

DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER BUSINESS MODEL STRATEGY IN BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE BRAND IMAGE (STUDY AT ENGINEER WORKWEAR BRAND)

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Abstract

The Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) business model has been one of the most sought-after ways for many brands to have a closer, more authentic connection with their consumers, yet still maintain complete control over how their brand is perceived and experienced. In contrast to past models relying on intermediaries such as wholesalers and distributors, D2C offers brands the chance to connect with consumers and sell directly to them through digital channels like company websites to vibrant social media bazaars. The direct contact is not purely about sales, it informs brands what their consumers require, their consuming patterns, feedback, and compliments. Depending on these inputs, brands can innovate and develop long-term relationships with customers. This is a story of the D2C strategy being pursued by Engineer Workwear, a local Indonesian brand dealing in workwear for young engineers and field staff. Using a case study and qualitative examination, the research delves into the primary areas such as the manner in which the brand manages distribution so that it can successfully maintain prices and inventory in position, the manner in which repeated storytelling and brand conversation allow their messages to connect, and the way interactive digital content community participation further strengthens their relationship with the customer. Equally vital is incessant product innovation specifically derived from consumer feedback. The report highlights that the success of Engineer Workwear lies in an equilibrium mixture of good brand communication, friendly community culture, and adaptability in respecting advancing digital technologies. Together, these traits provide a unique brand personality and durable customer memories, which enable the brand to stay relevant and grow with the fast-evolving competitive market.

Keywords: D2C, brand image, business strategy, sustainable branding, fashion

Introduction

In the world of business today, the landscape has shifted dramatically with the rise of digital commerce. One of the most transformative changes has been the rise of the Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) business model. Traditionally, businesses relied heavily on intermediaries—wholesalers, distributors, and retailers—to get products into consumers' hands. However, the advent of the internet and digital platforms has allowed brands to bypass these middlemen and go straight to the consumer. This direct connection not only allows businesses to maintain control over their pricing, brand messaging, and customer relationships, but also enables them to gather rich customer insights that were previously difficult to obtain (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

As Chaffey (2019) argues, the D2C model offers brands a unique opportunity to engage directly with consumers. This direct line of communication allows brands to better understand consumer preferences, leading to more personalized marketing, improved product offerings, and ultimately, stronger customer loyalty. Moreover, the power of social media and digital marketing has turned platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee into vital tools for brands looking to connect with their customers on a deeper level. Engineer Workwear, a local Indonesian workwear brand, has recognized this shift and capitalized on the D2C model to cater to a growing demand among young engineers and field professionals for stylish yet functional workwear. For years, workwear has been considered a purely functional product—essentially clothing designed for practicality. However, younger generations, especially millennials and Gen Z, are starting to demand more from their work apparel. These consumers are looking for style, comfort, and a sense of identity in their workwear. As Schiffman and Kanuk (2020) note, modern consumers are more likely to connect with brands that offer not just functionality, but products that align with their personal values and lifestyles. Engineer Workwear has tapped into this need, offering products that combine both style and durability, tailored to the needs and aspirations of a new generation of professionals.

By adopting the D2C model, Engineer Workwear has been able to strengthen its brand image and engage directly with customers, using feedback and digital analytics to refine and improve its offerings. From 2023 to

2025, the brand's presence across Shopee, TikTok, and its official website has enabled it to establish a consistent and personalized brand identity, which resonates with its target audience. Through platforms like TikTok, Engineer Workwear has not only been able to showcase its products but also build a community of brand advocates, driving both engagement and sales.

The allure of the D2C model is its ability to cut through the noise of traditional retail and communicate directly with the consumer. Liu and Kim (2021) argue that the D2C model is especially effective in industries like fashion and workwear because it allows companies to build brand communities and personalized experiences at scale. Brands that embrace this model are often able to create stronger emotional bonds with their consumers, which results in long-term loyalty and a deeper connection with the brand.

