



## DIESEL case study "Branded hedonism"

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# Table of contents

- 1. Era Analysis** ..... **4**
  - Era analysis
  - Competitive Analysis
  
- 2. Brand portfolio architecture** ..... **10**
  
- 3. Brand identity beyond names and marks** ..... **12**
  
- 4. Communication approaches and assets** ..... **16**
  - Identifying communication assets
  - Marketing Approach
  
- 5. Communication considerations and modes** ..... **22**
  - Framing of terms of comparison and key messages
  - Analysis of a communication
  
- *Webography and appendix* ..... **24**

# 1. Era and competitive analysis

## Era analysis

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Diesel jeans started in 1978 when Renzo Rosso, after being designing his own clothes for several years and after graduating of an industrial manufacturing textile school, joined forces with a group of textile manufacturers in his region creating the Genesis group. Under the umbrella of this company many brands were launched and nowadays many still remain well known: such as Katherine Hamnett, Goldie, Martin Guy, Ten Big Boys and of course, Diesel.

In 1985 Rosso took control of the company by buying out the other partners and while being the sole force of the brand the company began its expansion. Without being trained neither in marketing or advertisement, Rosso defined and created the brand from scratch and after few years, in the end of the 80s the brand started to be known as reference in jeans and workwear.

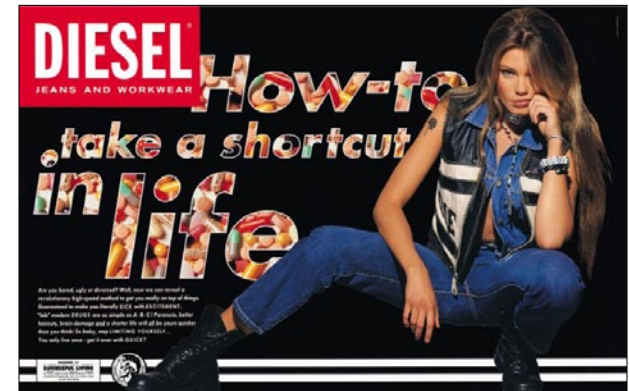
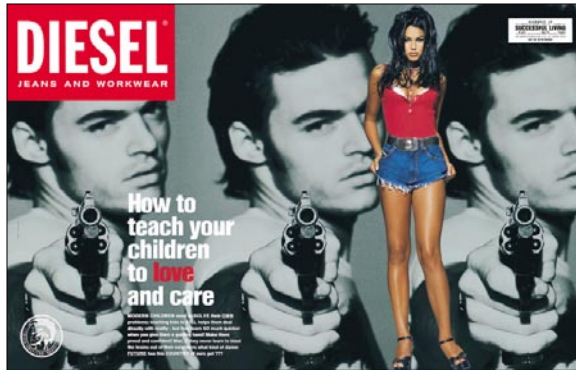


Image of one of the first Diesel campaigns launched in 1992  
"shortcuts in life"

## Brand Era Analysis

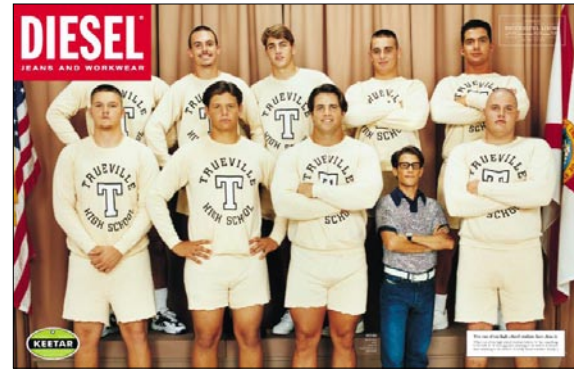
	<b>Era 1</b> Greasy rockabilly 1978-1993	<b>Era 2</b> Quirky urban fashionistas 1993-2000	<b>Era 3</b> Conscious hedonism 2000 - present
Reason for being	Dress the tough guys and their smoking girls	Make people feel different and provocative	Help people carry a more pleasant existence
Value Proposition	Stylish jeans and workwear with a used worn-out look	Affordable fashionable urban street wear	Fun, imaginative and colorful fashion.
Differentiation	Worn-out style	Risky and experimental hard urban style	Stimulating happy clothing
Persona	Tough, wild, adventurous, living in the edge.	Provocative, polemical, sarcastic, extravagant, critical.	Wit ,culture aware, conscious, ironical, naive.
Associations	Rebels, Hot chicks, cigarettes, bikes, rockabilly, 60s, dinners, gas stations., some leather.	Political issues, social conventions, religion, sexuality, fashion itself	Youth, vitality, happiness, hedonism, sex, worrylessness.
Range of authority	Jeans and workwear	Jeans, clothing, shoes, fragrances.	Jeans , clothing, watches, sunglasses , shoes , bags , fragrances, hotels, fashion.
Audience	Tough guys wannabes	Intelligent urban fashionistas	Hedonistic hipsters
Relationship	Pal that gives advice to be tough and brave.	Uncommonness provider to make your life more exciting	Ego and mood booster



### Era 1. Greasy rockabilly 1978-1993

Their original motto “only the brave” characterizes their first era. Defining themselves as ‘jeans and workwear’ clothing company and trying to find their place in the context of the 80s fashion, they try to differentiate themselves from the rest by innovating and selling jeans that looked worn. The jeans came pre washed and some with holes on them. People didn’t realize about this at the beginning that this was the intended look and often returned the jeans believing them to be defective. The misunderstanding didn’t take long and soon people got attracted to it.

