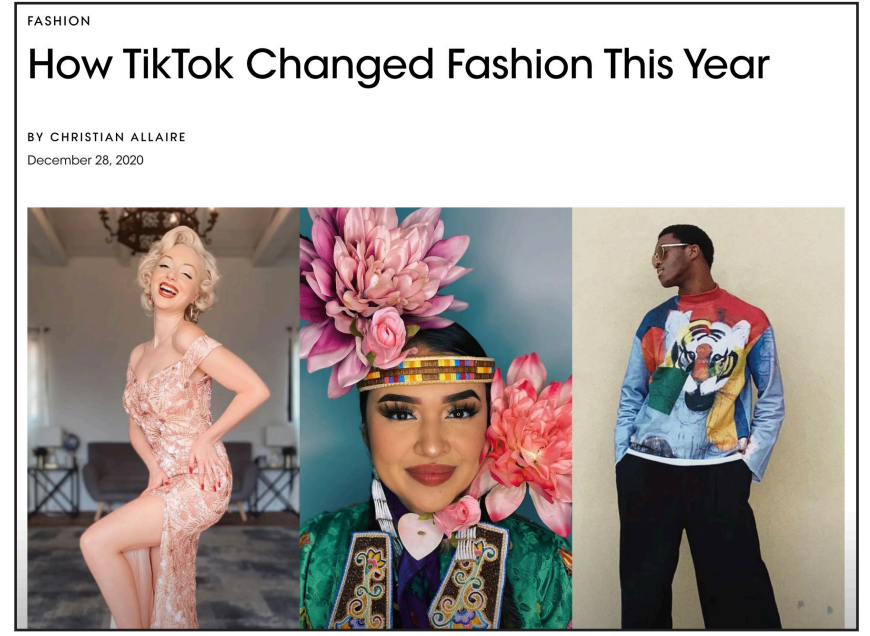
It also introduced a huge amount of people to the Tik Tok algorithm

and the concept of a ‘for you’ page.

Before Tik Tok, consumers were not used to experiencing such intimate content curation.

It seems that Tik Tok knows what you want better than you do. Marketers in the fashion industry spotted this and have since capitalised on it.

As well as the abundance of content, Tik Tok was a new space for **designers to share their process, models to be scouted and for new global fashion trends to begin.**



10

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