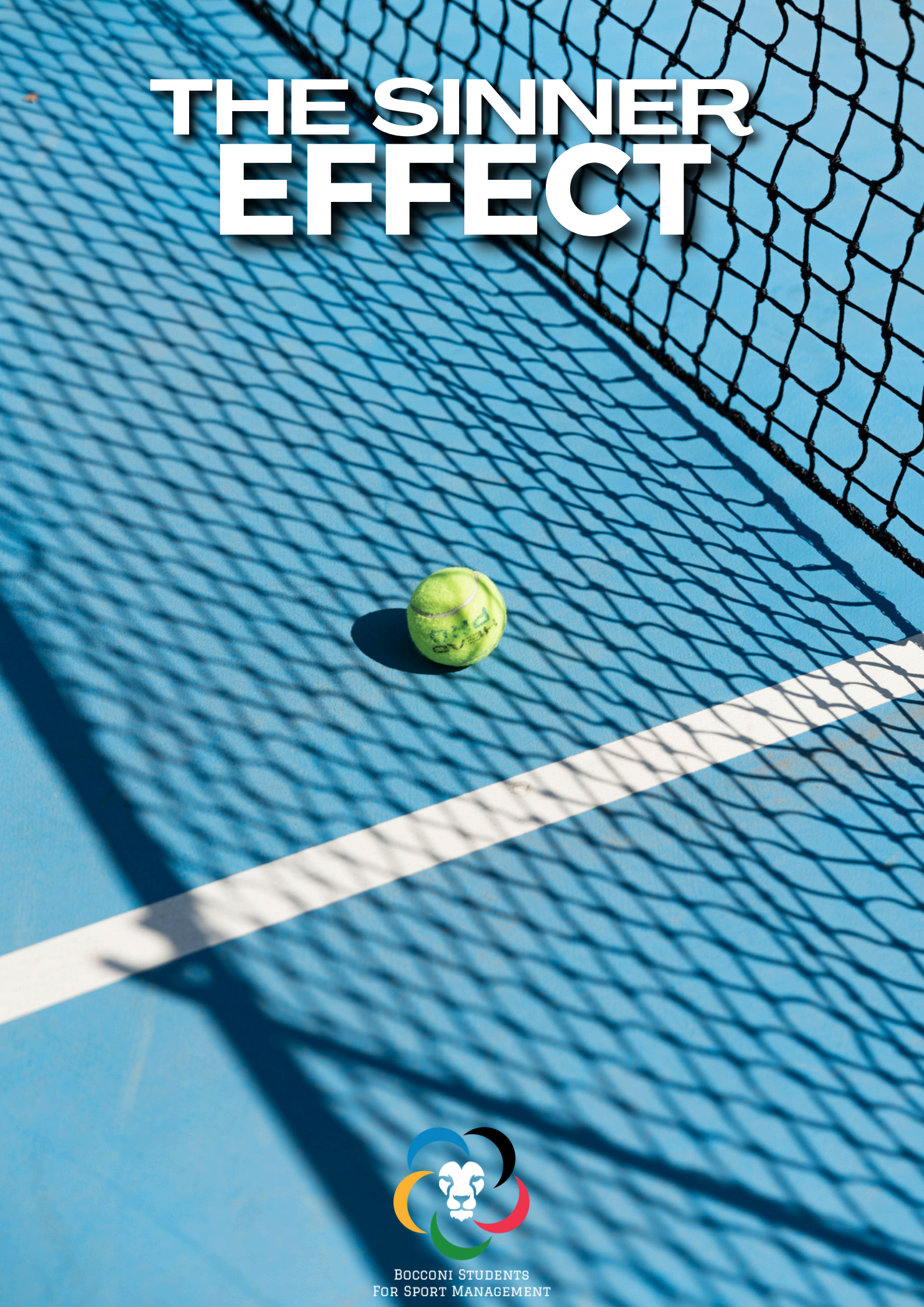
THE SINNER EFFECT



Bocconi Students
For Sport Management

THE SINNER EFFECT

A project carried on by Bocconi Students for Sport Management

From the idea of

Carolina Gandolfo

Supervised by

Sofia Negretti – Head of Case Studies and Articles

Written by

Tommaso Cagno

Carolina Gandolfo

Marco Ghidini

Francesco Maconi

Federico Sittaro

Francesco Tasso

Cover by

Sofia Negretti

Contents

I. Introduction 2
1.1. The Rise of Tennis in Italy 2
1.2. The changes brought by Jannik Sinner's rise to excellence 3
II. "Sinner Model" - The process from Athlete to Brand Icon 5
III. Gucci × Jannik Sinner 7
3.1. Why Gucci Chose Jannik Sinner 7
3.2. The Collaboration 8
IV. Lavazza × Jannik Sinner 10
4.1. Why Lavazza Chose Jannik Sinner 10
4.2. The Collaboration 10
V. Sinner X Nike 11
5.1. Why Nike Chose Jannik Sinner 12
5.2. The Collaboration 12
5.3. Cultural and Brand Impact: The "Sinner Effect" at Nike 13
5.4. Strategic Significance 14
VI. Head X Sinner 14
VII. Replicating the model: Paolini x Golden Goose 15
VIII. The future of tennis marketing 18
8.1. Opportunities for growth 20
IX. Comparison with football 21
X. Bibliography 23