For Engineer Workwear, embracing D2C wasn't just a strategy to increase sales, but a way to redefine what it means to be a workwear brand. The company understood that today's consumers aren't just looking for clothing to wear while they work; they are looking for a way to express themselves and feel a part of something greater. This shift in consumer mentality has pushed Engineer Workwear to prioritize community-building and emotional engagement over just product functionality. As Kotler and Keller (2021) point out, brand communication today isn't just about advertising; it's about creating authentic conversations with consumers that reflect their values and needs.

One of the biggest challenges for brands moving into the D2C space is managing the complexity of multiple digital channels. Engineer Workwear has strategically used Shopee, TikTok, and its official website to maximize its reach and establish a unique brand presence. As Chaffey (2019) suggests, businesses that successfully utilize multiple platforms are able to leverage the strengths of each to create a more cohesive and engaging customer journey.

The Shopee platform, with its broad reach in Southeast Asia, has proven to be a valuable tool for Engineer Workwear to tap into a diverse audience. Shopee's user-friendly interface and massive customer base have allowed Engineer Workwear to directly interact with consumers in a more efficient way. Through Shopee, the brand can ensure pricing consistency and leverage promotions that resonate with price-sensitive customers, while still offering the same high-quality products. Shopee also provides a unique opportunity for brands to gather data insights and feedback on products in real-time, helping companies make informed decisions about inventory, pricing, and product improvements.

Meanwhile, TikTok has become a central hub for brand communication and community engagement. The visual and interactive nature of the platform makes it an ideal space for Engineer Workwear to connect with a younger, more dynamic audience. Through TikTok, the brand can share not just product promotions, but also stories that resonate with the lifestyle of the target audience. For example, Engineer Workwear can showcase the real-life experiences of young engineers using their gear in the field, which builds authenticity and trust. The brand also engages with its audience through fun, interactive content such as polls, challenges, and customer-generated content, making them feel like part of the Engineer Workwear community.

Finally, the official website serves as a critical platform where the brand can offer more personalized experiences, detailed product information, and customer support. It is also where Engineer Workwear manages its direct sales, provides product customization options, and gathers data on customer preferences. Having a centralized, branded website enables the company to reinforce its identity and keep a close connection with its loyal customers.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to examine the implementation of the Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) business model by Engineer Workwear. The case study methodology is effective in understanding how the company navigated the transition to the D2C model and adapted its business strategy to leverage digital platforms for sales and engagement. This study focuses on company data, interviews, and academic literature to understand the effectiveness of the D2C strategy in enhancing brand image and fostering customer loyalty. The data for this study comes from three primary sources:

1. **Company Data:** Sales data from 2023 to 2025 obtained from Engineer Workwear's official website, Shopee, and TikTok Shop were analyzed to understand the impact of D2C channels on revenue growth, consumer engagement, and product popularity. This data was critical in evaluating how well the brand managed pricing, inventory, and sales performance across these different platforms.
2. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders at Engineer Workwear, including the founders, marketing team, and product development team. These interviews provided insights into how the brand leveraged its D2C channels, how it communicated its core values to consumers, and how customer feedback was integrated into the product development process.
3. **Literature Review:** A review of relevant academic journals and books helped provide the theoretical foundation for understanding the D2C business model, consumer behavior, and the impact of brand

communication on customer loyalty. The works of Kotler & Keller (2021), Schiffman & Kanuk (2020), and other relevant sources were instrumental in framing the research questions and guiding the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved a detailed review of sales performance across Shopee, TikTok Shop, and the official website. Trends in consumer purchasing behavior and sales figures were examined to assess the success of each channel in contributing to overall business growth. The second phase involved analyzing the qualitative data from the interviews and social media engagement metrics to understand how Engineer Workwear communicated its brand message and engaged with consumers on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Results

Overview of D2C Model Implementation

From 2023 to 2025, Engineer Workwear successfully implemented the D2C model through its official website, Shopee, and TikTok Shop. Sales data shows a marked increase in revenue across Shopee and Tiktok Shop, with Shopee being the standout performer. The ease of access to a broad customer base on Shopee has allowed the company to grow its customer reach, particularly among younger consumers who are more likely to use e-commerce platforms for workwear purchases.