The combination of their ads, their great fitting jeans and a breaking and radical logo portraying a Mohawk soon made an impact in the youth and colored T-shirts with the big Mohawk logo became a must-have.

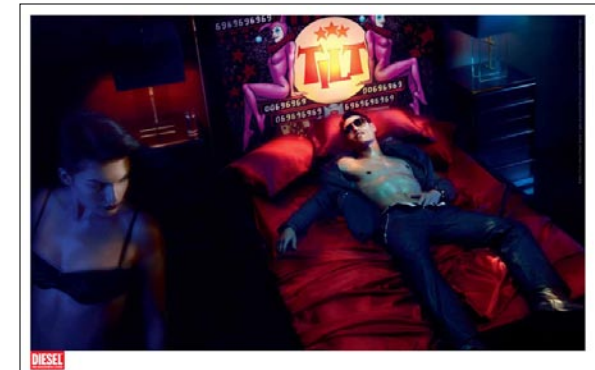


### Era 2. Quirky urban fashionistas 1993-2000

Their initial image of denim, motorbikes and American life gradually shifted in the early 90s. By incorporating odd messages and sometimes unexplainable “how to” guides, they managed to puzzle customers and make them question, think about and trying to understand the sense of the advertisements.

This branding redirection was exemplified with the shift from an advertisement based on a model posing in Diesel clothes in designed context with typography and pictures to a more staged kind of advertisement where models and non-models were portrayed in one single picture.

This contextualized scenarios provided situations that portrayed some mismatching with reality, very often with a lot of humour and criticism that make them different and quite often arose controversy. From this era, the most well known and campaigns that created more buzz are the ones about “luxury life in Africa” portraying a futuristic scenario of Africa getting rich and the western world being then third world, “young people in jeans drowned underwater with a stone attached at their feet” which was very controversial in Argentina since many people during the dictatorship was murdered that way, “being a man” by portraying two gay sailors kissing and the “selling in new markets” which fantasizes how western consumerism could soon invade the ex-communist countries and the contradiction between the message and the consumers situation.

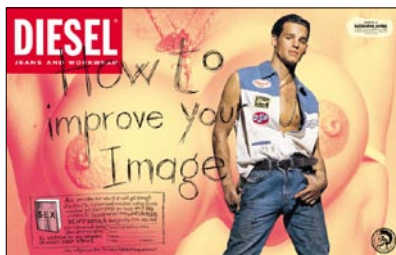


### Era 3. Conscious hedonism 2000 - present

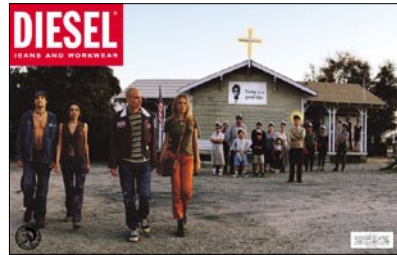
After spending some years centered on criticizing present society, its politicians, ridiculing religions, mocking the fashion industry and its personages, and walking along the extravagant side of personalities and situations they make a turn towards the individual itself and its passions, fears and motivations for life. Thus, their following campaigns are centered around the idea of pleasure, mortality and staying young, urban daydreaming and lusciously loving nature as an quirky ecological impulse.

With the consolidation of Internet and the explosion of free fashion magazines they realize that their consumers are really smart and they decide to change their strategy and gear their brand towards very informed people, intelligent, more individualistic and most important that want to be treated intelligently. This new strategy results in the placement of more advertisement in niche publications and in the creation of campaign specific web sites that perfectly complement the story of their campaigns and provides a more intimate relationship with their audience.

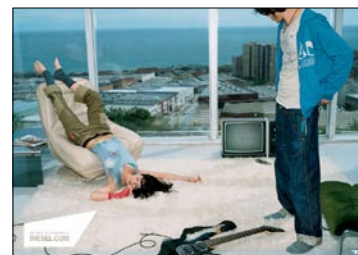
**Era 1. Greasy rockabilly**  
1978-1993



**Era 2. Quirky urban fashionistas**  
1993-2000



**Era 3. Conscious hedonism**  
2000 - present



## Competitive Analysis

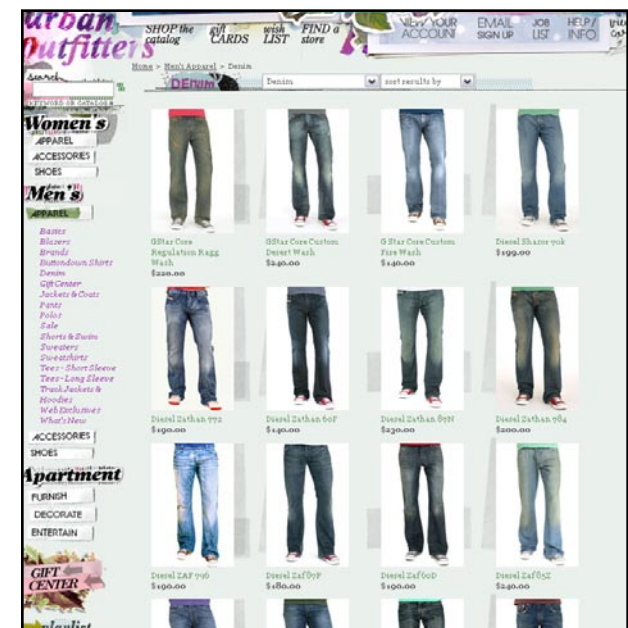
The Jeans and urban clothing industry has many competitors: Levi's, Replay, Acupuncture, Wrangler, Lee, Energie, Gas, Paul Frank, G-Star Raw, Miss Sixty, Calvin Klein. More specifically, with the new revival of stylish jeans many brands have joined the jeans wave such as Seven for All Mankind, Blue Cult, True Religion, Chip & Pepper, Earnest Sewn, Citizen of Humanity, Rock and Republic, Stitch's and Yanuk.