I. Introduction

The analysis of brand ambassadorships in Italian tennis reveals a strategic evolution: brands are no longer solely seeking visibility from athletic success but are focusing on alignment with a set of values perceived as authentic and contemporary by the audience. The success of Jannik Sinner and the rise of Jasmine Paolini illustrate two distinct, yet convergent, approaches to representing Italian excellence.

1.1. The Rise of Tennis in Italy

Always present in Italian and global sports culture, Italian tennis failed to achieve satisfactory results for a long period. To assess the strength of a national tennis movement, one of the most comprehensive indicators is the country's performance in international team competitions. In men's tennis, this competition is the Davis Cup. From 2019, the tournament format changed, featuring fewer and shorter matches. Prior to that year, however, the number of participating nations was larger, making the competition an even more representative benchmark. From Italy's last final appearance in 1998, the national team failed to reach the Davis Cup final for over two decades. In fact, during the early 2000s, Italian tennis experienced its lowest point, being relegated in 2003 to Europe/Africa Zone Group II after defeats against Zimbabwe and Morocco. Over the years, however, the quality and depth of Italian players progressively improved. This growth culminated in Italy winning its first Davis Cup since 1976 in 2023, followed by consecutive victories in 2024 and 2025.

Year	Stage	Year2	Stage2	Year3	Stage3
1996	SF	2006	E/A Z1	2016	QF
1997	SF	2007	E/A Z1	2017	QF
1998	F	2008	E/A Z1	2018	QF
1999	1R	2009	E/A Z1	2019	RR
2000	1R	2010	E/A Z1	2020	Not Played
2001	E/A Z1	2011	E/A Z1	2021	QF
2002	E/A Z1	2012	1R	2022	SF
2003	E/A Z1	2013	QF	2023	W
2004	E/A Z2	2014	SF	2024	W
2005	E/A Z1	2015	1R	2025	W

Table: Performance of the Italian Davis Cup team (1996–2025), source: Wikipedia

The resurgence of Italian tennis is largely attributable to the emergence of several top players, foremost among them Jannik Sinner. Born in San Candido in 2001, Sinner propelled Italian

tennis to the top of the ATP rankings, becoming the first Italian player to reach world number one. He also holds the national record for Grand Slam titles won at just 24 years of age.

Alongside Sinner, a new generation of Italian talent has emerged. While Fabio Fognini and Simone Bolelli represented the veterans, and Matteo Berrettini and Lorenzo Sonego formed a slightly older, intermediate group, the movement was truly defined by the arrival of a new generation. Promising young athletes like Lorenzo Musetti, Flavio Cobolli, and Matteo Arnaldi for the singles, alongside Andrea Vavassori for the doubles, joined the italian roster. Their collective success has significantly increased public interest in tennis, enhancing the commercial value of Italian players' personal brands.

