



# Ghost Lifestyle: Digital Marketing Audit

MS70113E: Global Brand Management and Leadership



Student Name: Allison Witucki

Student ID: 32135981

Module Leader: Dr Gidraph Michuki

## **Executive Summary**

Focusing on one's well-being has been a societal conversation for centuries and has only increased as the digital age dawned (Catalani, 2021). Once valued at \$44.43 billion in 2021, the worldwide sports nutrition market has the potential to make \$85.7 billion by 2030 (Ainbinder, 2022).

The reasoning behind this could be accredited to a wider demographic entering the market; gone are the days when Arnold Schwarzenegger fanatics and professional athletes dominated the protein shake game (Convery, 2019). Today males aged 19 to 30 are the primary target for sports nutrition retailers. Supplements have caught the attention of “lower-level athletes, amateurs, sports people of all ages and the wider general public (CRN, 2018)”. The products themselves also cater to the wants and needs of a diverse population. Variations of multivitamins, probiotics, and greens products neighbour sports supplements such as protein powder, creatine, pre-workouts, and fat burners (Convery, 2019). With today's advanced digital ecommerce technology at fitness consumers' fingertips, all it takes is a scroll through one's social media feed to find the latest supplements (Ainbinder, 2022).

The focus of this brand audit will be on Ghost Lifestyle, one of the fastest growing brands in the supplement industry since launching in 2016 (Knox, 2022). With the goal of creating the “first lifestyle sports nutrition brand”, co-founders Dan Lourenco and Ryan Hughes aimed at catering to the needs of every active consumer, straying away from the bodybuilding-centric market at the time. Licensing has been at the forefront of their business plan, locking down collaborations with brands such as Warheads, Swedish Fish, Oreo, and Chips Ahoy, and signing partnerships with influencers like Maxx Chewing and Christian Guzman. Primary products include their pre-workout “Legend”, whey protein, pump product, greens

powder, and thermogenic “Burn” (Ghost Lifestyle, 2023). Ghost’s brand equity will be unpacked using the Online Customer Experience Pyramid Model, the SWAT Model, and other sources, while also delving into identity, image, and positioning. Ghost Lifestyle distinguishes itself through strategic partnerships and diverse target audiences. This analysis highlights Ghost Lifestyle's journey and potential growth opportunities, alongside detailing the leadership roles played by co-founders Ryan Hughes and Dan Lourenco. The report concludes that Ghost Lifestyle's unique approach and diverse community show it is an industry trailblazer.

# Table of Contents

Brand Audit - 5

Figure 1: The Online Customer Experience Pyramid - Success Factors Model - 8

Framework Analysis - 8

Figure 2: SWAT Model - 9

Digital Technology and Marketing Tools - 11

Leadership Roles - 12

Recommendations - 13

Conclusion - 14

References - 15, 16

## **Brand Audit**

A brand audit is an externally consumer-focused valuation involving numerous activities to calculate the overall health of the brand, uncover sources of equity and recommend ways to refine and leverage that equity (Keller, 2013). This can be performed for brands to better understand what their consumers' perception is and foster a better consumer-producer relationship. To properly conduct a brand audit, one must identify the company's brand equity. According to Keller, brand equity is "the added value of a product, expressed usually in monetary terms based on the sum of all distinguishing qualities, assets and attributes (i.e., perceived quality, strong brand associations, patents, trademarks, channel relationships, etc.) of a brand, drawn from all relevant stakeholders, that results in personal commitment to and demand for the brand" (Keller, 2013). Throughout a brand audit, consumers dive into the ins and outs of what aspects of a company feed into the brand equity.

When conducting a brand audit, it is important to define the brand's identity. Brand identity is how the business wishes to be perceived by its consumers, conveyed through visuals such as the logo, name, and tagline. This is vital for a brand to set itself apart from competitors in the same market (TGPRC, n.d). Ghost Lifestyle can be seen successfully executing this on their website, GhostLifestyle.com. Under the "Our Story" tab, they delve into the backstory behind the ghost logo, citing "The name GHOST® and mantra 'be seen' come from that feeling of being behind the scenes and wanting to be heard, wanting to make an impact; we're all ghosts. This is our time" (Ghost Lifestyle, 2023). Co-Founder Dan Lourenco claims the brand lives out their mantra by showcasing many "micro influencers" and fans on their social media, saying, "This is the people's brand in the coolest of ways" (Knox, 2022).