Even though Diesel started as a jeans and workwear apparel brand and the fact that denim is still very present in every season they are not perceived as a jeans only brand anymore. In this sense now they are regarded more as a urban fashion brand.

Early in the 90s Diesel made an statement by opening a flagship store in New York right across Levi's store. Obviously an early competitor is Levi's but this legendary brand that everybody wanted to wear in the end of the 80s has lost most of its appeal and hipness and can not be considered a serious competitor anymore.

Among all this brands and clothing companies that target the casual fashionable youth the ones that can be considered more direct competence for Diesel are Energie and GStar. Energie is also an Italian based company that basing its collection on denim, it provides other clothing alternatives, not so stylish and designed but also appealing to a casual youth. GStar is a dutch brand that with the launch of its last collection by renowned product designer Marc Newson they are targeting a design style conscious crowd that want jeans and other clothing with a high level of detail and differentiation, not only on fabrics and style but also on the cut of the clothes.

The truth is that Diesel has been so many years in the business and have done things so well that is difficult to find a company now that can shadow it. Though it has new threats ahead. The fact that is growing so much can damage their reputation as a non mainstream brand but nowadays they are working to countereffect this by setting their own network of self owned stores where they can control better the environment where the product is sold and are removing their clothes from big commercial centers where they are seen in the same environment with other brands.



Urbanoutfitters.com denim page.

Obviously the youth is a big market and nowadays there are many brands targeting not only young people in general but to explicitly hip customers. On this retail web site, more than 12 brands of jeans are available, all wanting to be as cool as the others.

## Brand competitive analysis



	<i>Conscious hedonism</i>	<i>fashion cut style jeans</i>	<i>Comfortable street ware</i>
Reason for being	Help people carry a more pleasant existence	look ultracool and edgy with fashion cut jeans	make people look cool and feel comfortable on their clothes
Value Proposition	Fun, imaginative and colorful fashion.	denim and urban greyish colors on fashion cut clothing	casual cool natural without being stiff
Differentiation	Stimulating happy clothing	plain clothes with no labels or marks and just a differentiating cut and style with many details	comfortable and fitting-well jeans and clothes
Persona	Wit ,culture aware, conscious, ironical, naive.	fashion conscious and nightlife urban	a not so worried about fashion persona
Associations	Youth, vitality, happiness, hedonism, sex, worrylessness.	hot and good looking models, artificiality, coolness beyond associations.	metropolis, soccer, gang of friends, stay active and in motion
Range of authority	Jeans , clothing, watches, sunglasses , shoes , bags , fragrances, hotels, fashion.	Jeans , clothing, land-rover defender, guest designer experimental clothes.	Jeans , clothing, shoes
Audience	Hedonistic hipsters	metropolitan fashion people	urban youth with other worries besides fashion
Relationship	Ego and mood booster	make you look edgy without being so obvious	a minimum of coolness with a plus in comfort

## 2. Brand portfolio architecture



The Diesel logo has remained the same since its origins, when its brand image referred to hard jeans, gas stations, asphalt and bikes. Since then only the motto inside the logo has changed from “only the brave” to “for successful living”.

### Coexistence of different logos



Diesel uses a combination of the old and the new logos. The mohawk is still used in the trousers labels, the red box is mainly used for the campaigns and the D is used to label products (at the side of sunglasses, in the back of the jeans,

### Sister brands



The sister brands have a completely different style and in the case of 55DSL the diesel name is contracted as a reference to slang and a street casual language. They have one imagotype which is the core and on top of that they make variations every season.

### Product categories



The product categories are labeled also in an unusual way: 'time frames' for watches, 'spare parts' for accessories, 'shades' for sunglasses, 'footwear' for shoes.

They don't have a logo and on the ads their name is combined with the D, but occasionally, when the ad is only about one product category, the diesel logo is modified



### Brand on clothes



Diesel clothes are already branded. On trousers the D both in the front and in the back have become part of the design already. T-shirts use the brand in a very expressive and free way and labels, change from collection to collection making different use of the brand imagery constellation.

The logo has this powerful stretched sans serif on white which comes out against the red. Diesel reference to the fuel as the energy needed to have a successful fashion experience.

## Fragrances



Diesel Fragrances logo take the format of the original Diesel logo only changing the motto for the fragrances name. When it comes to the name of the fragrances, only Diesel PLUS PLUS follows the model, even though is an older fragrance. The new ones have a more flat logo, using the design of the bottle as identifier for the fragrance and leaving the brand in the back.

## Talent support

Diesel New Art



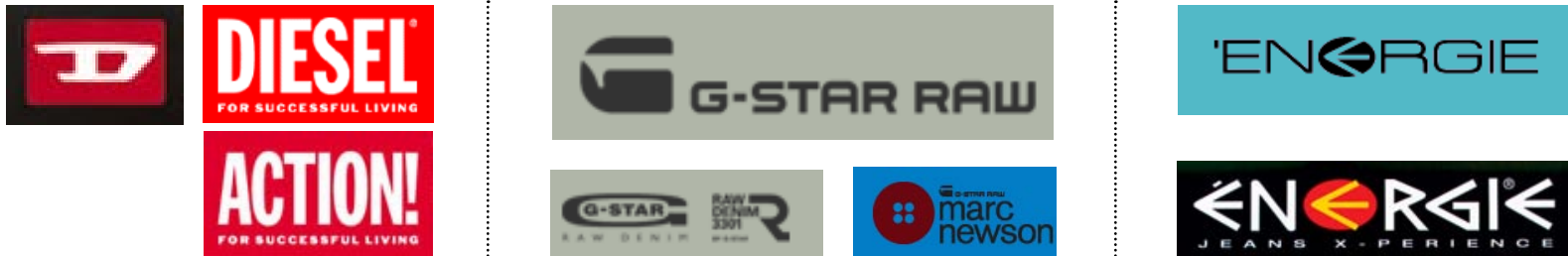
Diesel has parallel projects that support artists, emergent designers and music events. In all this events, Diesel name either does not appear or if it appears it takes the image of the event. This strategy is probably used to give more credibility to the proposal and portray itself as a brand that truly backs and supports creation rather than just another brand that sponsors hip events.