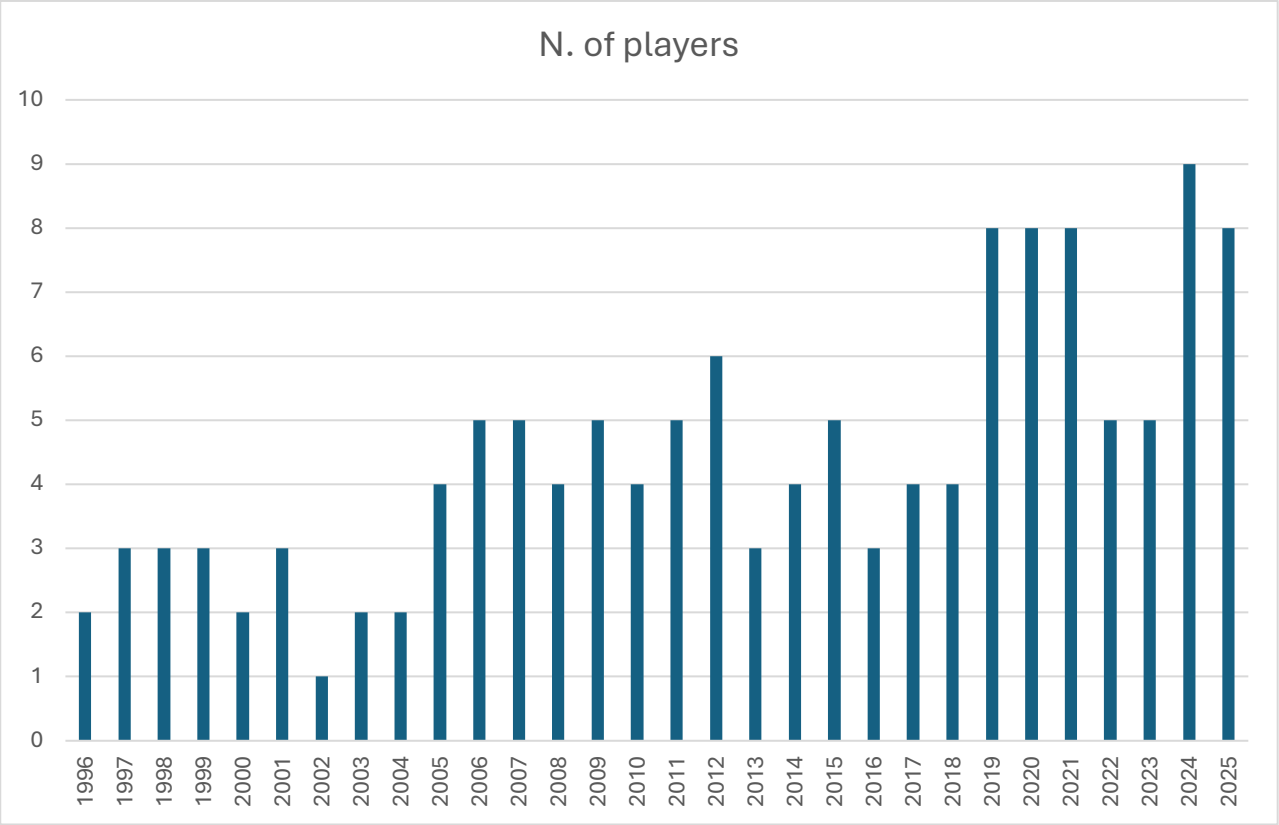


Figure: Italian players ranked in the ATP Top 100 at year-end (1996–2025), source: ATPTour.com

1.2. The changes brought by Jannik Sinner's rise to excellence

The rise of Sinner and the overall growth of the Italian tennis movement have captured widespread public attention, leading to increased engagement with the sport. Consequently, major corporations have shown heightened interest in sponsoring Italian players. Tennis has evolved into a marketing phenomenon of an unprecedented scale, serving as a platform through which brands communicate values and identity to consumers.

Beyond his sporting achievements, Sinner represents a broader cultural and commercial phenomenon. His composed and understated on-court demeanor, combined with an unwavering pursuit of excellence, has made him an ideal ambassador for numerous brands, particularly Italian ones. His international breakthrough began with his victory at the 2019 Next Gen ATP Finals in Milan, which paved the way for partnerships with global brands such as Nike, Rolex and Gucci. But while the first two ones are historically relevant brands that accompanied tennis through the ages, Gucci has stepped up in the market thanks to Sinner.

Jannik Sinner has played a decisive role in reshaping the perception of Italian athletes within both the sporting and cultural landscape. Unlike traditional sports icons characterized by charisma, emotional expressiveness, or media exuberance, Sinner has constructed his public image around restraint, consistency, and discretion. His communication style is minimal, his on-court behavior controlled, and his off-court presence is deliberately low-profile. Rather than limiting his appeal, this understated demeanor has contributed to a powerful redefinition of excellence rooted in credibility and authenticity.

Sinner's success has reframed the notion of Italian sporting excellence from one associated with flair and improvisation to one grounded in discipline, work ethic, and long-term commitment. His humility in victory and composure in defeat reinforce an image of merit-based achievement, aligning closely with contemporary societal values that privilege substance over spectacle. In this sense, Sinner functions as a cultural symbol: an athlete whose identity transcends performance and embodies a modern, internationally oriented vision of Italian authenticity. This transformation has significantly enhanced his effectiveness as a brand ambassador. Brands no longer engage with Sinner solely for his athletic results, but for the values he consistently represents. His image enables companies to communicate reliability, precision, and ethical coherence, positioning him as a trusted intermediary between corporate identity and public perception.