Sales data indicates that TikTok Shop has also been an important channel for Engineer Workwear, especially for engagement with customers. The company's ability to sell directly through these platforms has allowed it to maintain control over its pricing and inventory management, ensuring that consumer expectations are met consistently. Direct communication with consumers has provided Engineer Workwear with real-time feedback, enabling the brand to continuously innovate its offerings.

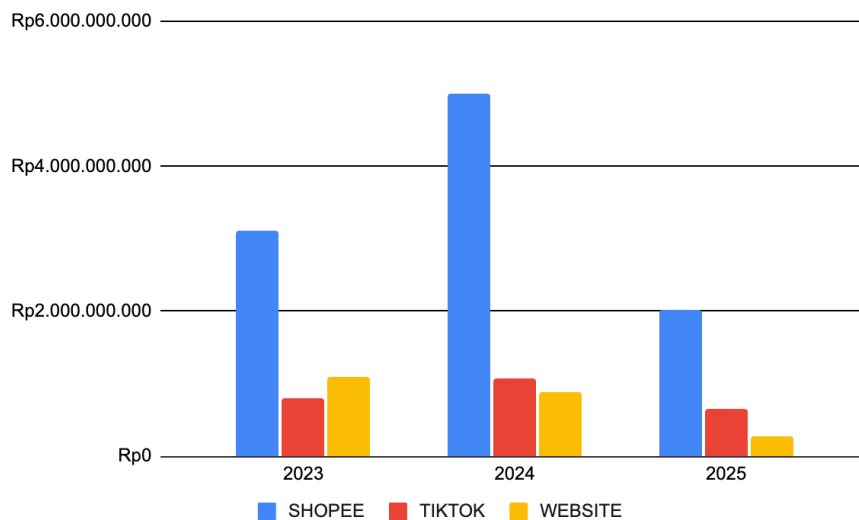


Figure 1

Engineer Workwear's Sales Data (Shopee, Tiktok, and Website)

The data is Engineer Workwear turnover data from 2023 to May 2025. There was an increase in Shopee in 2024 due to the influence of promotions and consumer shifts from the website to Shopee. And the increase in TikTok was due to the influence of content engagement and regular live streaming of Engineer Workwear on TikTok.

Brand Communication Consistency

One of the key successes of Engineer Workwear's D2C strategy lies in its ability to communicate a consistent brand message across all channels. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, have been integral in conveying the brand's core values of quality, resilience, and professionalism. Content created for these platforms not only showcases the brand's products but also integrates real-life customer stories and behind-the-scenes content that humanizes the brand, making it more relatable.

The brand's social media engagement metrics from 2023 to 2025 demonstrate that posts with interactive elements, such as user-generated content, polls, and Q&A sessions, saw significantly higher engagement. This level of interactivity has helped build an emotional connection with the audience, encouraging customer loyalty and advocacy.

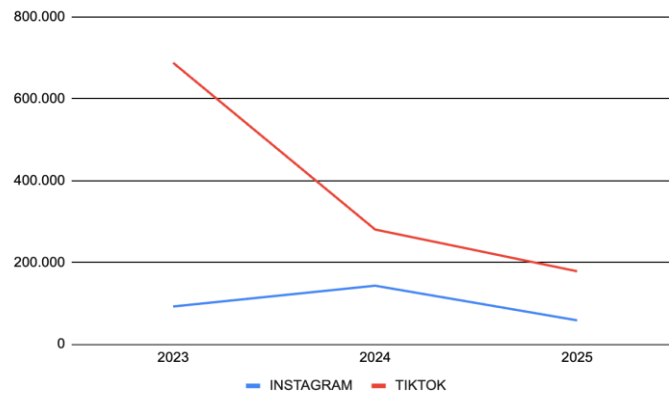


Figure 2

Social Media Engagement from Instagram and Tiktok (2023-May 2025)

There was an increase in engagement in 2024 on Instagram and in May 2025 the number of engagements was almost the same as the engagement in 2023. There was a decrease in engagement on TikTok in 2024 due to the effect of the closure of TikTok Shop on October 4, 2023 and only reopened on December 12, 2024, but it has not shown an increase in 2024.

