

CORPORATE BRAND MANAGEMENT AND REPUTATION

MASTER CASES



**Djerf Avenue's Pajama Fight:
A case of online duplicates**

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Corporate Brand Management and Reputation: Master's Cases

The "Corporate Brand Management and Reputation: Master's cases" is a case series for applying the case method of teaching and learning in higher education. The cases are relevant to brand strategists in private and public sector organizations, as well as academics and students at universities, business schools, and executive education.

The cases are written by groups of master's students as a course project. The specially developed case format is defined as: *"A management decision case describes a real business situation leading up to a question(s) that requires assessment, analysis, and a decision reached by discussion in class. The alternative approaches and recommendations from the class discussion are followed by a description of the choices made by the case company. This description is then discussed by the class."*

The student groups select the topics of their case providing updated and relevant insights into the corporate brand management. The cases can be used as "written cases" (handed out and read in advance, later to be discussed in class) and/or as "live case" (presented by the teacher following a discussion in class). Each case includes teaching notes, visuals with speaker's notes, learning objectives, board plans, and references.

The mission of the series is *"to develop cases for discussion providing insights into the theory and practice of corporate brand management and reputation, with the intent of bridging the gap between academic teaching and managerial practice."*

The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers at the elective course Corporate Brand Management (BUSN35 – five-credit course/eight-week half-time studies), part of the master's program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The cases represent the result of the intellectual work of students under the supervision of the head of course.

Although based on real events and despite references to actual companies, the cases are solely intended to be a basis for class discussion, not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. The cases are free to be used and are to be cited following international conventions.

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WRITTEN CASE

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The Epitome of Scandinavian style: meet Matilda Djerf

On a rainy day, you open up Instagram on your phone and start to scroll aimlessly, as you always do. Suddenly, a picture-perfect image of a neatly styled girl with flawless, blonde blowout hair posing in the streets of Stockholm appears on your feed. You pause for a moment and think to yourself, "Who is she?". In the sprawling digital landscape of social media, where trends bloom and fade with the blink of an eye, one name stands out like a beacon of Scandinavian chic: Matilda Djerf. Hailing from the picturesque landscapes of Sweden, 26-year-old Matilda has effortlessly carved her niche as a social media influencer, captivating audiences with her impeccable taste for fashion and unwavering commitment to minimalist elegance and lifestyle. With over three million followers on Instagram and 1.5 million on TikTok, Matilda has established herself as a style icon for many, and over the past few years of her social media career has become a name to remember.

Exhibit 1 Inside Matilda's Instagram



Matilda Djerf's influence extends far beyond her captivating aesthetic; she has mastered the art of seamlessly blending Scandinavian minimalism with the ever-evolving trends of Gen Z. Through her content on TikTok, she effortlessly embraces popular hashtags like #cottagecore and #cleangirl, showcasing her versatility and adaptability to the latest digital movements, appealing to a larger crowd of devoted followers (Paton, 2022).

Upon first glance, it seems as if nothing could go wrong in the perfectly curated social media world of Matilda Djerf... *right?* Unfortunately, in October of 2023, there was a social media storm brewing. However, just as in all stories, in order to understand what happened, we have to go back to where it started.

2016 - Sunny Beginnings

In the warm summer of 2016, right after Matilda and her boyfriend Rasmus graduated from high school, they jetted off to the Caribbean for an adventure of a lifetime that would shape her future in ways she could never have imagined. Matilda describes this pivotal moment: *"While travelling, I started a blog for my family and friends. I brought just one small camera on that trip, and we shot bikini looks and posted them on Instagram. Next thing I knew, I had 3,000 followers. It was major. A lot of followers to have in 2016"* (Toresson, 2024). When she eventually made it back to Sweden, she was faced with a huge decision: she could either go back to working at a juice bar or take a chance and pursue a career in social media, risking the unknown. In the end, she decided to pursue her passion as she knew that in the worst-case scenario, getting another full-time job was always an option (Toresson, 2024).

As new followers emerged daily, and the *likes* under Matilda's posts on Instagram reached a few thousand, she could tell – the future was looking bright.