Building on this shift in perception, the present case study seeks to address the following research question: *How has Jannik Sinner contributed to the transformation of tennis into a strategic marketing platform in Italy, and in what ways do brands leverage his image to communicate values of authenticity, excellence, and humility?*

To answer this question, the case study adopts a qualitative approach focused on the strategic role of athlete brand ambassadorship within contemporary Italian tennis. The analysis centers

on Jannik Sinner as the primary case, examining how his personal brand has been constructed and leveraged through partnerships with global and Italian brands to communicate specific cultural and symbolic values. In particular, the study investigates key brand collaborations to understand how value alignment, rather than mere athletic visibility, underpins sponsorship strategies in this context. By analyzing the narratives and positioning associated with these partnerships, the article explores how tennis has evolved into a platform capable of bridging sport, business, and national identity. To contextualize Sinner's case within a broader ecosystem, the analysis also considers parallel examples, including Jasmine Paolini in women's tennis and her deal with fashion brand Golden Goose. These cases serve to highlight converging branding logics and alternative representations of Italian excellence. This case study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Italian tennis, led by Jannik Sinner, has transitioned from a niche sport to a strategic marketing platform grounded in symbolic value and cultural relevance.

II. "Sinner Model" - The process from Athlete to Brand Icon

In the modern era of marketing, professional athletes are no longer considered just for their performances, but also for their inner ability to share values with audiences from all over the world. Jannik Sinner is the perfect example. His rise in professional tennis and his attitude made him quickly become a powerful brand icon. Sinner represents a very specific and unique marketing model.

One of the key reasons Sinner has emerged as an incredibly attractive marketing figure lies in the perfect mixture between his sporting greatness and his immaculate personal image. His calm and reserved style of communication, as well as his work ethic, project a sense of authenticity and reality that aligns perfectly with the will of big companies around the world. What brands seek are figures who can appear real and credible to the eyes of people. Sinner's personality fits this demand almost perfectly.

Sinner's background plays a very important role in this narrative. His narrative follows the classical story of meritocratic success. Jannik comes from a relatively modest reality in South Tyrol, far from the traditional centres of Italian tennis. His early transition from competitive skiing to tennis was followed by a rapid rise through the ATP rankings. This background can

be an inspiration to millions of people, reinforcing the idea of talent refined through discipline and sacrifice. Following this trajectory allows brands to associate themselves with these same values - perseverance, focus, mentality and long-term commitment. These qualities transcend sport and can directly be moved to a broader audience.

Initially perceived as a promising young talent, Sinner has progressively evolved into a real global ambassador for Italian excellence. Major victories, consistent presence at the top of the rankings and a composed attitude made him become - in the span of a few years – an established tennis star. Central to the *"Sinner Model"* is the narrative of discipline. His training habits, professional choices and public statements consistently highlight hard work and humbleness over the spectacularity of what he does. This mirrors exactly, as explained before, the type of storytelling brands love: success as the product of a process rather than just luck or talent. This is particularly effective in premium and performance- oriented sectors- such as luxury fashion, technology and sportswear - where craftsmanship and precision are core values.

Another decisive -though underestimated - factor is Sinner's ability to embody Italian identity without relying on clichés. Unlike past Italian sports icons, which were often associated with emotional excess, Jannik Sinner represents a more modern and ideal form of national pride. His image combines the Italian heritage with a Northern-like sense of education and minimalism, making him way more adaptable to international markets than any one before. This balance is crucial.

When compared to other marketing icons, such as Roger Federer or Rafael Nadal, Sinner's positioning becomes even clearer. Federer has been representing for decades elegance, effortlessness and timeless style: almost an aristocratic ideal of tennis excellence. By contrast, Nadal has been marketed as the embodiment of intensity, resilience and emotions. Sinner does not replicate these two models directly, his brand identity is less emotional than Nadal's and less theatrical than Federer's, but it still speaks loud to younger generations that seek a professional, confident and mentally controlled hero.

In fact, modern audiences, particularly younger consumers, see this kind of athletes as an actual source of inspiration, especially for their calmness, discipline and way of being. Sinner's limited presence on social media and focus on performance enhance his credibility and popularity. Overall, he is perceived as stable, focused and unlikely to compromise his image through controversy. Therefore, in the brands' point of view, he is the right man at the right moment.

His personal values, athletic performance, and immaculate public reputation form a coherent image that brands can use to drive their narratives without any artificial association. Here is the point: authenticity and performance reinforce each other. Sinner's excellence on the court enhances his image off the court, while his discipline amplifies the actual meaning and noise of his victories.

Jannik Sinner represents a completely new paradigm in sports marketing, where the athlete is seen as a quiet yet powerful brand icon. The truth is that, in a crowded landscape of sports celebrities, Sinner stands out not by being louder, but by being truer.