## Hotel



Besides clothing and fashion, Diesel has expanded its business into hotels. The pelican hotel is located in a art deco building in Miami. Their logo matches more this style rather than following the brand and having the whole hotel painted in red and being a physical brand. This follows Diesel's strategy to treat their customers intelligently and try to seduce them with experiences rather than with marketing or branding tricks. The Diesel logo actually appears on the web site but in a very discreet way.

### 3. Brand identity beyond names and marks



#### Clothing category

In the clothing category Diesel's most direct competitors are GStar and Energie. There are many brands competing in this segment but specially this three, they manufacture very edgy collections, most of them based on jeans but also extending it to tops, shirts and jackets.

#### Category connection

##### Font Style

Both three competitors share the same type of sans serif font, all in upper case. The only difference between three logos is that Energie font is thinner than the others and sometimes they use a different logo with sharper angles, but very occasionally.

##### Logo application

Diesel's logo is simply a rectangle with Diesel and its bottom line inside. Both G-star and Energie have an imatotype displayed either inside or around the logo.

##### Associated words

All three brands have some words associated with the brand name, not necessarily always a bottom line:

-Diesel extends its name to compose a "diesel for successful living," trying to transmit that they do clothing which is the fuel or the energy for a successful life:

-GStar adds the word "raw" to extend their brand to try to portray themselves as a brand that is only about the produce, about the raw denim and that there is no candy on top of it in form of advertisement or other fashion attributes.

-Energie in the recent past used a bottom line "jeans x-perience" but nowadays they are not using it and they just stick to the misspelled energy which would be correct in french 'energie'

##### Color

By having their brand inside the rectangle, Diesel logo can be applied anywhere perfectly, specially in top of multicolored photographs, which is what they do in their campaigns. From the early days of the brand when they were already using collages of pictures or very colorful photographs for their advertisements, their logo has always remained the same: the white type against the red background. In fact, they were so sure that everybody knew their logo, that in occasion for the "Take action" campaign they changed the Diesel word in the logo for "Action for successful living". This combined with the kind of photographs that Diesel use felt to the audience as just another Diesel ad, even though the Diesel word was nowhere, which was in part a strategy to give credibility, if possible, to the social message of the ad as not being sell-out.

If Diesel is easily recognized by their white against red, GStar is mainly known by the white logo against denim grey backgrounds, all very colorless. In the opposite, Energie places its white or black logo against 'fauve' and violent colors and on the jeans they use their traditional logo with the colored E with yellow on top of red. This last one is the brand image that customers recognise the most since is the one they have been using on their clothes consistently.

It is worth noting that from collection to collection (a collection's campaign lasts normally only 6 months) this brands make a very flexible use of the brand, changing the way their logo appears in the advertisement depending on the theme and topic of the campaign



### **Differentiation from category**

What makes different Diesel from its competitors is the way they advertise the clothes. While GStar and Energie portray models using the clothes in a semi staged scenario, Diesel excels at creating stories around their photographs.

In the young clothing area the perception of the brands by consumers is mainly based on the advertisement and nowadays more and more on the web site of each brand. So pretty much the values the brand portrays are based on the art direction and the concept of the campaigns launched every 6 months.

GStar may change their ads every collection but the art direction of the ads stays the same: models posing in motion and pictured details of the clothes. A very simple and traditional approach to clothing advertisement. Energie uses also models again a urban background and all standing on asphalt and being very street and macho.

Diesel has maintained their storytelling for years and customers even expect them create compelling messages beyond the fancy people posing with cool clothes. What Diesel does is to condense in the same rectangle clothes, attitude and their brand of course. In the campaign about "the future, a musical to believe in" the diesel logo appears staged as it would be a prop of the whole setting, sometimes printed on a trash container, sometimes hanging from a zeppelin (see picture). The topics and themes picked for the campaigns make Diesel ads even more different. Lately their themes they are not so quirky and odd as those were before but still they maintain this unusual in the election and the perspective of the topics. As an example, their last campaign called "Hedonistic pleasure" takes domination inside out and you can see girls riding guys or makes humorous winks to the enjoyment of sex by the youth.

### **Consistency across all Diesel offerings**

Since the clothing changes from year to year, the consistency of the brand is mainly reflected on the advertisements and the store's displays, which change accordingly with the campaigns as well. Diesel stores are very white and neutral so they fit with every years collection and the space does not have to be made over again.

Concerning the advertisements, they never make big shifts on it, and if they introduce changes those are inserted in a very progressive way.



Diesel has specialized in creating stories as the support to show their clothes. For the spring/summer 2000 collection "It's real Joanna" they made up a fictional character of a pop star that was chased day and night by paparazzis. The ads mimicked the style, attitude and language of the yellow press very realistically.

