

Article

Tailoring the Ideal Customer: A Methodological Framework for Buyer Persona Design in the Tailoring Industry

Juan Camilo Ospina-Agudelo ¹, Carlos Hernán Suárez-Rodríguez ^{2,*}, Esteban Largo-Avila ²,
Alba Mery Garzón-García ^{2,*} and Laura Suárez-Naranjo ³

¹ Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Universidad del Valle, Caicedonia 762540, Colombia; juan.ospina.agudelo@correounivalle.edu.co

² Regionalization System, Universidad del Valle, Caicedonia 762540, Colombia; esteban.largo@correounivalle.edu.co

³ Faculty of Medicine, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL 32816, USA; la313876@ucf.edu

* Correspondence: carlos.hernan.suarez@correounivalle.edu.co (C.H.S.-R.); garzon.alba@correounivalle.edu.co (A.M.G.-G.)

Abstract

Amid rapid digital transformation and shifting consumption models, the tailoring industry faces a dual challenge: preserving its artisanal essence while adapting to the expectations of an increasingly digital-oriented clientele. This study introduces a methodological framework for designing buyer personas suited to the contemporary artisanal tailoring ecosystem, offering a structured approach to understanding modern consumer behavior within hybrid physical–digital environments. Using a mixed-methods design and Sastreía Jorge Ospina (Caicedonia, Colombia) as a case study, 378 online surveys—117 from current clients and 261 from potential clients—were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques (Pearson’s χ^2 , $p < 0.05$). Managerial priorities were concurrently assessed using a multi-criteria decision-making model (TOPSIS) with entropy-based weighting. The analysis identified two consumer archetypes: (1) the Classic Segment—mature clients motivated by tradition, loyalty, and reliability, who value tangible elegance and experiential craftsmanship; and (2) the Digital Segment—young consumers driven by aesthetic trends, convenience, and immediacy, who prioritize online interaction and personalized digital consumption. TOPSIS results highlighted older men ($C_i = 1.000$) and young women ($C_i = 0.870$) as the most strategically valuable customer groups. These findings redefine the post-digital tailoring consumer as a hybrid entity guided by artisanal value, hyper-personalization, and digital engagement.

Keywords: artisanal; buyer persona; consumer segmentation; digital transformation; hybrid; marketing; tailoring; traditional industries



Received: 31 October 2025

Revised: 8 December 2025

Accepted: 11 December 2025

Published: 25 December 2025

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and

conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.

1. Introduction

Digital transformation in the twenty-first century has evolved far beyond its initial technological and operational orientation to become a disruptive structural, cultural, and symbolic force that is progressively reconfiguring the foundations of production, consumption, and organizational identity within the global economy (X. Liu et al., 2025). Once primarily associated with automation, efficiency gains, and process optimization, digital transformation has developed into a multidimensional phenomenon that reshapes firm–consumer relationships, reorganizes mechanisms of knowledge, experience, and value co-creation, and transforms how meaning is produced, communicated, and sustained in

contemporary markets (M. Chen et al., 2025; Dąbrowska et al., 2022). This evolution has given rise to novel modes of brand signification, consumer engagement, and competitive differentiation, progressively dissolving historically entrenched boundaries between tradition and technology, materiality and mediation, and heritage and innovation (Gavrila Gavrilă et al., 2023; Szeszák et al., 2025).

In this context, digital technologies no longer merely restructure organizational processes; rather, they function as a pervasive cultural infrastructure capable of actively redefining the symbolic architecture of markets and the meaning systems through which value is constructed and legitimized (Christofi et al., 2025; Leso et al., 2023). By shaping collective imaginaries, social practices, consumer expectations, and processes of identity formation, digitalization has extended its influence even into sectors historically characterized by artisanal logics, embodied knowledge, and structural resistance to innovation (Vărzaru & Bocean, 2024).