2018 - Shaping Matilda's Influencer Career

As Matilda continued her travels, she also maintained her activity on Instagram, consistently posting content. However, once she found herself back in beloved Stockholm, things took off. It was not until 2018 that Matilda truly felt the weight of her social media presence transform into a full-time job. That pivotal year marked the beginning of her collaboration with brands, signalling the onset of her rise to influencer stardom (Toresson, 2022). With each strategic partnership, Matilda's influence grew, as did her recognition within the fashion industry. Followers from all over the world wanted to recreate Matilda's curated outfits, and photographs showcasing her favourite clothing items were put on many fashion enthusiasts' mood boards on Pinterest (Spruch-Feiner, 2022).

Among Matilda's collaborations, one stood out as particularly influential: her partnership with Zalando. Working with the fashion giant allowed Matilda to showcase her favourite pieces from their collection, effortlessly blending her signature Scandinavian aesthetic with the brand's offerings. Through carefully curated posts on Instagram and TikTok, Matilda captivated audiences with glimpses of her soft-focus Scandi dream life. From chic city streets to idyllic countryside escapes, her posts transported followers into a world of effortless elegance and timeless style.

Exhibit 2 Matilda Djerf x Zalando partnership



Matilda Djerf's influence extends beyond just her impeccable fashion sense; her signature hairstyle has also become an iconic staple in the world of social media. With its effortless waves and perfectly tousled layers, Matilda's haircut has garnered widespread attention, becoming one of TikTok's most emulated styles to date.

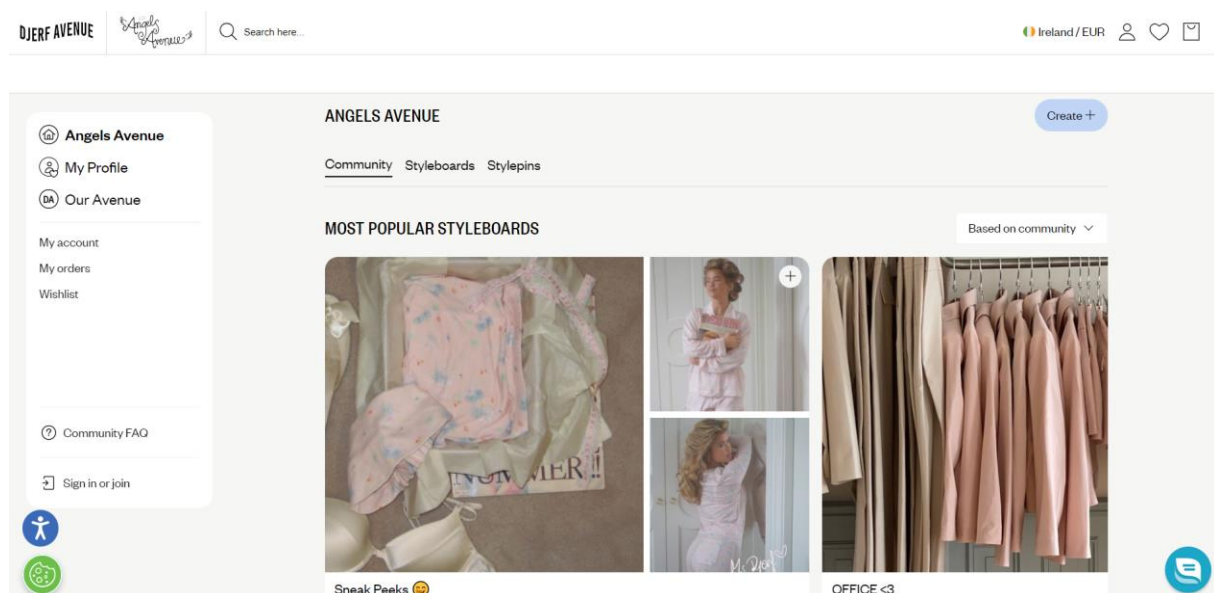
And yet, amidst the glitz and glamor of influencer life, Matilda remained grounded, cherishing the unwavering support of her most devoted followers, whom she affectionately calls "Djerf Angels" up to this day (Paton, 2022). These loyal fans, inspired by Matilda's authenticity and style, formed the backbone of her growing community. Through their support and encouragement, Matilda found the strength to pursue her social media dreams with set-on determination.