# Identity and diversity elements

similar  
different

site look-and-feel changes for every collection

rich use of typography

rich context and story around clothes

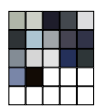
risky and advanced interface

models

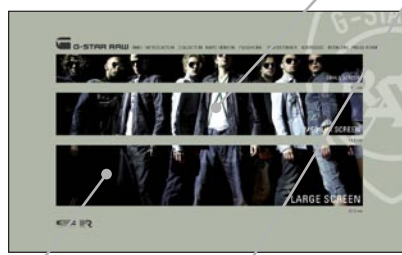
sans serif bold fonts



soft gamma of colors



range of cold colors



very saturated colors



absence of text on web sites

traditional use of photography in mosaic

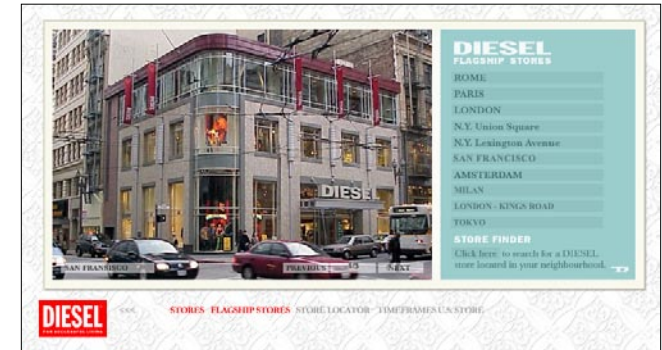
# 4. Communication approaches and assets

## Identifying communication assets

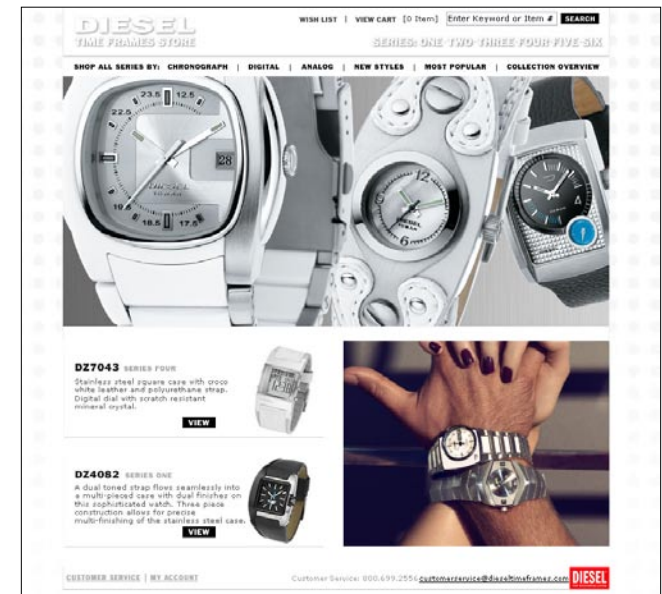
Diesel, being a fashion brand has many assets that can highly benefit the brand communicator.

### Rich Customer Interaction Potential

Now that it is expanding worldwide and is seeing two-digit growth Diesel is starting to take control of the channel by shrinking the amount of non-diesel outlets to 5500 from 10000 and expanding its owned stores. Doing so it aims to control the way the user interacts with the brand in a controlled scenario. At the same time it is controlling the way user accesses the brand itself and its campaigns by investing in rich interactive applications on the web. For years it has always engaged potential customers with its campaigns, that more than presenting a product they were able to transmit a message that in a way connected with its audience and made it think about and try to understand the message even most of the times it is uncertain and ambiguous. They also provide the store as a virtual channel where their customers can shop, instead of going to other retailers' web sites (Nordstrom, Urban Outfitters,...)



Diesel Store in San Francisco



Time frames store on-line



*Cultural connection and personal expression value*

Diesel's advertisements help the brand to add a cultural component to the clothes beyond their aesthetics and the messages imprinted on them. Cultural values as sexuality, hedonism, idleness, youth, suicide, religion or others have been constant references on Diesel advertisements and as the same company acknowledges their campaigns react to what happens in the world.

*Interesting positive news*

The fact that Diesel presents a collection every 6 months enables them to make customers expect good news on a regular basis. The innovation appears on all the lines, from watches to clothing and users are always expecting edgy and fresh stuff from Diesel. Also the campaigns they launch are something to be expected because customers, after so many years of good campaigns, to expect to be impressed or surprised by the new campaign.



Diesel campaigns have been so controversial that have become the target of spoof ads from advertising critic organizations like [adbusters.org](http://adbusters.org).



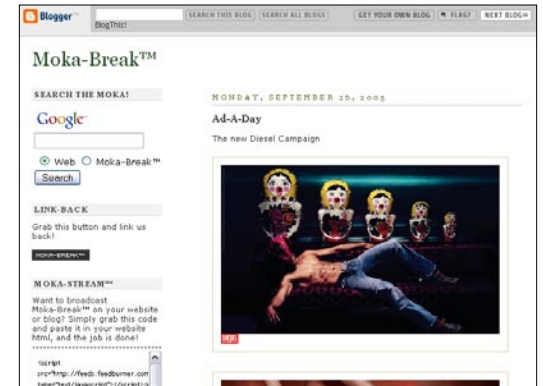
Website announcing new collection



FEMALE

MALE

Clothes from collections change every 6 months



Diesel's campaigns creating buzz in weblogs

### *Underlying differentiation from competitors*

As all the companies that are in the fashion and clothing industry, Diesel is not doing nothing that anyone else could do. At any moment, any competitor or any new company entering in the market could start creating clothes as good as theirs and hiring a creative team to have cutting edge campaigns.