Among such sectors, artisanal tailoring constitutes a paradigmatic case through which the tensions, negotiations, and hybrid articulations between tradition and digital transformation can be empirically observed. Deeply embedded in centuries-old practices of craftsmanship, interpersonal trust, and intergenerational knowledge transmission, bespoke tailoring currently confronts a dual imperative: preserving cultural authenticity while simultaneously integrating into a digital ecosystem that demands new forms of visibility, personalization, and strategic competitiveness to ensure long-term sustainability (Pararakis et al., 2025; Tang & Wang, 2024). Traditionally, artisanal tailoring has relied on highly specialized manual practices—including individualized pattern drafting, precision cutting, hand-crafted garment construction, and iterative in-person fittings—embedded within intimate, trust-based relationships between tailor and client. This model is sustained by tacit and experiential knowledge of fabrics, bodies, and social contexts unique to the master tailor; the continued use of traditional tools and techniques; and the employment of high-quality natural fibers such as wool, silk, and linen.

The resulting garments are valued not only for their technical precision, durability, and aesthetic refinement (D’Uonno, 2017), but also for their symbolic, emotional, and experiential significance as markers of identity, exclusivity, and social distinction. Historically—and to a significant extent still today—these meanings have been constructed, circulated, and legitimized primarily through reputation, relational proximity, and word-of-mouth networks, rather than through mass-mediated or algorithmically driven communication channels (De la Cruz Galicia et al., 2025).

These foundational characteristics increasingly collide with the dynamics of digitally accelerated consumption. The global digital fashion market—valued at USD 23.94 billion in 2024 and projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 6.3% through 2030 (Grand View Research, 2025)—signals not merely economic expansion, but a profound cultural transformation in how fashion is produced, consumed, and interpreted. Contemporary consumers increasingly prioritize immediacy, hyper-personalization, sustainability, inclusivity, emotional resonance, and digitally mediated experiences (Del Olmo Arriaga et al., 2025; Haris, 2024). In parallel, emerging technological infrastructures—including social media ecosystems, influencer marketing, e-commerce platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR)—are redefining how firms identify, engage, and retain consumers across omnichannel environments (Chu et al., 2025; Enyejo et al., 2024). Within this landscape, hyperconnectivity, immersive user experiences (UX), and algorithmically enabled personalization have become central sources of competitive advantage (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025).

However, these dynamics do not necessarily displace artisanal traditions. Rather, they enable the emergence of hybrid value ecosystems in which digital mediation can be strate-

gically interwoven with craftsmanship, potentially amplifying—rather than eroding—the expressive, symbolic, and experiential dimensions of artisanal labor (Felipe Sgorla et al., 2025). Despite these opportunities, the adoption of digital strategies and the alignment with emerging consumption dynamics remains strikingly limited among small fashion enterprises and heritage-based industries. Empirical evidence indicates that only between 10% and 25% of textile and apparel firms have implemented practices such as digital market intelligence, data analytics, omnichannel integration, algorithmic personalization, or strategic digital brand management (Akhtar et al., 2022; Nwobodo, 2024). This structural lag is mirrored in academic research, which continues to privilege technologically advanced, economically dominant fashion corporations while systematically marginalizing microenterprises, family workshops, and culturally embedded production systems (S. Liu & Liu, 2025). Such epistemological biases constrain scholarly understanding of how digitalization reshapes value creation, authenticity, and consumer meaning-making within heritage-based industries.

Addressing these limitations requires theoretical and methodological approaches capable of interpreting consumption in artisanal contexts through integrative, human-centered frameworks that combine cultural sensitivity with analytical rigor. In this regard, the buyer persona methodology offers a robust interpretive instrument for constructing empirically grounded consumer archetypes that synthesize behavioral patterns, emotional motivations, and contextually embedded symbolic meanings (Aimé et al., 2022). Beyond conventional market segmentation, buyer personas function as relational and semiotic devices that align organizational identity with consumer motivations, affective dispositions, and meaning structures. Nevertheless, their application remains underdeveloped within artisanal and heritage sectors, where consumption is inherently relational, experiential, and symbolic rather than purely transactional (C. Chen et al., 2016).

