

PRESS RELEASE

According to the latest data from the NetComm Suisse Observatory and the Swiss e-Commerce Consumer Behaviour report conducted in collaboration with ContactLab, Switzerland is an increasingly dynamic country in terms of e-Commerce.

In 2015 the industry exceeded 9 billion CHF, up 14% on 2014. There are 4.7 million (+12%) Swiss shoppers and fashion is the most popular product category purchased online with 52% of consumers buying at least one fashion product over the course of the year with an average spending in this segment of 535 CHF.

Launching the Fashion Digital Lab

- **The Fashion Digital Lab (www.fashiondigitallab.ch) is powered by NetComm Suisse and investments from public and private operators will be raised worth over 2 million CHF, in premises in Lugano spanning some 3000m².**
- **The premises will be home to the “NetComm Suisse Digital Academy”, a training project run in collaboration with the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) and with support from Canton Ticino through regional economic policy.**
- **A private Research Centre will be formed to collaborate with the NetComm Suisse Observatory.**
- **Top players in the digital ecosystem will inhabit the Lab.**
- **An area will be dedicated to local start-ups, the Start-Up Square, supported by PostFinance SA and Swiss Post.**
- **Ticino is the perfect “bridge” to support DigitalZurich2025 (<http://digitalzurich2025.com/>).**

Lugano, 18th April 2016 – The new **Fashion Digital Lab** was launched today, a new centre for technology based in Lugano, whose goal is to give a physical form to the digital ecosystem supporting fashion companies. Powered by NetComm Suisse, this new initiative involves the inauguration of the "**NetComm Suisse Digital Academy**", a project run in collaboration with the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), supported by Canton Ticino – through regional economic policy – as well as local companies, which focuses on training and research in the areas of *fashion*, luxury and *e-Commerce*.

The launch of the new digital hub was announced at the opening of **e-Commerce meets Fashion in the "Ticino Fashion Valley" 2016**, an event now in its second edition, organised by NetComm Suisse, the only Swiss association for operators of electronic commerce and digital communication. Over 400 operators from the digital world and fashion brands took part in the event.

*“The **Fashion Digital Lab** is a really interesting project operating within the fashion and information communication technologies segments, two out of the four sectors that research by BAK Basel identified as key for the future of the Ticino economy. Specifically, the "**NetComm Suisse Digital Academy**", with its focus on training and research, is one of the priorities identified for regional economic policy for the four years 2016-2019 in support of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For this very reason, the Canton has signed a letter of intent, in which it declares itself available to support this project in the area of training,” said Stefano Rizzi, Director of the Economy Division at the Department of Finance and the Economy of Canton Ticino. “The initiative is also part of the broader project, the **Swiss Innovation Park**, for which our Canton has applied to run offices carrying out research on “fashion, luxury and data logistics”. The Swiss Innovation Park will provide a home for the research and development activities of big international companies, which will in turn reinforce the local economy and academic sphere. In this sense, the Academy is taking part in a virtuous ecosystem with a regional, Swiss and international scope, aimed at favouring, on the one hand, the innovation of SMEs and, on the other, training in specific digital skills, for both professionals and people getting started in the world of work.”*

*“It is with great satisfaction and pride that we today announce the birth of the **Fashion Digital Lab**, which will open this September in 3000m² premises in Lugano,” announced **Alessandro Marrarosa, President of NetComm Suisse e-Commerce Association**. “Finally the digital ecosystem supporting fashion companies will find a physical hub in Ticino where international players with targeted skills and dedicated services support a specific segment of e-Commerce, which over the years has proven itself to be one of the most thriving at both a global level and in the Swiss market. Indeed, the most popular product category purchased online by Swiss shoppers in 2015 is that connected to clothing and accessories. And 52% of Swiss online users made at least one online purchase of fashion products last year, spending on average 535 CHF, according to the vertical cross-section dedicated to fashion in the Swiss e-Commerce Consumer Behaviour report conducted with ContactLab. Naturally the **Fashion Digital Lab** will be available to the best technology companies looking for a place where they can create value and find great inspiration in terms of innovation, creativity and the development of pioneering ideas.”*

