

## Consumer Perceptions and Cognitive Biases in Digital and Traditional Brand Communication

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### Article history

Received 04 December 2025 | Accepted 25 May 2026 | Published online 08 June 2026.

### Abstract

In the context of an increasingly fragmented media environment driven by digital transformation, brands are confronted with challenges in maintaining effective communication across both digital and traditional media channels. Against this background, the present study investigates consumer perceptions and evaluations of brand communication within the online fashion retail industry, using Fashion Days as a case study. The research focuses on consumers' exposure to various communication sources, the perceived differences between digital and traditional brand communication, and the perceived effectiveness of these communication environments. To address these objectives, the study employs a quantitative research approach based on an online self-administered survey distributed among current and potential users of the brand. The questionnaire examined respondents' media consumption habits, perceptions regarding communication characteristics such as visibility, diversity, and personalization, as well as their evaluations of different communication techniques used by the retailer. The findings reveal significant differences between digital and traditional communication channels, with digital media being perceived as more visible, diverse, interactive, and personalized. In particular, social media communication, influencer marketing, and search engine-based advertising were evaluated more favorably compared to traditional communication formats. Furthermore, the results indicate that consumers tend to perceive more positively the communication environments they use more frequently and in which they interact more actively with the brand. This pattern suggests the presence of cognitive biases, including the mere-exposure effect, confirmation bias, and the availability heuristic, which influence consumers' evaluations of brand communication effectiveness. The study provides relevant implications for the development of integrated communication strategies, highlighting the importance of aligning communication channels with consumer media habits and cognitive processing mechanisms. The originality of the research derives from incorporating a cognitive bias perspective into the analysis of brand communication effectiveness and from offering empirical insights into the Romanian multibrand online fashion retail market.

**Keywords:** Brand communication, digital and traditional media, cognitive biases, fashion retail, consumer perception.

**JEL classification:** M31, M37, D12, D80.

### Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the way fashion brands communicate with consumers. In recent years, the communication landscape has become increasingly fragmented, as brands are required to operate simultaneously across digital and traditional media environments. As a result, consumers are continuously exposed to brand messages through multiple communication channels, including social media platforms, online advertising, influencer-generated content, television, radio, and outdoor advertising. This evolution has increased the complexity of brand communication, forcing companies to ensure consistency, relevance, and visibility across different media channels in order to maintain consumer engagement and competitive advantage.

At the same time, consumer behavior has evolved alongside these technological and communication changes. Consumers interact with brands more actively in digital environments, where communication is often more personalized, interactive, and immediate. Social media platforms, search engine advertising, and influencer marketing have become essential tools through which brands attempt to capture consumers' attention and strengthen brand relationships. Nevertheless, traditional communication channels continue to play an important role in shaping brand awareness and reinforcing brand credibility. Consequently, digital and traditional media provide different communication experiences, which may influence the way consumers notice, interpret, and evaluate brand messages.

In this context, understanding how consumers perceive the effectiveness of different communication environments becomes increasingly important. Existing studies frequently emphasize the strategic integration of communication channels or the performance of digital marketing tools from a managerial perspective. However, less attention has been given to the way consumers themselves evaluate communication effectiveness and to the psychological mechanisms that may influence these evaluations. Consumers do not assess brand communication in a completely objective manner. Instead, their perceptions are often shaped by previous experiences, media consumption habits, personal preferences, and repeated exposure to specific communication channels.

An important factor influencing these evaluations is represented by cognitive biases. Cognitive biases refer to systematic patterns of judgment that affect the way individuals process information and make decisions. In the context of brand communication, consumers may perceive a communication channel as more effective simply because they encounter it more frequently or interact with it more often. Cognitive mechanisms such as the mere-exposure effect, confirmation bias, and the availability heuristic may lead consumers to favor the communication environments that are more familiar and cognitively accessible to them. As a result, evaluations of communication effectiveness may reflect not only the objective characteristics of the channel itself, but also consumers' habitual patterns of media use and information processing.