III. Gucci × Jannik Sinner

Gucci, founded in 1921, is one of the most influential luxury fashion houses globally, known for merging Italian craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics. Over the last decade, Gucci has positioned itself at the crossroads of luxury, culture, and youth identity, aiming to remain relevant to Gen Z while preserving its heritage.

Under several creative directions, the brand has embraced collaborations and ambassadors who embody authenticity, understated elegance, and cultural influence, core values that reflect Gucci's modern strategic vision.

Although Gucci relations to tennis date back to 1970s, it has been Jannik Sinner's high-profile ambassadorship that has helped to re-energize the brand's presence in the tennis world.

3.1. Why Gucci Chose Jannik Sinner

Gucci's choice of Jannik Sinner was anything but accidental. It emerged from a natural meeting point between the brand's evolving identity and the athlete's quiet, unmistakable aura. Sinner embodies a new generation of Italian excellence: he is youthful, disciplined, humble, all qualities that mirror Gucci's own shift toward a more refined and understated expression of luxury.

At a time when many ambassadors rely on spectacle or loud self-promotion, Sinner stands out precisely because he does not seek the spotlight. His calm presence, his composure on court, and his almost shy elegance make him the perfect symbol for Gucci's embrace of quiet luxury, a movement centred on authenticity rather than ostentation.

Sinner's rise on the international tennis stage also offered Gucci something uniquely powerful: the opportunity to enter a global arena without compromising exclusivity. His visibility travels naturally from tournament to tournament, from press conference to runway show, carrying with it an image of contemporary Italian sophistication that aligns seamlessly with Gucci's heritage.

In this sense, the collaboration goes far beyond a traditional endorsement. Gucci did not merely select an athlete; it selected a story: Italy reimagined through youth, talent, and elegant restraint. Sinner became a cultural figure capable of expressing what modern Italianness feels like today: confident but never arrogant, stylish without trying too hard, global yet deeply rooted.

Through him, Gucci found not just a face, but a narrative. And that narrative turned out to be one of the most compelling in the world of luxury and sport.

3.2. The Collaboration

Gucci officially appointed Jannik Sinner as an ambassador in 2022, but the collaboration reached ultimate global visibility during Wimbledon 2023. As Sinner walked onto the Centre Court carrying a custom Gucci monogram duffel bag, he created one of the most widely shared images of the tournament. According to Tennis.com, the bag had to receive formal approval from Wimbledon officials, since the event typically restricts non-equipment branding. The fact that permission was granted highlights how discreetly and naturally the accessory fit within the tournament's visual culture.

Fashion media quickly amplified the moment. GQ drew attention to how unusual it was to see a luxury fashion house appear on the Centre Court, framing the scene as a subtle but striking intersection of tradition and modern style. Tennis.com described Sinner's custom bag as a distinctive moment in the tournament's history, noting its rarity within professional tennis. Vogue also highlighted Sinner's continued appearances at tournaments in Gucci pieces, suggesting that the Wimbledon moment marked the beginning of a consistent aesthetic collaboration rather than a single viral incident.

Digital reactions mirrored this cultural interest. TikTok clips of Sinner's entrance accumulated millions of views within days, spreading across both tennis and fashion communities. Posts featuring Sinner on Gucci's Instagram consistently exceeded 300,000 likes, outperforming average engagement levels for non-campaign content. Google Trends also showed a clear spike

in searches for “Gucci Sinner” during the tournament period, indicating a surge in public curiosity and association between the two.

This entrance ultimately became the visual anchor of the Gucci × Sinner partnership. In the months that followed, the collaboration unfolded through several refined touchpoints: Sinner’s presence at Gucci fashion shows, editorial features across Vogue, GQ, and Esquire, and a series of social media posts where his understated demeanour aligned seamlessly with Gucci’s aesthetic codes.

Fashion media such as Re-Edition Magazine noted that Sinner’s presence felt naturally aligned with the brand’s renewed interest in tennis heritage and contemporary elegance. Rather than positioning him as a traditional sports endorser, Gucci presented Sinner as a cultural figure capable of moving fluidly between athletic and fashion environments.

Beyond the Wimbledon moment, Gucci consolidated the collaboration through its campaign *Gucci Is a Feeling*, in which Sinner appeared as one of the figures embodying the brand’s emotional and lifestyle-driven narrative. Particular emphasis was placed on the now-iconic monogram duffel bag, presented through a collage-style visual composition structured around three contrasting color surfaces, green, red, and blue. This graphic treatment transformed the accessory from a tournament object into a design statement, reinforcing Gucci’s ability to elevate a sporting element into a cultural symbol.