*“For over a year we have been working with institutions, top digital players and the best fashion brands to identify premises and formulas suited for the construction of an appealing digital hub,” explained **Carlo Terreni, General Director of NetComm Suisse e-Commerce Association**. “The **Fashion Digital Lab** is today the physical space in Ticino where digital expertise in e-Commerce is grown, a space attracting even more international fashion and luxury brands and labels. This step goes hand in hand with the fashion house trend for internalising digital skills to manage an increasingly multichannel industry. For this reason, we are particularly grateful to the Department of Finance and the Economy of Canton Ticino, to USI, to SUPSI, to Fondazione Agire and PostFinance for seeing NetComm Suisse as a partner capable of creating a profitable ecosystem for companies and professionals. We will also be introducing dedicated training courses to equip young people in our area with targeted skills. As, according to research conducted with the University of Fribourg in “Unlocking the potential of Swiss eCommerce”, one of the main barriers to e-Commerce in Switzerland is the lack of professional profiles and targeted skills. What’s more, the constitution of the **Fashion Digital Lab** makes Ticino a crucial stop in the digital corridor between Milan and Zurich, a bridge supporting DigitalZurich2025 (<http://digitalzurich2025.com/>)”.*

*“The impact of online communication on the world of fashion is much more than a passing trend, and it needs to be accompanied by research and training to study its complex dynamics and prepare suitable professional profiles in a context of global competition,” said **Lorenzo Cantoni, Director of the Institute of Communication Technologies at the Faculty of Communication Sciences at USI**, Università della Svizzera Italiana. “On the 19th April,” continued Cantoni, “we are running a workshop with e-Commerce managers from companies in the sector such as to better define the knowledge and skills required by this sector with regards digital communication.”*

*“Ticino-based fashion houses have long been turning to the USI Career Service to look for individuals specialised in areas spanning sales, marketing and controlling, and we are today seeing more and more companies operating in e-Commerce and digital,” added **Silvia Invrea, Director of the Career Service and Alumni at USI**. “Fashion companies are without doubt becoming one of the leading recruiters of recent graduates, also in terms of appeal. In Ticino alone about 60 of our graduates have been employed by fashion labels. This is a big change for our area: just a decade or so ago, our Career Forums were almost exclusively attended by financial companies, whereas today more and more fashion players are contacting us for individuals to employ, names like Gucci, Michael Kors, VF International (with its portfolio brands Timberland, Vans, The North Face), Hugo Boss, Guess, Labelux Global Business Services (including brands like Baly, Belstaff and Jimmy Choo), Zegna, Rossimoda and Pianoforte Holding (which controls brands like Carpisa and Yamamay)”.*

*“The project powered by NetComm Suisse falls perfectly and consistently within the remit of the broader economic development strategy implemented by our Canton and is an integral part of Fondazione Agire’s mission to coordinate the regional innovation system,” said **Lorenzo Leoni, Director of Fondazione Agire**. “Moreover, the project is an important arrow in the bow of Ticino’s application to host the **“Swiss Innovation Park”**, which was well received last year and which, with help from the Division of the Economy, we intend to perfect and newly submit in the near future.”*

“The ability to support new start-ups naturally falls within the scope of our strategy to foster entrepreneurship in the Ticino area,” comments **Daniele Petrucci, Head of Commercial Clients for Ticino Region at PostFinance.** *“For this reason we’ve identified the **Fashion Digital Lab** as the perfect space in which to create our area, which we have called the Start-Up Square. This area is available for the best entrepreneurial ideas relating to the worlds of fashion and technology. We are researching a strategy that will put the top fashion companies in Ticino in direct contact with the start-ups, which are selected and incubated to become the companies of tomorrow.”*

*“The opportunity to take part in the Fashion Digital Lab is very important for our company, says **Fabio Gianfreda, Product Consultant at Swiss Post.** We're happy to support NetComm and PostFinance in this project together with the entire e-Commerce ecosystem. From our perspective, we'll have the chance to expand our logistic skills and help Swiss start-ups grow in a Start-Up Square devoted to the most innovative ideas.”*

Netcomm Suisse

Founded in June 2012, with headquarters in Lugano, NetComm Suisse is the only Swiss association for operators of e-Commerce and digital communication. The current President is Alessandro Marrarosa and Carlo Terreni is General Director. NetComm Suisse supports the growth of the sector and strengthens consumers’ confidence in online sales channels. The association is open to all companies operating in the sector of e-commerce and counts over 150 associates from a diverse range of sectors and profiles, including merchants, PSP, web agencies, software houses, logistics operators, acquirers, specialist law firms, trustees and consultancy companies working in the e-Commerce sector, comparators, digital communication platforms, affiliation companies, data farms. In addition to Lugano, the association has opened offices in Geneva and Zurich, further expanding its structure and prioritising lobbying activities at institutions to support the interests of Swiss operators.

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