Brand image also plays an important role in conducting a brand audit. According to Keller, a brand image is the "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory", composed of the brand's benefits, attitudes, and attributes the consumer holds (Keller, 1993). Benefits can range from physiological and safety needs like satisfying hunger, to experiential needs like eliciting positive feelings, to symbolic needs like boosting one's self esteem. Brand attitudes are how the customer feels about the brand as a whole, and this often dictates how they interact with the brand. Brand attributes are "descriptive features that characterised a product or service – what a consumer thought the product or service is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption" (Keller, 1993).

One can examine Ghost Lifestyle's brand image through the conversation surrounding the brand on Reddit. In the "Gymsnark" forum, which gives fitness enthusiasts a place to anonymously discuss the people and brands involved in the fitness industry, the brand image of Ghost Lifestyle can be found under the thread, "Ghost brand - any snark?" (Reddit, n.d). In the forum, the creator of the thread announces his or her desire to learn more about the public consensus of the brand, saying it has been recommended often for their transparency, and personally feels their Instagram page was "very cleaned up/professional". Other Reddit users took to the thread to give their personal opinions. Top comments cited their flavours, rewards program, and fast shipping as some of the reasons they loved the brand, while others claimed the flavours missed the mark and were overall disenchanted by the fact that the supplements are not FDA approved and therefore preferred more research-backed products.

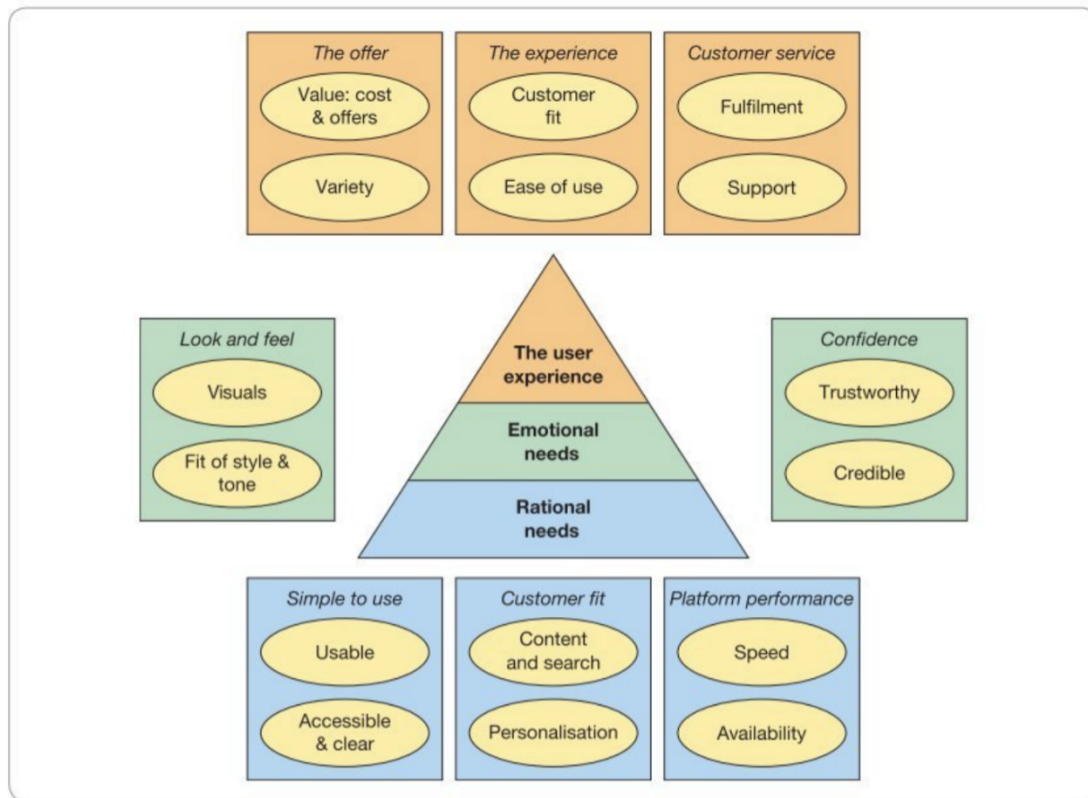
Alongside brand identity and brand image is brand positioning, "the act of designing a company's [...] image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's mind" (Keller, 2008). As seen on their website, Ghost Lifestyle describes themselves as "the