Considering these aspects, the present study aims to examine consumer perceptions of digital and traditional brand communication in the context of the online fashion retail industry, using Fashion Days as a case study. More specifically, the research investigates consumers' exposure to different communication sources, the perceived differences between digital and traditional communication channels, and the extent to which cognitive biases influence the perceived effectiveness of these communication environments. By adopting a consumer-centered perspective, the study contributes to the existing literature on integrated marketing communication and consumer behavior, while also providing empirical evidence from the Romanian multibrand online fashion retail market.

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1. Brand communication and consumer perception**

Brand communication can be defined as the set of messages through which a company aims to create, maintain, and strengthen the symbolic value of its brand (Keller, 2009; Schultz & Patti, 2009). Within the framework of integrated marketing communications (IMC), previous research has mainly emphasized the importance of consistency across communication channels, arguing that consumers develop stronger and more favorable brand attitudes when they are exposed to coherent messages across multiple platforms (Schultz & Patti, 2009; Batra & Keller, 2016).

However, this perspective has become increasingly insufficient in the context of contemporary media environments. Recent studies suggest that consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand communication. Instead, they actively interpret, filter, and evaluate

the information they receive, contributing to the construction of brand meaning through their own experiences and interactions with media content (Voorveld et al., 2018). Consequently, understanding communication effectiveness requires not only analyzing the messages transmitted by brands, but also examining the way consumers process, interpret, and recall these messages in highly fragmented and competitive communication environments.

One of the most relevant theoretical perspectives explaining this process is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). According to this model, persuasion can occur through two distinct routes. The central route is activated when individuals are both motivated and able to carefully analyze the quality and relevance of the arguments presented. In contrast, the peripheral route appears in situations of low involvement, when individuals rely on simple cues such as attractiveness, credibility, or the visual appeal of the communication source rather than on detailed cognitive evaluation.

The Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) proposed by Chaiken (1980) and further developed by Chaiken et al. (1989) expands this perspective by suggesting that heuristic and systematic processing may occur simultaneously rather than independently. In addition, the model introduces the sufficiency principle, according to which individuals process information only to the extent necessary to reach a satisfactory level of confidence in their judgments. This approach is particularly relevant in fragmented media environments, where consumers are exposed to large amounts of information and are more likely to rely on cognitive shortcuts and heuristic judgments when evaluating communication messages (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Overall, both ELM and HSM highlight an important implication for brand communication research: the effectiveness of communication is influenced not only by message content, but also by the way consumers process and evaluate information. In many situations, consumers rely on familiar cues, previous experiences, and heuristic judgments rather than on detailed analysis, especially in increasingly complex digital communication environments.

## **1.2. Digital and traditional brand communication**

The comparison between digital and traditional brand communication is most often structured along four main dimensions: credibility, reach, interactivity, and type of impact. Traditional media such as television, print, radio, and out-of-home advertising continue to hold important advantages in terms of unduplicated reach and perceived credibility, largely due to their established editorial and institutional contexts (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2016; Joo et al., 2014).

In contrast, digital media is characterized by higher levels of interactivity, more precise targeting capabilities, and continuous performance feedback. However, individual digital platforms typically reach smaller audiences compared to traditional mass media channels (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Kannan & Li, 2017).

Rather than functioning as competing alternatives, digital and traditional media are increasingly understood as complementary. Empirical evidence suggests that exposure in one channel can reinforce outcomes in another, for example television advertising can stimulate online search behavior, while digital campaigns may enhance the overall effectiveness of traditional media exposure (Joo et al., 2014; Naik & Peters, 2009; Stephen & Galak, 2012). This interdependence further supports the relevance of an integrated marketing communications (IMC) perspective when analyzing modern communication strategies.