### *A premium niche*

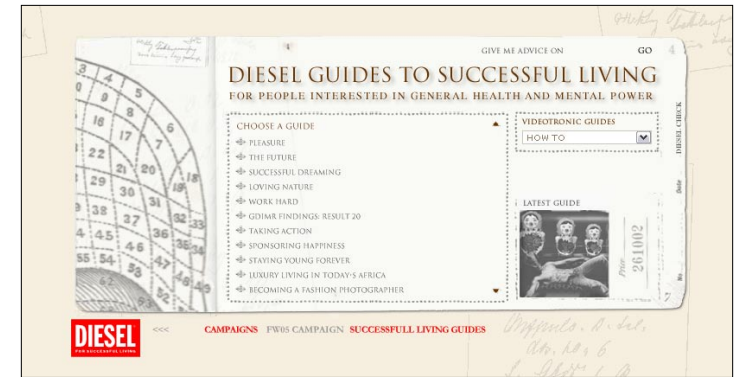
Even though Diesel manufactures street clothing the brand itself it is regarded as a fashion brand - recent polls ranked Diesel No. 15 among worldwide luxury brands -- above Lancome, Armani, Bose, Calvin Klein, and Ralph Lauren. In this way we could assume that Diesel is operating in a premium niche with all this characteristics: great design, great advertisement, great channels and exclusivity based on price.

### *Inherent brand visibility*

The brand itself is not really announced on its clothes, except in few pieces like T-shirts or jackets and tops but when this happens the brand is displayed in a very typographical way with no references to the logo and just taking the name of the brand as an excuse to play with rich fonts. A part from this obvious visibility, the brand is not much seen anywhere else. Diesel is looking for dosed visibility in the right places and publications (specialized magazines, no more billboards). Brands visibility is represented by the stores in the city and its glass windows at the heart of major cities (London, Tokyo, Milan, NYC) Besides this, the products itself from Diesel are so different that they reclaim attention themselves. Diesel is a brand that is worn by people that like fashion but do not want to be compared with fashion victims and don't want to be the so-called 'label whores' who wear label and brand names all over the body and complements. Thus, the importance of a design that is different and reclaims attention is important, and normally, Diesel tags its products but very discreetly so the people that wants to find out which brand the product is, they can find out.

### *Easy-to-reach audiences*

Fashion audience pays a lot of attention into what is new and what can make them difference themselves from the rest. In this way, the audience is easy to reach, and maybe we could even say that is the audience the one that goes after the brand to see what it will offer in the future. For this purpose the internet channel proves very helpful to provide information and maintain attention from the base of customers.



Extra offer for the soul. All the guides for successful living (past campaigns) compiled on the web for further reference by die-hard fans.



"Diesel planet: on the web with information about the company, its founder, communications and even the Diesel Farm which produces the wine "Rosso di Rosso"

## The communication assets of existing brand equity

### Existing awareness

Diesel has been notorious for some years already and its campaigns and what people remember about them are a brand equity. What they do is to every now and then make a campaign more polemic, or more memorable so their name again occupies a share of the people's brain attention for a little more.

### Heritage

As it has been mentioned, Diesel's polemic and rememberable campaigns are part of the brand heritage that it accumulates along the years. At a customer level, any piece of clothing that has been purchased and has been satisfactorily worn and enjoyed it is part of this memories that customers put on the brand, specially if they renew their wardrobe every few months with new clothes.

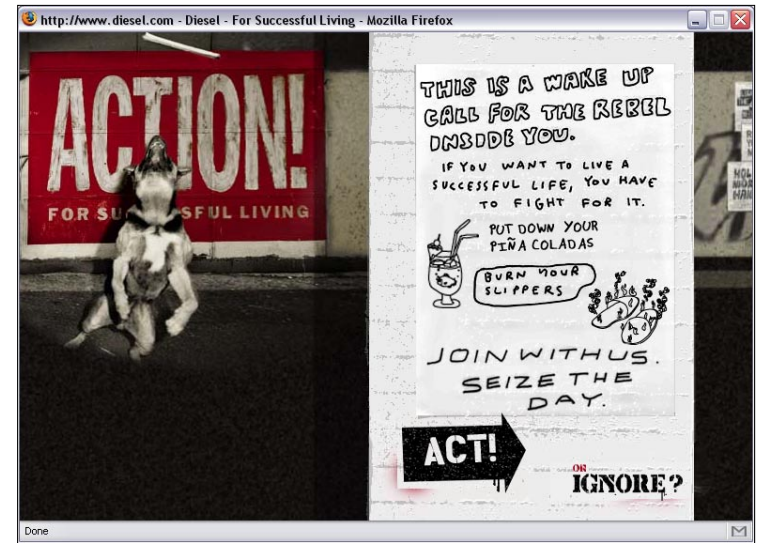
## Monetary brand communication assets

Diesel is not a public company and does not need to publicize itself so much to the open public, Instead they concentrate their efforts on specific and specialized channels. Since they have been experiencing a rapid growth in the last years with new self owned stores and their advertising expense has not varied much, probably they have a reasonable amount of money to spend if needed at some time.