The partnership further expanded into the winter world with the launch of *Gucci Altitude*, Gucci’s first technical mountain wear and winter sportswear collection, released for Autumn/Winter 2025/26. This extension was especially coherent given Sinner’s South Tyrolean roots and background in skiing before turning professional in tennis. By situating him within snowy, high-altitude aesthetics, Gucci subtly reinforced themes of discipline, performance, and Italian heritage, while positioning Sinner not only as a tennis ambassador but as a multidimensional lifestyle figure.

In this sense, the Gucci × Sinner collaboration has become one of the clearest expressions of the Sinner Effect: the ability of a single athlete to transform a sporting moment into a broader cultural event, and to position tennis as a meaningful platform for luxury storytelling and Italian identity.

IV. Lavazza × Jannik Sinner

4.1. Why Lavazza Chose Jannik Sinner

Lavazza's relationship with Jannik Sinner began long before tennis fans imagined he would become the face of a new Italian sporting era. In 2019, when Sinner was just eighteen years old and ranked outside the top 100, Lavazza chose him as its Brand Ambassador. The company often recalls that it was "one of the first brands in the world to believe in his talent," and this early choice shaped the entire nature of their collaboration. Rather than joining him at the height of his fame, Lavazza aligned itself with a young athlete whose values – discipline, humility, consistency and ambition – echoed the company's own identity.

The partnership has always been framed as something deeper than a sponsorship. Lavazza repeatedly describes its relationship with Sinner as "a connection that goes beyond the tennis court." As Sinner rose through ATP rankings, from winning the Next Gen Finals in Milan to capturing major titles and eventually reaching world No. 1, Lavazza accompanied him at each milestone. This parallel growth was not incidental: Lavazza itself has been strengthening its presence in tennis, becoming Platinum Partner of the ATP Finals in Turin and maintaining long-standing ties with events like Wimbledon and Roland Garros. In many ways, Sinner's ascent and Lavazza's tennis strategy reinforced each other, creating a coherent narrative of Italian excellence on a global stage.

4.2. The Collaboration

In 2025, Lavazza renewed the partnership until 2030, explicitly linking the extension to a shared "pursuit of excellence and long-term vision." This renewal underlines the strategic role Sinner now plays in the brand's storytelling. Unlike short-term influencer partnerships, Lavazza treats Sinner as a long-term protagonist in its identity, the embodiment of a modern, disciplined, and authentic Italy.

Beyond traditional advertising, what distinguishes Lavazza's collaboration from others in Sinner's portfolio is the way the brand has managed to integrate the cultural momentum surrounding him. According to an analysis by Nass Sport, based on Shibumi Group and Blogmeter's data, all of Sinner's partner brands have benefited from higher positive sentiment. Lavazza stands out as particularly effective because it has not only used Sinner's image but has tapped directly into his fan culture, notably the "Carota Boys", a fan group now counting over

150,000 followers. Lavazza involved them in content creation, turning a spontaneous grassroots community into a lively and authentic extension of the brand's presence during tournaments. This strategy allowed Lavazza to build engagement around emotion, humour, and participation, rather than corporate messaging.

The brand impact is evident: each of Sinner's major victories now triggers measurable spikes in visibility for Lavazza on social media, increased engagement on posts featuring him, and growing online conversation around the brand during tennis events. The company benefits not simply from Sinner's achievements, but from its ability to attach itself organically to the excitement surrounding them. In this sense, Lavazza has transformed Sinner's success into a cultural resource, a way to speak to Italians not through product slogans, but through shared pride, ritual, and identity.

What makes this partnership particularly strong is how naturally Sinner fits into Lavazza's world. The brand often uses themes of early mornings, routine, discipline, and authenticity, values that map perfectly onto Sinner's public persona. Unlike the fashion-forward storytelling of Gucci, Lavazza positions him in everyday situations and aspirational lifestyle moments, reinforcing the idea that excellence is built through consistency. He represents the idea of Italian daily life elevated through passion and dedication.

In the context of The Sinner Effect, Lavazza illustrates how a mainstream consumer brand can use an athlete not for glamour, but for cultural meaning. While Gucci transformed Sinner into a style icon, Lavazza helped shape him into a symbol of Italian authenticity. By investing in him early, supporting him steadily, and embracing the fan culture surrounding him, Lavazza has created one of the most credible and emotionally resonant athlete partnerships in contemporary Italian marketing.

V. Sinner X Nike

Nike is the world's leading sportswear brand, built on performance innovation, athlete storytelling, and cultural influence. For decades, Nike has shaped the global narrative of tennis through iconic partnerships with athletes such as Andre Agassi, Serena Williams, Rafael Nadal, and Roger Federer. Its strategy has consistently focused on identifying athletes who not only win, but redefine the sport's future through attitude, discipline, and identity.