Brand communication across both environments can also be conceptualized through the paid, owned, and earned media framework (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Paid media refers to advertising space purchased by brands, owned media includes channels fully controlled by the organization, while earned media represents consumer-generated exposure

such as word-of-mouth or online sharing, which is often perceived as more credible due to its independent nature.

A distinctive characteristic of digital communication is the limited and highly fragmented nature of consumer attention. As a result, brand messages need to be concise, visible, and contextually relevant, particularly within search engines and social media environments (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Within these digital channels, several formats have become particularly important. Social media platforms combine brand-generated and user-generated content, with user-generated content often perceived as more credible (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Colicev et al., 2018). Influencer marketing relies on perceived authenticity and source credibility to enhance persuasion effects (De Veirman et al., 2017; Hudders et al., 2021), while search-based communication operates in high-intent contexts, where ranking positions themselves serve as signals of trust and relevance (Goldfarb, 2014).

Finally, digital environments have also transformed the way consumers are segmented and targeted. Instead of relying solely on static demographic criteria, modern marketing increasingly uses behavioral, contextual, and community-based segmentation approaches. These allow for the formation of dynamic audience groups and more precise, data-driven targeting strategies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Kotler et al., 2020).

### **1.3. Brand communication in the fashion retail context**

Fashion retail communication reveals several limitations of general theories of brand communication, largely due to the specific characteristics of the industry. First, fashion represents a highly aesthetics-driven category, in which visual elements play a central role in shaping consumer perception. Given the rapid product turnover and short lifecycle of collections, communication in this sector functions less as a set of isolated campaigns and more as a continuous stream of content designed to sustain engagement over time (Kim & Ko, 2012; Phillips et al., 2014).

Second, the strong association between fashion and celebrity culture has contributed to the early and extensive adoption of influencer marketing. In contemporary fashion communication, influencers play a key role in bridging brand identity and consumer aspiration, acting as important intermediaries across both luxury and mass-market segments (Casaló et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021).

Third, fashion retail has increasingly evolved into a fully omnichannel ecosystem, in which physical stores, e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, and social media channels are no longer perceived as separate touchpoints, but as interconnected components of a unified brand experience (Verhoef et al., 2015).

### **1.4. Consumer media habits and communication evaluation**

Research on media habits suggests that consumers do not engage with all communication channels in the same way. Instead, media consumption is largely habitual and repetitive, being shaped by routine behaviors such as the applications individuals open daily, the platforms they scroll through, or the types of content they consistently consume (LaRose, 2010; Wood & Neal, 2009). These established routines play an important role in determining which brand messages are actually encountered and processed by consumers.

In addition, selective exposure theory argues that individuals tend to prefer media environments that align with their existing interests, preferences, and attitudes. Consequently, media choice is influenced not only by habit formation, but also by personal orientation toward specific types of content and platforms (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015; Stroud, 2017).

Beyond media selection, these habitual usage patterns also affect how consumers evaluate communication. Prior research shows that engagement levels differ across platforms and can significantly influence attitudes toward advertising and branded content within those

environments (Voorveld et al., 2018). This implies that the evaluation of brand communication is not determined solely by message characteristics, but also by the experiential qualities of the medium itself.

Moreover, repeated exposure within preferred media channels can positively influence brand perceptions, as consumers tend to transfer favorable associations from the platform to the brand messages they encounter there (Calder et al., 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

### **1.5. Cognitive biases in brand communication perception**

The application of cognitive bias theory within consumer behavior research is well established (Bettman et al., 1998; Kahneman, 2011). Within this broader stream of literature, a significant body of work has explored its implications for decision-making processes, particularly in relation to product choice and purchase behavior. By comparison, the application of cognitive bias frameworks to the evaluation of communication channels and media environments has received comparatively less systematic attention. In this context, three cognitive mechanisms are particularly relevant: confirmation bias, the availability heuristic, and the mere-exposure effect.