Moreover, although recent scholarship increasingly advocates hybrid consumer segmentation approaches that reconcile technological adoption with cultural heritage and human authenticity (Argento et al., 2025; Dąbrowska et al., 2022; Maity & Lee, 2025), substantial theoretical and empirical gaps persist regarding how digital mediation and heritage craftsmanship can coevolve without compromising cultural integrity. Advancing this research agenda therefore requires moving beyond instrumental conceptions of digitalization narrowly focused on customer acquisition and retention, toward interpretive paradigms that conceptualize digital technologies as mechanisms of cultural production, experiential enrichment, and symbolic co-creation (Shankaranarayana et al., 2025). Understanding the contemporary consumer of artisanal tailoring thus entails decoding subjectivities that are simultaneously anchored in material heritage and shaped by the algorithmic logics of the digital age.

In response to these challenges, this study proposes a culturally sensitive and data-driven methodological framework for designing buyer personas tailored to the hybrid ecosystem of contemporary artisanal tailoring. The framework is empirically applied to Sastrería Jorge Ospina, a family-owned tailoring workshop founded in 1960 in Caicedonia, Valle del Cauca (Colombia), locally renowned for bespoke design, personalized garment construction, and specialized alterations. Despite its artisanal excellence, the firm faces significant challenges related to limited digital visibility, reliance on traditional marketing strategies, and difficulties in attracting younger, digitally oriented consumers. These conditions reveal a growing misalignment between artisanal mastery and contemporary consumption dynamics, rendering the case particularly suitable for operationalizing the scope and purpose of the proposed framework:

1. To develop representative buyer persona profiles for artisanal tailoring within digitally mediated consumption environments.

2. To compare “traditional” and “digitally oriented” consumer segments across demographic, behavioral, symbolic, and perceptual dimensions.
3. To identify market segments capable of generating sustainable economic value while preserving cultural authenticity and artisanal integrity.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. *Digital Transformation as a Sociotechnical and Cultural Meta-Paradigm*

Digital transformation has progressively transcended its early conceptualization as a technology-driven efficiency initiative to emerge as a sociotechnical, economic, and cultural meta-paradigm that fundamentally restructures organizational logics, market architectures, and systems of meaning production (Agarwal, 2020; Vărzaru & Bocean, 2024). Rather than denoting a discrete or linear process of digital tool adoption, digital transformation constitutes a pervasive cultural rationality grounded in ubiquitous connectivity, algorithmic mediation, datafication, and continuous semiotic production (Yao, 2025). Within this rationality, digital infrastructures operate not merely as operational backbones, but as contested cultural arenas in which identities, norms, power relations, and regimes of value are continuously negotiated and reconstituted.

Recent scholarship has increasingly challenged technologically deterministic narratives, particularly in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), traditional organizations, and heritage-based firms. Empirical evidence demonstrates that digital mediation may reproduce structural inequalities, introduce new asymmetries of visibility and participation, and embed algorithmic biases into everyday organizational practices (Heeks, 2022; Hossain et al., 2025). However, emerging sociotechnical perspectives conceptualize digital transformation as a recursive and co-constitutive process, wherein technological artefacts and social structures mutually shape, stabilize, and transform one another over time (Kessler et al., 2025). Within heritage-based microenterprises, this recursive dynamic generates a distinctive form of organizational hybridity, characterized by the coexistence and interpenetration of analog craft practices and digital affordances. Artisanal tailoring exemplifies this condition: tailors are compelled to integrate the precision, scalability, and informational richness of digital infrastructures while simultaneously preserving the sensory, affective, and narrative dimensions that constitute the epistemic core of the craft (Maheswari et al., 2025).

2.2. *Consumer Culture Theory and the Hybrid Consumer*

This study is theoretically anchored in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), which conceptualizes consumption as a culturally embedded practice through which individuals construct, negotiate, and communicate identity within historically and institutionally situated market systems (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Thompson et al., 2013). CCT foregrounds the dialectical interplay between consumer identity projects, marketplace structures, and sociotechnical environments (Vera et al., 2019), rendering it particularly well suited for examining digitally mediated consumption contexts characterized by rapid technological change and symbolic fluidity.