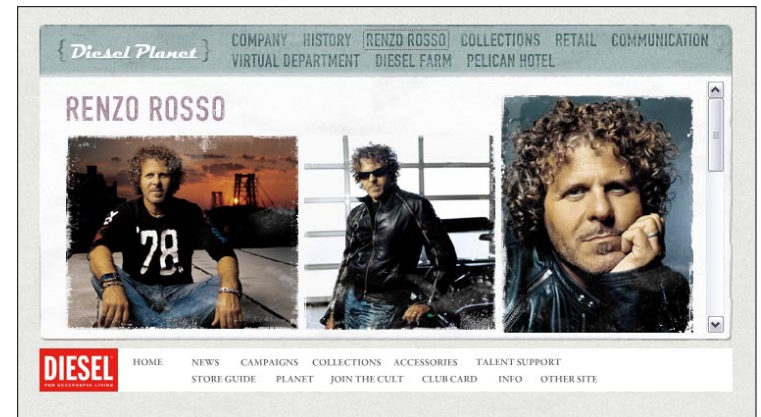
## Organizational brand communication assets

Renzo Rosso is still the manager of the company and he is also the man that created the whole brand with the help of creative agencies. So this combination of CEO and brand manager in one single person is probably the secret why Diesel has managed to build itself so freely as a brand, because they didn't have to convince any top manager about the need to articulate the brand. So yes, the management it is very much aligned with the brand department.

The communication strategies are perfectly orchestrated and they launch a whole set of communication items every time a collection is launched: clothing, campaign, ads, web site and store decoration. All perfectly synchronized and with the communications remarkably very integrated both in style and time.



web site exclusively launched to complement the "Action!" ad campaign



Renzo Rosso as the CEO and Brand manager that created Diesel.

## Marketing Approach

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Diesel is not a public company so many of the marketing approaches that traditional public companies have to consider are not applicable to Diesel itself.

### Marketing in an industrial economy

*Customer-as-target*

Diesel is establishing a closer relationship with the customer by whispering and establishing a dialogue with it.

*Organize by product units*

Diesel organizes itself in product units but also in customer segments beyond men and women by including Diesel for skaters and more urban street life and Diesel Style lab for hard-core fashion victims

*Focus on profitable transactions*

Diesel focuses on keeping the margins up and at the same time maintain a close relationship with the customers by providing a full range of products to accompany and match their lifestyle and the campaigns to be happy beyond the clothes.

*Judge performance primarily by financial results*

Diesel is not a public company so it does not really have pressure to make enormous profits or to meet the year sales expectations. As Renzo Rosso appoints, he does this for fun so we can assume that Diesel looks both for marketing metrics and financials.

*Focus on satisfying shareholders*

Diesel is not a public company. So I guess is more focused on satisfying the stakeholder groups

### Marketing in an information economy

*Customer-as-relationship*

*Organize by customer segments*

*Focus on customer lifetime value*

*Look at marketing metrics as well as financial ones*

*Focus on satisfying several stakeholder groups*

## Marketing in an industrial economy

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*The marketing department does the marketing*

Everyone in the company does the marketing. Even the clothes are the face of the marketing indirectly. And their own stores let them interact with customers.

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*Build brands primarily through advertising*

Diesel both has campaigns that impress and as well they have side projects that support new musicians, art, and pleasure in general.

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*Emphasize customer acquisition*

In clothing is very hard to retain a customer who while being influenced by ads and campaigns still end up buying from the brand mainly because of the design. We could possibly argue that they try to create faithful followers that sync with their philosophy and culture explained mainly on ads.

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*Measure customer satisfaction*

The clothing category is very volatile and customer loyalty is almost null due to the speed at which clothes and fashion change. Hence, the immediate satisfaction of the customer at the moment of considering the purchase is what is more focused on the company.

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*Over-promise to get an order*

Diesel promises clothing for successful living, and promotes happiness through their clothes. So as many other clothing companies they charge their product by embedding values that go beyond the clothes.

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*Make the firm the unit of analysis*

Slowly, Diesel has tried to capture more of the value chain by reducing the amount of non-diesel retail stores and starting to control all aspects of the offering.

## Marketing in an information economy

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*Everyone in the company does marketing*

---

*Build brands through company behavior*

---

*Emphasize customer retention*

---

*Measure customer value and loyalty*

---

*Under-promise, over-deliver*

---

*Make the value chain the unit of analysis*

## 5. Communication considerations and modes

### Framing of terms of comparison and key messages

In terms of how they frame their messages we will compare Diesel with GStar since they are close competitors in the stylish urban high-end jeans market.

Since its conception, Diesel has been commanded by Renzo Rosso, the young minded man that still owns the 100% of the company and controls its growth and development. In the early nineties, when he decided it was time to expand for his company he strongly bet for products that would be different from the back then hegemonic Levi's in terms of design and freshness as opposed to the jeans that were the originals but lacked of variety.

Now that clothing has changed, Levi's is no longer a competitor and there are multiple brands at the same time, Diesel is not really comparing with no one but themselves. Through the years their message have been constant, stating the difference and the quirkiness but changing the background topics that framed this difference, evolving from more global and sociopolitical issues to more hedonistic and youth-worries-centered.

The Diesel brand therefore frames clothing, watches, shoes and other accessories comparisons in terms of stating a clear difference based on edgy design that stands out (but not too obviously). It encourages customers to be happy, worry free and enjoy life but without being too superficial and being conscious and intelligent enough about the world they live in.

GStar frame on comparison has a stress on being cool, arrogant, hot and good looking and not looking at anyone else. Their tag line "raw" referring both at the plain construction of its clothes, looking very simple and neutral and the neutral advertisements where they announce "just the product" (being false this assertion as well, because the clothes appear on models and this models act). The supposed coolness of the brand with the models and fashion pose and its rawness characterize themselves almost as a street fashion brand with the coolness of the catwalk and the freshness of the street style.