Confirmation bias refers to the tendency of individuals to seek, interpret, and favor information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs (Nickerson, 1998). In the context of brand communication, this implies that consumers who already prefer or trust a specific communication channel are more likely to perceive messages delivered through that channel as more credible or relevant. This tendency is further reinforced by algorithmic filtering systems, which personalize content based on previous user behavior and thus continuously expose individuals to information aligned with their prior preferences (Pariser, 2011; Cinelli et al., 2021). Consequently, consumers may overestimate the effectiveness of communication within the channels they already favor.

The availability heuristic explains how individuals assess the importance or effectiveness of information based on how easily examples come to mind (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Applied to brand communication, this suggests that consumers may judge a brand as highly communicative simply because they can easily recall instances of exposure. This effect is particularly strong in the case of recent, frequent, or emotionally salient exposures, which are often more characteristic of digital media formats than traditional ones (Bornstein, 1989; Sundar, 2008). As a result, perceived visibility may not accurately reflect actual communication reach.

The mere-exposure effect further suggests that repeated exposure to a stimulus leads to more positive evaluations, even in the absence of conscious cognitive processing (Bornstein, 1989). In marketing literature, this mechanism has been shown to enhance familiarity, trust, and overall brand attitudes (Janiszewski, 1993; Grimes & Kitchen, 2007; Park & Lessig, 1981). Importantly, this effect extends beyond brand-level evaluation and can also apply to communication channels themselves, meaning that consumers may develop preferences for the media environments they encounter most frequently.

Overall, these cognitive mechanisms indicate that consumer evaluations of brand communication are influenced less by the objective characteristics of communication channels and more by familiarity, habitual exposure, and cognitive accessibility.

### **1.6. Research gap and study positioning**

Three main research gaps can be identified in the existing literature. First, comparative studies of digital and traditional communication tend to focus predominantly on objective performance indicators, while comparatively less attention is given to the cognitive processes that shape consumers' subjective evaluations of communication channels. Second, although research on omnichannel strategies in fashion retail has extensively addressed operational and

strategic integration across touchpoints, it has placed less emphasis on how consumers' media habits influence their perceptions of communication effectiveness. Third, while cognitive bias theory is well established within consumer behavior research, its application to the evaluation of communication channels across different media environments remains relatively limited as an integrated analytical perspective.

The Romanian fashion e-commerce market, particularly Fashion Days, offers a relevant context for addressing these gaps. The sector is characterized by strong digital growth, the continued relevance of traditional media, and increasing openness to influencer-based communication strategies (Demyen, 2024; Szakal et al., 2024). This combination creates a mixed media environment in which consumer perceptions of brand communication may vary depending on habitual media use and exposure patterns. Although previous studies have examined online consumer behavior, platform adoption, and influencer marketing effects (Tiutiu et al., 2025; Miorescu et al., 2020), the explicit integration of a cognitive bias perspective into the evaluation of communication channels remains underexplored.

Building on this gap, the present study investigates how Romanian consumers evaluate the communication of Fashion Days across digital and traditional environments, focusing on perceived visibility, diversity, and personalization, and examining whether these evaluations are shaped by habitual media exposure and cognitive biases rather than solely by the objective characteristics of communication channels.

## 2. Methodology

The present research is situated in the context of Fashion Days, a leading multibrand online fashion retailer in Romania, recognized for its strong market position, long-standing presence, and extensive communication activity across both digital and traditional channels. Established in 2009 and part of the eMAG group, the brand has developed a solid reputation among Romanian consumers through competitive offers and consistent marketing efforts. Given its visibility and relevance within the local fashion retail industry, Fashion Days represents an appropriate case for examining consumer perceptions of brand communication, with potential insights applicable to similar multibrand online retail contexts.

Building on this context, the study aims to investigate how consumers are exposed to and evaluate Fashion Days' communication across digital and traditional media environments, while also considering the potential influence of cognitive biases on these evaluations. More specifically, the research seeks to compare consumer exposure to different communication sources within the fashion retail sector, to identify perceived differences between online and offline communication channels in the case of Fashion Days, and to analyze how these channels are evaluated in terms of effectiveness and key communication characteristics. In addition, the study explores the extent to which these perceptions are influenced by habitual media use.