In digitally saturated environments, identity performances increasingly assume hybrid configurations that integrate material, symbolic, and algorithmic dimensions. Extending Belk's (2013) notion of the extended self, contemporary consumers navigate overlapping physical, digital, and datafied realms in which identity is continuously assembled through interactions with platforms, interfaces, recommendation systems, and personalization algorithms (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). These hybrid consumers do not merely consume products; they engage in ongoing processes of self-curation, narrative construction, and symbolic alignment across mediated touchpoints. Within the context of artisanal tailor-

ing, consumers articulate a paradoxical yet complementary demand for authenticity and hyper-personalization. They seek the cultural depth, uniqueness, and embodied knowledge associated with handcrafted garments, while simultaneously embracing algorithmic customization, immersive digital interfaces, and data-driven design processes (P. Zhang, 2021; Y. Zhang et al., 2023). Consumption thus evolves into a participatory act of cultural co-creation, wherein garments function not merely as utilitarian products but as symbolic interfaces that integrate tactile, emotional, and computational layers of meaning (Bonazzi et al., 2024).

2.3. Value Co-Creation and the Service-Dominant Logic

Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) reframes value as relational, emergent, and contextually enacted, rather than as an intrinsic attribute embedded in goods (Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2017). From this perspective, value materializes through dynamic processes of resource integration within interconnected service ecosystems, encompassing cognitive, material, emotional, cultural, and symbolic resources. In artisanal tailoring, digital interfaces—such as online client platforms, immersive or virtual fitting systems, and interactive design tools—operate as primary loci of value co-creation. These interfaces enable artisans and clients to collaboratively shape not only the physical garment, but also its associated identity narrative, aesthetic meaning, and experiential value (Basile et al., 2024). This epistemological shift redefines the traditional tailor–client relationship from a transactional exchange to a dialogical partnership grounded in iterative feedback, shared sensemaking, and experiential alignment.

Within this relational configuration, the concept of the buyer persona undergoes a substantive transformation. It evolves from a static segmentation artefact into a dynamic cognitive and interpretive mechanism that synthesizes data-driven insights with artisanal sensibilities, guiding iterative design decisions, personalization strategies, and narrative coherence across touchpoints (Díaz Soloaga et al., 2023; Maciejewski & Wróblewski, 2025). Digital transformation thus emerges as an ongoing process of organizational learning and cultural adaptation through which value is continuously co-produced.

2.4. Buyer Persona Theory and Human-Centered Design Thinking

Originally developed within marketing, user experience, and interaction design research, the buyer persona framework conceptualizes consumers as holistic archetypes derived from ethnographic inquiry, behavioral analytics, and qualitative interpretation (Jansen et al., 2021; Sheppard & Mahdad, 2021). By integrating emotional drivers, cognitive heuristics, social contexts, and demographic variables, buyer personas enable organizations to articulate user-centered value propositions that align organizational identity with consumers' aspirations, motivations, and symbolic worlds (Salminen et al., 2022).

This framework aligns closely with Human-Centered Design (HCD) and Design Thinking, both of which emphasize empathy, iterative experimentation, and participatory co-creation as foundational principles of innovation (Nandan et al., 2020; Siricharoen, 2023). In the context of artisanal tailoring, these approaches facilitate a critical transition from intuition-based personalization toward evidence-informed cultural personalization, wherein consumers actively participate as co-designers of meaning rather than passive recipients of customized offerings (Berthinier-Poncet et al., 2025). In this study, the buyer persona transcends its instrumental marketing origins to function as a symbolic translation architecture. It captures the dialogical interplay between heritage-based authenticity and digital affordances, operating as a key analytical device for understanding how identity, value, and narrative coherence are co-produced within artisanal ecosystems.