Community Engagement and Customer Loyalty

Community engagement has played a central role in Engineer Workwear's D2C strategy. Campaigns like #ForeverUnion have fostered a strong sense of belonging among customers, transforming them into brand advocates. Data from company records reveals that customers who interacted with the brand's community-focused content were more likely to repurchase and recommend the brand to others.

Further analysis of Instagram customer interactions confirms that personalized communication and community-driven campaigns led to higher customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. As Schiffman and Kanuk (2020) suggest, creating a sense of community can significantly enhance brand retention.

The following is a post with the theme #ForeverUnion on the Engineer Workwear instagram platform which shows the high engagement of the community. with the d2c business model, engineer workwear can more easily control its community.

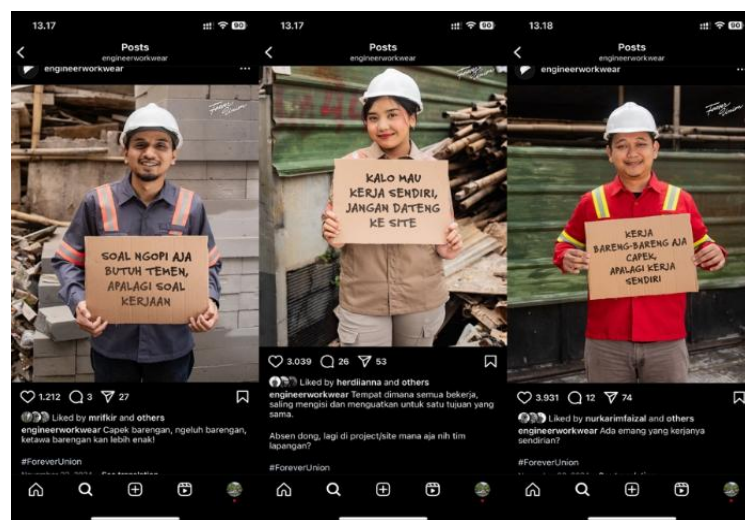


Figure 3

Community Engagement for #Forever Union on Instagram

Conclusions and Recommendations

The implementation of the D2C business model by Engineer Workwear has been crucial to the brand's success in building a sustainable brand image and increasing customer loyalty. By utilizing Shopee, TikTok Shop, and its official website as primary sales channels, Engineer Workwear has effectively engaged with consumers in an increasingly digital and competitive market. The brand's ability to consistently communicate its values and build emotional connections with its audience has led to sustained growth and a stronger market presence.

Leverage Advanced Data Analytics: Engineer Workwear should consider investing in advanced data analytics tools to gain even deeper insights into consumer preferences and purchasing behavior. This will allow the brand to predict emerging trends and offer more personalized experiences.

Expand Community Engagement: While Engineer Workwear has excelled with campaigns like #ForeverUnion, there is room for expansion. Hosting virtual events, offering exclusive loyalty programs, and further integrating customer feedback into campaigns can strengthen brand loyalty.

Improve Cross-Platform Integration: To further enhance the customer experience, Engineer Workwear should work on improving cross-platform integration across Shopee, TikTok, and the official website, ensuring a seamless and unified customer journey.

Embrace Sustainability: As sustainability becomes a higher priority for consumers, Engineer Workwear should continue to focus on eco-friendly and ethical production practices, promoting these efforts through its D2C channels to attract more environmentally conscious customers.

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