The research is guided by three main hypotheses. First, it is hypothesized that consumers tend to perceive brand communication in digital environments more favorably compared to traditional media channels. Second, it is expected that the main perceived differences between digital and traditional communication relate primarily to personalization and message diversity. Third, it is assumed that consumers' evaluations of communication effectiveness are influenced by cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, the mere-exposure effect and the availability heuristic, leading individuals to favor communication channels they use more frequently.

To address these objectives, an exploratory quantitative research design was adopted, based on an online survey as the primary data collection method. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered using Google Forms. The sample consisted of 100 respondents, selected among current or potential users of the Fashion Days platform. A non-probability sampling technique was used, relying on voluntary participation, with the aim of

including individuals familiar with the brand and capable of evaluating its communication efforts. The questionnaire was distributed online through social media platforms, ensuring access to a diverse group of respondents.

Participants completed the questionnaire based on their prior exposure to Fashion Days communication across different media channels. The main variables analyzed included exposure to communication sources (digital versus traditional) and perceived characteristics of brand communication (visibility, diversity, and personalization). The data was analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistical methods in order to identify differences between communication environments and to test the proposed hypotheses.

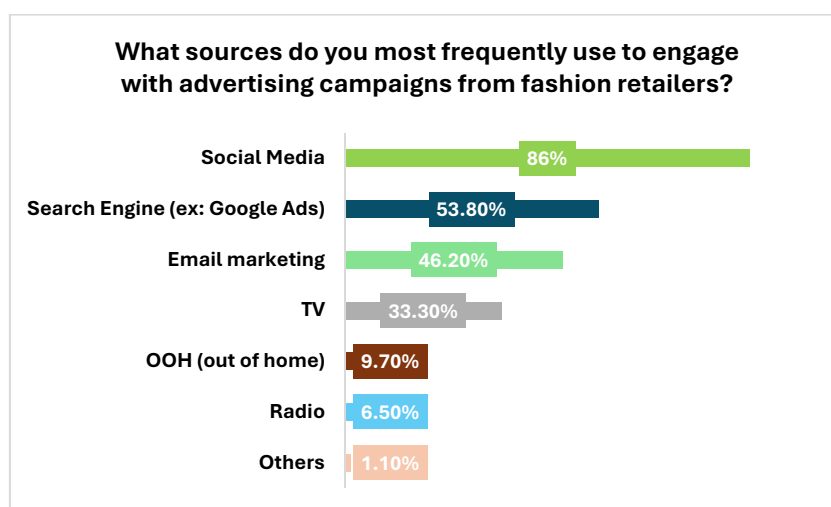
### 3. Results and discussion

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative survey conducted among 100 respondents, with the objective of examining consumer exposure to and evaluation of Fashion Days communication across digital and traditional media environments. The analysis is organized in line with the research objectives and focuses on three main directions: differences in exposure to communication sources within the fashion retail sector, comparative perceptions of online and offline communication channels, and evaluations of key communication attributes, namely visibility, diversity, and personalization, alongside the role of cognitive biases in shaping these perceptions.

The findings are interpreted in relation to the proposed hypotheses, with emphasis on identifying patterns in how digital and traditional communication are perceived. Particular attention is given to potential differences in evaluation between the two media environments, as well as to the extent to which these assessments may be associated with habitual media consumption and familiarity with specific channels.

#### 3.1. Patterns of exposure to communication sources within the fashion retail sector

The results show a clear dominance of digital communication channels in shaping consumer exposure to fashion retail advertising (see Figure 1). Social media emerges as the main point of contact between consumers and brand messages, being reported by 86% of respondents. This indicates that social platforms function as the primary environment in which fashion-related communication is encountered. Search engines (53.8%) and email marketing (46.2%) also represent important sources of exposure, highlighting the relevance of digital channels that combine both active search behavior and more personalized message delivery.