#### Interview with Renzo Rosso in Businessweek

The Driving Force behind Diesel , January 20, 2003

[http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03\\_03/b3816135.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03_03/b3816135.htm)

*Q: What's the philosophy behind your provocative advertisements, which sometimes seem absurd or pointless?*

**A: We try to do things that are right for the moment we are living in. Whatever is happening in the world changes the politics and strategy of Diesel's communication.** Our advertising is ironic or humorous -- it's not product advertising. It's the message that's important -- a common, shared way of seeing things.



2004 spring/summer Diesel campaign wit cool and conscious "Nature lovers"



GStar website with a picture of the fashion show presenting the new collection spring/summer 2006.

## Analysis of a communication

The communication analyzed here is one of the many print ads made for the spring/summer campaign "The future: a musical to believe in"

### Audience

The ad is clearly targeted at young adults. The ad is a staged photograph with many actors and in a urban scenario, trying to resemble a

### Framing of terms of comparison and key messages

In the ad the brand's name appears as a backdrop in a very sophisticated way trying to give the impression that it has no importance and Diesel itself doesn't really want to advertise its clothes but wants to let the people/actors and their actions express themselves in freedom on the advertisement.

### Stage of involvement

Clothing is a seasonal product and its products are always candidates for purchase. This ad targets people in the three different stages considering that people is potentially always considering purchasing clothes: of awareness for the people that do not know the brand, of consideration and preference for the people that already know the brand but haven't seen this season's collection.

### Situation of use

Since it is advertising the spring/summer campaign these ads are published and launched right before the collection hits the stores and the three or four following months.

### Media use

As Renzo Rosso stated in one interview, Diesel ads will never be seen in mainstream media, because the targeted customers are not mainstream consumers. Instead this ads run in specialized magazines and more and more, this ads end up being not only advertisements of the brand but also ads that point to the campaigns that are fully displayed on the web.

### Communication mode

The ad is a presentation around people, many people, and around the culture or the sociocultural context of the advertisement. It uses references to the hippies, the musicals, the free love, peace, and pigeons flying to convey a message of happiness and spiritual joy in a context of a musical which are always cheerful and always have happy endings.. The ad both celebrates the good vibes and happiness of the brand with colors, peace. The clothes chosen for the ad are very colorful and match the whole set up, associating the clothes with the good times.



### Interview with Renzo Rosso in Businessweek

*Q: Your ads are very creative and win awards, but they aren't widely seen. You even did a series of TV spots, but they didn't appear on any mainstream channel. Why?*

*A: Oh, television is too popular. **It doesn't make sense to spend a lot of money to place ads on television when you are only talking to 5% of the audience.** We used those spots on MTV and at the cinema because you can select the films your ads are shown with. That way you have an idea that you are reaching the right audience.*

## Webography

Diesel web site  
<http://www.diesel.com/>

The Driving Force behind Diesel  
[http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03\\_03/b3816135.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03_03/b3816135.htm)

The Pelican. Diesel Hotel  
<http://www.pelicanhotel.com/>

Renzo Rosso at Design Boom  
<http://www.designboom.com/eng/interview/rosso.html>

## Appendix

"Coercion: why we listen to what they say"  
by Douglas Rushkoff  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/rushkoff/coercion.html>

"[...] The Diesel jeans company ran a series of billboard and magazine ads designed to critique the whole discipline of advertising. One showed a sexy but downtrodden young couple, dressed in stylish jeans and arguing with each other in what looked like the messy, 1960s-era kitchen of a dysfunctional white-trash family. The ad meant to reveal the illusory quality of the hip retro fashion exploited by other advertisers. Diesel would not try to convince anyone that those were the "good old days." We were meant to identify with the proposition that the enlightened values of the sixties, as represented by the media, are a crock. But the meaning is never made explicit. Another Diesel campaign consisted of advertisements which themselves were photos of garish billboards placed in ridiculous locations. One showed a sexy young couple, dressed in Diesel jeans, in an advertisement for an imported brand of ice cream. The billboard, however, was pictured in a dirty, crowded neighborhood filled with poor Communist Chinese workers.

Benetton and The Body Shop ran similar ads, but at least theirs made some sense. One Benetton campaign pictured Queen Elizabeth as a black woman and Michael Jackson as a Caucasian to comment on racial prejudice. A series of Body Shop ads featured giant photos of marijuana leaves, presumably to call attention to drug and agriculture laws. These are appeals to a target market that feels hip for agreeing with the sentiments expressed and for grasping the underlying logic. There is, indeed, something to "get."

**We are supposed to believe that Diesel's ads also make sociopolitical statements, but we never know quite what they are.** In fact, the ads work in a highly sophisticated disassociative way: They make us feel as tense and uneasy as we do after a good scary story—but we refuse to admit to our anxiety lest we reveal we are not media-savvy enough to get the joke. **The campaign is designed to lead the audience to the conclusion that they understand the ironic gesture, while the irony is left intentionally unclear.** No one is meant to get the joke. In that moment of confusion—like the car buyer subjected to a disassociative hypnotic technique—the consumer absorbs the image within the image: two sexy kids in Diesel jeans. Thinking of yourself as hip enough to "get" it—no matter what "it" may be—means being susceptible to lying to yourself, and to being programmed as a result."

"A brand by any other name - How marketers outsmart our media-savvy children"  
by Douglas Rushkoff  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/rushkoff/brand.html>

"[...] New magazine advertisements for jeans, such as those created by Diesel, take this even one step further. The ads juxtapose imagery that actually makes no sense - ice cream billboards in North Korea, for example. The strategy is brilliant. **For a media-savvy young person to feel good about himself, he needs to feel he "gets" the joke. But what does he do with an ad where there's obviously something to get that he can't figure out?** He has no choice but to admit that the brand is even cooler than he is. An ad's ability to confound its audience is the new credential for a brand's authenticity."