world's first lifestyle sports nutrition brand” (Ghost Lifestyle, 2023). To successfully combine lifestyle and sports, they have partnered with prominent social media influencers within multiple industries who fit the brand’s image and can introduce the products to the target market.

Influencers such as Taylor Mills, who specialises in fitness and gaming, is one such influencer who bridges the gap between lifestyle and sports nutrition, successfully promoting the two different sides of the brand to her audience. Ghost Lifestyle has also partnered with multiple music festivals, such as Apocalypse in Long Beach, CA, to make their energy drinks the official energy drink of the event.

In Dave Chaffey’s book “Digital Marketing”, he uses the Online Customer Experience Pyramid to explain how a brand must cater to the rational values, emotional values, and promised experience to successfully deliver the online experience promised (Chaffey, 2022). For Ghost Lifestyle, catering to the rational needs is shown through providing products with fully disclosed ingredient lists, so consumers know what they are purchasing and feel safe in knowing what they are consuming. This information is available online while purchasing. As for emotional values, Ghost Lifestyle strives to make a genuine connection with their consumers, calling them “Legends” and sharing their social media content on the brand’s multiple pages. For the promised experience, the brand is delivered on time and products live up to the expectations of the consumer; they are given free samples or discount codes encouraging them to become repeat customers.

Figure 1: The Online Customer Experience Pyramid - Success Factors Model



Source: Based on de Chernatony (2001)

## Framework Analysis

In order to create a strong brand, a brand must identify how it can provide value in the eyes of the consumers. This can be done through the lens of Keller’s Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2013). At the base is the brand’s “identity”, meaning how the brand is perceived by consumers. Ghost Lifestyle prides itself on being the brand that includes all fitness fans, and not only the ones who are looking to compete at high fitness levels. The next level is “meaning”, shown through performance and imagery. The edgy style Ghost provides along with the cutting-edge supplements show their “against-the-grain” execution. The next level is “response”,



or how the consumers feel about the brand. As seen through Ghost’s many interactions with consumers through social media reposts and through reviews, consumers view the brand as inclusive and hip. Finally, at the top is “resonance”, showing how the consumer feels a connection to the brand. Through brand merchandise, interacting via social media, and making videos showing consumers the behind-the-scenes aspects of the company, consumers can feel closer than ever to Ghost Lifestyle.

According to Kotler and Keller in *Marketing and Management*, “The overall evaluation of a company’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is called SWOT analysis. It’s a way of monitoring the external and internal marketing environment” (Keller, 2013). The SWOT Model highlights a business’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Figure 2: SWOT Model

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
OPPORTUNITIES	Opportunity-Strength (OS) Strategies Use the strengths to take advantage of opportunities 1. 2. 3. 4.	Opportunity-Weakness (OW) Strategies Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities 1. 2.
THREATS	Threat-Strength (TS) Strategies Use strengths to avoid threats 1. 2. 3. 4.	Threat-Weakness (TW) Strategies Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats 1. 2.

When looking at Ghost Lifestyle's strengths, we can identify a couple key points that have put the supplement company on the industry's map. To start, Ghost Lifestyle is one of, if not the first, supplement company to begin collaborating with prominent food companies such as Oreo, Nutter Butter, Sour Patch Kids, amongst others, introducing novel flavours to the public that overshadowed the long-reigning chocolate and vanilla monopoly. By doing this, consumers without previous knowledge of the Ghost Lifestyle brand will be more likely to give the product a try due to recognising the brand Ghost has collaborated with. It adds legitimacy to the product for the consumer knowing companies like Oreo and Nutter Butter must sign off on the flavour for their name to be included on the packaging. Even if they have never heard of Ghost Lifestyle or tried the product before, they will feel like their choice is a safe bet.