*Figure 1. Consumer Exposure to Communication Sources in the Fashion Retail Sector*

In contrast, traditional media channels register considerably lower levels of exposure. Television remains the most frequently mentioned traditional channel (33.3%), although it is still behind the leading digital platforms. Out-of-home advertising (9.7%) and radio (6.5%) are mentioned by a much smaller share of respondents, suggesting a marginal role in the current communication landscape. Overall, the findings indicate that consumer exposure to fashion retail communication is largely concentrated in digital environments, with social media playing a central role. Traditional media, while still present, appear to function more as supplementary or reinforcing channels rather than primary sources of brand interaction.

### 3.2. Comparative evaluation of online and offline communication channels in the case of Fashion Days

Perceived visibility of Fashion Days communication was assessed using two Likert-scale items (1 = “not at all”, 5 = “to a very large extent”), measuring the extent to which respondents noticed the brand in digital environments (Q10.3) versus traditional environments such as television and outdoor advertising (Q11.3).

The results indicate a higher perceived visibility for digital communication ( $M = 4.29$ ) compared to traditional channels ( $M = 3.58$ ). This suggests that consumers are more likely to notice and recall brand communication in online environments, pointing to a stronger visibility effect associated with digital media.

This pattern is further supported by responses regarding specific exposure sources (see Table 1). Within the digital environment, the highest scores are observed for online advertising ( $M = 3.97$ ), followed by influencer-based exposure ( $M = 3.85$ ) and incidental discovery during online search activities ( $M = 3.71$ ), resulting in an overall average of  $M = 3.84$ . In contrast, offline exposure registers lower values, with television advertising ( $M = 3.26$ ) and outdoor advertising ( $M = 2.54$ ), leading to a lower overall mean of  $M = 2.90$ .

Overall, the findings suggest that consumers perceive Fashion Days as more visible in digital environments than in traditional ones. This is consistent both at the level of general visibility assessment and across specific exposure channels, reinforcing the dominant role of digital media in shaping brand awareness and consumer encounter frequency.

*Table 1. Consumer Exposure to Fashion Days Communication Across Online and Offline Channels*

	Statement	Mean score (per item)	Mean score (per communication environment)
<b>ONLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>	I found out about this brand through online advertising	3.97	3.84
	I found out about this brand through influencers online	3.85	
	I found out about this brand incidentally while searching for clothing items online	3.71	
<b>OFFLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>	I found out about this brand through television advertising	3.26	2.90
	I found out about this brand by seeing outdoor advertising (e.g., billboards)	2.54	

### 3.3. Consumer perceptions of communication effectiveness and key characteristics

The evaluation of Fashion Days' communication characteristics was conducted using multiple Likert-scale items (1 = "not at all", 5 = "to a very large extent"), capturing respondents' perceptions of message attributes (e.g., diversity, personalization, clarity, and credibility) across different communication channels. These items were grouped by channel within online (social media, influencers, search engines) and offline (TV and outdoor advertising) environments, allowing for both individual item assessment and aggregated mean scores at channel and environment level.

The evaluation of communication characteristics associated with Fashion Days indicates a consistently more favorable perception of digital channels ( $M=3,84$ ) compared to traditional ones ( $M=2,91$ ). These findings suggest that Fashion Days' digital communication is perceived as more diverse, personalized, and relevant, while traditional channels are seen as less engaging and less tailored to individual consumers (see Table 2).