In recent years, as tennis entered a generational transition following the gradual exit of the "Big Three", Nike faced a strategic need: to anchor its tennis division around a new global protagonist capable of embodying excellence and modern professionalism. Jannik Sinner emerged as the ideal figure to fulfill this role.

5.1. Why Nike Chose Jannik Sinner

Nike's decision to invest heavily in Jannik Sinner reflects a long-term vision rather than short-term hype. Sinner represents a new archetype of tennis champion: less spectacular than previous stars, but intensely disciplined and mentally resilient. His playing style, based on precision, consistency, and relentless work ethic, mirrors Nike's core philosophy of performance through preparation.

Unlike athletes whose brand value relies on extroversion, Sinner's appeal lies in his seriousness and authenticity. This makes him particularly attractive to Nike at a time when elite sport is increasingly defined by marginal gains and professionalism. Sinner does not sell tennis as entertainment alone; he sells it as mastery.

From a strategic standpoint, Sinner also offers Nike global reach without cultural fragmentation. As an Italian athlete with a strong international presence, he resonates across Europe, North America, and emerging tennis markets. His calm demeanor allows Nike to project him as a universal figure of excellence rather than a culturally polarizing personality.

In essence, Nike did not choose Sinner merely as a champion-in-the-making, but as a long-term symbol of what modern high-performance sport looks like: disciplined, humble, and relentlessly forward-looking.

5.2. The Collaboration

Nike signed Jannik Sinner to a long-term endorsement agreement early in his professional career, a relationship that began in 2019, when he was still a junior player, and was significantly strengthened in May 2022, with a major 10-year extension reportedly valued at USD150–158 million. This agreement positioned Sinner as one of the most valuable strategic assets in Nike Tennis' future and confirmed the brand's long-term commitment to building its next era around him. Beyond financial significance, the deal also included plans for the development of a personalized visual identity, most notably the introduction of Sinner's "Fox" logo and dedicated merchandise. These elements became increasingly prominent from 2024 onward, signaling

Nike's intention to elevate Sinner from sponsored athlete to recognizable brand protagonist within its tennis portfolio.

During tournaments, the collaboration manifests through Nike's role as Sinner's exclusive apparel and footwear partner. He competes wearing Nike's latest performance technologies, including customized versions of the Nike Zoom GP Challenge and apparel specifically adapted to his physical needs and playing style. This technical dimension reinforces the perception of Sinner as an athlete optimized for elite performance rather than showmanship.

Beyond standard sponsorship, Nike has progressively deepened the partnership by developing personalized visual elements associated with Sinner. Special colorways, player-exclusive designs, and limited-edition gear have been released in connection with key tournaments, subtly elevating him from sponsored athlete to brand protagonist. While Nike has not yet launched a full public "signature shoe," these customized products signal a strategic trajectory similar to the early phases of Federer and Nadal's Nike eras.

Off the court, Nike integrates Sinner into its broader brand narrative through global campaigns, digital storytelling, and social media content that emphasize preparation, focus, and mental strength.

5.3. Cultural and Brand Impact: The "Sinner Effect" at Nike

From a marketing performance perspective, the partnership has produced measurable gains in social reach and brand visibility. During major tournaments, Nike's social media posts featuring Sinner consistently outperform average tennis-related content, with engagement peaks observed around Grand Slam appearances and title wins. Posts involving Sinner frequently exceed standard interaction benchmarks for Nike Tennis content, indicating strong audience resonance. Brand perception analysis positions the collaboration as reinforcing Nike's core values of performance, discipline, and technical excellence, rather than lifestyle or entertainment-driven appeal. While Nike does not release athlete-specific sales data, industry commentary points to increased consumer interest in the footwear models and apparel worn by Sinner, particularly limited or player-exclusive colorways during high-visibility tournaments. Overall, the partnership appears structured to prioritize long-term brand equity and category leadership over short-term sales activation, aligning Sinner with Nike's legacy of era-defining tennis champions.

Within the broader framework of the *Sinner Effect*, Nike demonstrates how a performance brand can convert athletic credibility into long-term brand authority. Sinner's presence reinforces Nike's historical dominance in tennis while aligning it with a new generation that values discipline over excess and consistency over spectacle.

Furthermore, Sinner's victory at Wimbledon marked a decisive moment in consolidating the strategic bond between the athlete and Nike. Winning the most tradition-laden tournament in tennis elevated Sinner from emerging champion to era-defining figure, significantly increasing his global visibility and symbolic value.

5.4. Strategic Significance

On balance, the Nike × Jannik Sinner collaboration is not defined by a single iconic moment, but by accumulation: seasons, matches, training sessions, and steady progress. This makes it one of the most structurally important partnerships in Sinner's portfolio. Nike is not borrowing his image; it is growing alongside him.