Another strength Ghost Lifestyle has working in their favour is the fact that, due to these brands having official collaborations, the flavours are exclusive to the brand and cannot be copied by competitors. Ghost Lifestyle has locked down some of the biggest names in the food industry and will hold unique flavours because of it. Finally, pairing with sweets companies like Oreo, Nutter Butter, and Sour Patch Kids will draw in new potential customers who have previously strayed away from supplements due to the stigma that supplements do not have an appealing flavour. Now, with these prominent names backing the product, consumers may be more open to trying supplements they otherwise would have written off due to lack of taste appeal.

As for weaknesses, Ghost Lifestyle has an exclusive deal with GNC within the United States, limiting their in-store retail options for consumers and therefore forcing them to either purchase directly from the website or from GNC. While this may make the brand appear more

exclusive, it also prevents new customers from seeing the product while browsing and making a purchase solely from this experience alone.

As Ghost Lifestyle continues to dominate the supplement industry, it has also expanded into other industries that could benefit from supplementation as well, such as gaming. This marketing move can easily fit into Kotler's and Keller's SWOT Model category "Opportunities". By expanding into more industries, Ghost Lifestyle increases their target audience and potential consumer reach.

Finally, as far as "Threats", Ghost Lifestyle must keep vigilant in staying aware of competing brands copying their marketing move to pair with prominent food companies. Ryse is one such brand that has taken initiative and followed in their footsteps, working with brands like Kool-Aid and Ring Pop to make their own exclusive flavours and successfully taking that company off of the supplement market. Another threat to Ghost Lifestyle's business is their decision to be marketed as a "lifestyle brand". While this may help potential consumers feel less intimidated by the brand and more likely to give it a try, it can also alienate other consumers who do not take the brand as seriously and steer more toward brands who capitalise on marketing the science aspects of their products.

### **Digital Technology and Marketing Tools**

Since launching in 2016, Ghost Lifestyle has had a consistent online presence on multiple social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. In addition to their main Instagram channel, they also have sister accounts for apparel, their energy drink line, their gaming supplements, and their wellness supplements. Customers can make

purchases directly through the website, in the United States in-store exclusively at GNC, and in select retailers in over 40 countries across the world (GNC, 2023).

Ghost has signed influencers in increasingly diverse concentrations, better targeting a broader range of consumers, from fitness influencers to Youtubers, professional athletes and more. Members of the “team” are given discount codes for followers to use. In addition to influencer marketing, Ghost incorporates a Loyalty program that rewards customers for interacting with the brand by using the codes, referring friends, and buying limited edition bundles, amongst other interactions (Ghost Loyalty Program, 2023). On their social media accounts, they highlight their SMS opt-in marketing strategy to allow consumers to stay up to date with the latest product releases and event details. As they work toward building a community around the brand, Ghost has created aesthetic lock screens for consumers’ iPhones, not only allowing consumers to feel as though they are more connected to the brand, but also to stay in the minds of the consumers every time they unlock their mobile devices.

When navigating the website, consumers can bounce between a few different tabs. The “Brand” tab includes subcategories showcasing Ghost’s story, the “family”, the impact the brand has had on the community, the blog, and the “Building the Brand” YouTube channel, which documents the journey of the brand from 2016 to the present day (Ghost Lifestyle, 2023).

## **Leadership Roles**

Co-founders Ryan Hughes and Dan Lourenco both take leadership roles within the brand, as can be seen in their “Building the Brand” YouTube videos, where they are actively involved in the flavour testing, team-building activities such as “Mail Time”, and events such as expos.

Taking part in these brand-building processes showcases their “drive to achieve” and desire to uphold “honesty and integrity”, two key traits of being a leader (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991).

According to Shackleton, leadership is “a process in which an individual influences other group members towards the attainment of group or organisational goals” (Shackleton, 1995).