Within the online ecosystem, social media and influencer-based communication emerge as the most positively evaluated formats. Social media is particularly associated with message diversity ( $M = 3.98$ ) and personalization ( $M = 3.86$ ), indicating that respondents perceive this channel as both varied in content and relatively tailored to individual preferences. Similarly, influencer communication receives strong evaluations, particularly in terms of perceived brand fit ( $M = 3.90$ ) and credibility ( $M = 3.81$ ), alongside relatively high personalization scores ( $M = 3.76$ ). Search engine communication is also evaluated positively ( $M = 3.78$ ), being primarily associated with message clarity ( $M = 3.98$ ) and, to a lesser extent, diversity ( $M = 3.59$ ).

In contrast, traditional communication channels, represented mainly by television and outdoor advertising, receive lower evaluations overall. The offline environment is characterized by moderate perceptions of message diversity ( $M = 3.07$ ) and notably lower perceptions of personalization ( $M = 2.76$ ), resulting in a lower overall assessment of communication effectiveness.

Overall, the findings suggest that consumers perceive Fashion Days as more visible in digital environments than in traditional ones. This is consistent both at the level of general visibility assessment and across specific exposure channels, reinforcing the dominant role of digital media in shaping brand awareness and consumer encounter frequency.

*Table 2. Evaluation of Communication Characteristics by Channel for Fashion Days*

	Communication channel	Statement	Mean Score (per item)	Mean Score (per communication channel)	Mean Score (online/offline)
<b>ONLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>	Social media	The communicated messages are diverse	3.98	3.92	<b>3.84</b>
		The communication is personalized	3.86		
	Influencers	Messages are communicated through influencers who fit the brand profile	3.90	3.82	

	Communication channel	Statement	Mean Score (per item)	Mean Score (per communication channel)	Mean Score (online/offline)
<b>ONLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>		Influencers used in the brand's communication are perceived as highly credible	3.81		
		The communication is personalized	3.76		
	Search engines (e.g., Google Ads)	The communicated messages are clear	3.98	3.78	
		The communicated messages are diverse	3.59		
<b>OFFLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>	TV, outdoor advertising	The communicated messages are diverse		3.07	<b>2.91</b>
		The communication is personalized		2.76	

A more detailed analysis indicates the presence of systematic differences in the evaluation of communication characteristics depending on respondents' habitual media use. It is important to note that these two segments (online-oriented and offline-oriented consumers) are not mutually exclusive, as some respondents may actively engage with both types of media. Therefore, the observed differences reflect general tendencies in media preference rather than strictly separated consumer groups.

In particular, individuals who report frequent engagement with Fashion Days communication in digital environments tend to assign higher scores to online communication attributes, whereas respondents who are more oriented toward offline media evaluate traditional communication more favorably (Table 3). This pattern is consistent with the presence of confirmation bias, suggesting that consumers interpret and assess communication in ways that reinforce their pre-existing media preferences.

At the same time, the findings align with the familiarity-based explanation of the mere-exposure effect, according to which repeated exposure to a given type of communication leads to more favorable evaluations of it. This tendency is particularly evident in the case of perceived personalization in traditional communication, where online-oriented respondents report lower scores ( $M = 2.92$ ), while offline-oriented respondents provide substantially higher evaluations ( $M = 4.30$ ). This divergence indicates that perceptions of personalization are not determined solely by objective channel characteristics, but are strongly shaped by familiarity and prior exposure patterns. Consumers tend to perceive as more relevant and tailored those communication forms with which they are more frequently exposed.

In addition, the results can also be interpreted through the lens of the availability heuristic. Respondents appear to evaluate communication effectiveness based on the ease with which they can recall instances of brand exposure. Given the higher frequency and salience of digital touchpoints, particularly social media, these are more readily accessible in memory, which contributes to higher perceived effectiveness of digital communication compared to traditional channels.

Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals certain exceptions that nuance the role of cognitive biases. In the case of influencer credibility, evaluations remain highly similar across both groups ( $M = 4.23$  vs.  $M = 4.30$ ), suggesting that this attribute is relatively independent of media preference. This indicates that credibility is attributed primarily to the influencer as a source, rather than to the communication channel itself. A similar pattern is observed for influencer-based personalization ( $M = 4.26$  in both groups), which appears to be interpreted more through the individual characteristics of the influencer than through the media environment in which the message is delivered. These findings suggest that influencer communication may partially attenuate channel-based perceptual biases, functioning as a cross-channel persuasive mechanism.