2019 - Introducing Djerf Avenue

Despite Matilda's active engagement in various design collaborations, she felt her creative insights were often overlooked, leaving her sidelined in crucial business decisions. Concerns about the origins of product production, the portrayal of models in photoshoots, and the excessive retouching of images weighed heavily on her mind. Fuelled by a desire for autonomy and a commitment to integrity, Matilda, alongside her partner Rasmus, made a bold decision in 2019: to embark on their own fashion design journey, completely on their own terms (Toresson, 2022). With the launch of Djerf Avenue, fans and followers were given the opportunity to not only admire Matilda's style but to embody it themselves by purchasing pieces directly inspired by her lifestyle.

Central to the ethos of Djerf Avenue was the idea of building a strong community, one that resonated deeply with Matilda's existing base of loyal supporters, "Djerf Angels." These devoted fans became more than just customers; they became true brand ambassadors, actively shaping the identity and direction of the brand. At the heart of this community was the Angels Avenue, a special tab on the Djerf Avenue website where fans could share their style boards, engage with fellow enthusiasts, and interact with the brand on a more personal level. Within the vibrant community of Angels Avenue, the most ardent brand lovers found a platform to connect and engage with one another (Angels Avenue, 2024). From leaving comments under curated images to sharing styling tips and personal stories, these interactions fostered a sense of belonging.

Exhibit 3 Angels Avenue



2021 - Soaring Success

In 2021, the success of Djerf Avenue reached impressive heights for an influencer brand, marking a significant milestone in the brand's remarkable journey. From its establishment, Djerf Avenue had been on a trajectory of dynamic growth, fuelled by Matilda's seemingly genuine commitment to authenticity, style, and community. Vogue reported that in 2021, the brand was making \$8 million in sales, and as forecasted by The New York Times in the coming years, it would be making more than \$20 million yearly (Noyen, 2024).

From claims of ethically sourced materials to size-inclusive designs available for purchase, Matilda ensured that every aspect of the brand reflected her values and resonated with her audience. This authenticity struck a chord with consumers at the time, fostering a deep sense of loyalty and connection that set Djerf Avenue apart in a crowded marketplace. Each collection was a celebration of diversity, creativity, and self-expression, inviting women of all ages, shapes, and backgrounds to join the "Djerf Angels" community. As the brand looked towards the future, guided by Matilda's vision and passion, there was no doubt that its journey was only just beginning.

October 2023 - Trouble in Avenue

In October of 2023, a troubling development loomed on the horizon for Matilda Djerf's brand. What initially appeared as a distant threat soon materialized into a stark reality: several small companies, once deemed inconsequential, began flooding online platforms with duplicates, or "dupes," of Djerf Avenue's coveted items. Among the most replicated pieces was a viral fruity pajama set, a beloved staple in Matilda's collection. However, these replicas were often of inferior quality and sold at significantly lower prices than the authentic Djerf Avenue items.

Exhibit 4 Djerf Avenue's Summer Berry Pajama Set



Regardless of the quality, curiosity ended up winning for some individuals. With their eye-catching prints and trendy appeal, the dupes swiftly gained traction among some TikTok creators, with viral videos emerging showcasing the pajamas within the fashion community (Tolentino, 2023). While the majority of videos were promoting the dupes, it is important to note that certain creators who also identified as “Djerf Angels” were encouraging their audiences to still purchase the original pajama set, as the duplicate product was “very disappointing” (Kohler, 2023).

Either way, the discovery of these dupes sent shockwaves through the fashion world and tested Matilda's resolve as an entrepreneur and advocate for ethical business practices. With her brand's reputation on the line, Matilda knew she and her team had to take decisive action to protect the integrity of Djerf Avenue and reassure her loyal customers.

As we reach this critical moment of the story, we ask you to put yourself in the shoes of Matilda and her management team at Djerf Avenue and answer this question:

How can Djerf Avenue strategically respond to the appearance of dupe videos online?

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