When examining Blake and Mouton’s Four Leadership Styles in context with the Ghost Lifestyle brand, it is evident that both Hughes and Lourenco exhibit traits of “Team management”, wherein their actions show a high concern for both people and production (Blake & Mouton, 1994). They are actively involved in the brand’s development from the ground up, from production of the products to customer service and face-to-face customer engagement at events.

### **Brand Recommendations**

1. Utilise influencers for social media video creation geared toward TikTok, Instagram Reels, etc. as video content is currently the highest performing social content.
2. Formulate a trend that Gen Z will be eager to participate in that requires purchasing of the product. A recent example of this successfully working for a brand is McDonalds’ Grimace Birthday Shake trend, which showed a humorous “before and after” result of drinking the shake.
3. As Ghost Lifestyle already capitalises on branching out into industries beyond fitness, they have started pairing with musicians for collaborations as well. I believe formulating a product similar to “Rave Aid” geared toward music festival goers would help tap into a rapidly growing market.

## **Conclusion**

Ghost Lifestyle's approach to supplementation is not only unique but has set the tone for the industry's direction for the foreseeable future. A focus on creating a "family" of consumers by highlighting consumer needs, promoting consumer content, and listening to consumer feedback has allowed the company to win over not only fitness supplement fans but those in neighbouring industries, like gaming and music, alike. By capitalising on influencer marketing, novel trends, and innovative products, Ghost Lifestyle can continue to be the cutting-edge company within the industry and beyond.

## Reference List

Ainbinder, R. (2022) *Why sports nutrition is a booming market*, *Front Office Sports*. Available at: <https://frontofficesports.com/why-sports-nutrition-is-a-booming-market/> (Accessed: November 24, 2023).

Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J. S. (1994) *The managerial grid*. Oxford, England: Gulf Publishing.

Catalani, V. *et al.* (2021) “The market of sport supplement in the digital era: A netnographic analysis of perceived risks, side-effects and other safety issues,” *Emerging trends in drugs, addictions, and health*, 1(100014), p. 100014. doi: 10.1016/j.etedah.2021.100014.

Chaffey, D. and Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2022) *Digital marketing*. 8th ed. London, England: Pearson Education.

Convery, S. (2019) “Extreme gains: how the sports supplement industry bulked up,” *The guardian*, 8 August. Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/aug/09/extreme-gains-how-the-sports-supplement-in-dustry-bulked-up> (Accessed: November 24, 2023).

*Ghost® Loyalty program - ghost lifestyle (2023) GHOST UK*. Available at:

<https://uk.ghostlifestyle.com/pages/loyalty> (Accessed: November 24, 2023).

*Ghost lifestyle (2023) GHOST UK*. Available at: <https://uk.ghostlifestyle.com/> (Accessed:

November 24, 2023).

GNC (2023) *GNC and GHOST® continue to glow up with exclusive launch of GHOST® GLOW*

*V2, PR Newswire*. Available at:

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/gnc-and-ghost-continue-to-glow-up-with-exclusive-launch-of-ghost-glow-v2-301736648.html> (Accessed: November 24, 2023).

Keller , K. L. (2013). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* (4th Edition ed.). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, Inc.

Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A. (1991). Leadership: Do traits matter? *The Executive*, 5, 48–60.

Knox, D. (2022) *How GHOST built A brand where authenticity is undefeated*, *Forbes*. Available at:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daveknox/2022/09/30/how-ghost-built-a-brand-where-authenticity-is-undefeated/> (Accessed: November 24, 2023).

*Reddit - dive into anything* (no date) *Reddit.com*. Available at:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/gymnark/comments/np8nf7/ghost\\_brand\\_any\\_snark/](https://www.reddit.com/r/gymnark/comments/np8nf7/ghost_brand_any_snark/) (Accessed: November 24, 2023).

Shackleton, V. J. (1995) *BUSINESS LEADERSHIP SHACKLETON*. Andover, England: Cengage Learning EMEA.

TGPRC (n.d) *TJPRC: International journal, TJPRC: International Journal | Academic, Art Journal, Academic, Journal Publishers | Proof Reading*. Available at: <http://www.tjprc.org> (Accessed: November 24, 2023).