Overall, the results indicate that while digital communication is generally perceived as more effective, particularly in terms of personalization and diversity, consumer evaluations are strongly influenced by cognitive mechanisms such as confirmation bias and the mere-exposure effect. At the same time, certain elements, especially those related to influencer communication, appear more stable across user groups, highlighting the importance of considering both the communication channel and the nature of the message source when analyzing perceptions of brand communication effectiveness.

**Table 3. Differences in the Evaluation of Communication Characteristics by Media Usage (Evidence of Cognitive Bias)**

	Communication channel	Statement	Mean Score (Online-Oriented Consumers)	Mean Score (Offline-Oriented Consumers)
<b>ONLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>	Social media	The communicated messages are diverse	4.49	4.39
		The communication is personalized	4.37	4.26
	Influencers	Messages are communicated through influencers who match the brand profile	4.39	4.17
		Influencers used in the brand's communication are perceived as highly credible	4.23	4.30
		The communication is personalized	4.26	4.26
<b>OFFLINE ENVIRONMENT</b>	TV, outdoor advertising	The communicated messages are diverse	3.46	4.26
		The communication is personalized	2.92	4.30

## Conclusions

This study aimed to analyze how consumers are exposed to and evaluate Fashion Days' communication across digital and traditional channels. The results show that digital communication dominates, both in terms of exposure and perceived effectiveness. Channels like social media, influencers, and search engines are the main ways consumers interact with the brand, while traditional media plays a secondary role.

The findings also confirm that digital communication is perceived as more visible, diverse, and personalized. However, an important insight is that these differences are not explained only by the characteristics of the channels themselves. Consumer evaluations are strongly influenced by cognitive biases and media habits. In particular, results suggest the presence of confirmation bias, as people tend to evaluate more positively the channels they already prefer. This is supported by the mere-exposure and familiarity effects, since repeated exposure leads to more favorable perceptions, and by the availability heuristic, as digital communication is easier to recall and therefore seen as more effective. At the same time, some results show that not all perceptions are influenced in the same way. For example, influencer credibility and personalization are evaluated similarly across groups, which suggests that these depend more on the influencer as a source, not on the channel. This highlights the importance of influencer marketing as a communication tool that works across different environments.

However, the study has limitations, such as the sample size, which is relatively small (100 respondents), and limits generalization. The use of self-reported data may also affect accuracy, since responses depend on memory and perception. In addition, the study focuses on a single brand, which may influence the results. Another limitation is that cognitive biases are analyzed indirectly, without experimental testing. This means that cognitive biases are inferred from observed patterns in the data rather than being directly tested through controlled experimental procedures. A further limitation concerns the segmentation approach used to distinguish between online-oriented and offline-oriented consumers. These groups are not mutually exclusive and may include overlapping respondents, which reduces the precision of the comparison and may blur differences between categories. A more refined segmentation, including distinct profiles such as predominantly online-oriented, predominantly offline-oriented, and mixed-media users, could provide a more nuanced and accurate understanding of how communication is evaluated across different consumer types.

Future research could address these limitations by using larger and more representative samples, incorporating experimental designs to directly test cognitive biases, and extending the analysis to multiple brands or industries. In addition, the integration of behavioral data, such as actual media exposure or interaction metrics, could offer a more accurate picture of how communication effectiveness is formed in practice.

## Acknowledgments

This work was funded by the EU's NextGenerationEU instrument through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Romania - Pillar PNRR-III-C9-2022 – I8, managed by the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, within the project titled „A Study of Consumer Trust in Online Reviews and Social Media Comments in the Age of Artificial Intelligence”, contract no.760248/28.12.2023, code CF 158/31.07.2023.

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