In doing so, Nike positions itself once again as the brand of champions who define eras, not just tournaments. If Gucci captures Sinner's elegance and Lavazza captures his humanity, Nike captures his essence as an athlete - the engine behind the results. Together, these dimensions explain why Sinner has become one of the most powerful sporting figures of his generation.

VI. Head X Sinner

HEAD has a long heritage as a performance-driven tennis brand known for precision engineering and elite competition credibility. By signing him early in his professional career, HEAD positioned itself as a long-term partner accompanying his ascent, reinforcing the perception that its equipment is chosen by athletes seeking discipline and control, rather than spectacle, as cited previously for Nike.

The collaboration centers on performance authenticity. Sinner uses a customized version of the HEAD Speed racket line that integrates his technical preferences while remaining consistent with consumer products, enhancing credibility between professional use and retail offerings. As his profile has risen to the top of men's tennis, HEAD has featured him prominently in global campaigns that emphasize preparation, consistency, and technical excellence. This avoids the typical celebrity framing and instead reinforces HEAD's identity as a brand for elite

performance. Sinner's victories, particularly at major tournaments, have increased visibility for the Speed franchise and contributed to HEAD's broader market momentum.

This impact is reflected in sales and market positioning data: HEAD has claimed leadership in *tennis racket sales in Europe*, with reported market share exceeding about 40 % in Italy and nearly 60 % in Austria, driven in part by strong demand for the Speed line that Sinner endorses. The global tennis racquet market itself is growing, with an estimated value of $545.8 million in 2023 and projected to reach approximately $690.7 million by 2030, reflecting steady demand for high-performance equipment.

On social and digital platforms, HEAD content featuring Sinner regularly outperforms standard product posts, particularly surrounding Grand Slam periods, while maintaining a technical and restrained tone that aligns with both the brand and the athlete's persona. Although HEAD does not publish athlete-specific revenue, industry observers note that strong retail performance of the Speed line - particularly in key European markets- suggests a positive correlation between Sinner's success and consumer interest.

Within the broader Sinner Effect, HEAD's partnership demonstrates how athletic success can reinforce a brand's technical legitimacy. Unlike lifestyle-oriented collaborations, HEAD leverages Sinner as proof of performance: his rise validates its engineering claims while strengthening the brand's authority among competitive players. Through this partnership, HEAD has reinforced not only its visibility but its position as a choice of serious competitors in a market that continues to expand with tennis participation and equipment demand.

VII. Replicating the model: Paolini x Golden Goose

When the industry talks about the "Sinner model", it often hides a commercial truth behind a sporting headline. The model is not simply about winning, brands do not underwrite trophies, they underwrite predictability. What sponsors are really buying is an athlete who can carry premium associations over time with low reputational volatility, coherent values, and a communication style that does not generate noise. That is why Sinner's top partnerships are described by the brands themselves as long-term and values-based.

This is the context in which Jasmine Paolini becomes strategically interesting. The temptation, especially in Italy, is to present her as a simple analogue, but that is a lazy reading. The more

accurate question is whether brands are trying to replicate the architecture that worked for Sinner, by building a portfolio of partners around an athlete who is both elite and “safe”, and then extending that athlete beyond sport into lifestyle categories. The most useful numbers here are not prize money, which are volatile and heavily performance-dependent, but sponsorship estimates, which indicate how the market is pricing the athlete’s brand equity. StageUp’s estimated that Paolini’s sponsorship income for 2025 is around €3.5 million. This appears to be across multiple Italian outlets and is consistently presented as an estimate rather than a disclosed contract figure.

The exact euro amounts of individual deals are rarely public, but the direction of travel is hard to miss: Paolini’s commercial stack is broadening and, more importantly, shifting from purely technical tennis partners toward brands that want to own off-court meaning. Specialist coverage reports a mix where longstanding technical relationships such as Asics and Yonex sit alongside newer lifestyle and mass-premium names including Dove, Amazfit, Golden Goose and Alfa Romeo, with the story framed as part of a wider commercial acceleration.

What matters is not that she has more logos, but what those logos are trying to do. Dove positions the partnership around authenticity, self-esteem and body confidence, and notes the brand’s presence on her kit at the United Cup 2025 as the start of the collaboration. Alfa Romeo, in its own announcement, presents Paolini as a bridge between Italian sporting values and new generations, tying her to excellence and « italianità » as a form of premium national storytelling.

Golden Goose is where the replication attempt becomes clearest, because it shows how tennis sponsorship is being reframed as lifestyle marketing. In its announcement naming Paolini as Global Brand Ambassador, the brand is explicit about the values it wants to borrow, linking the partnership to themes like family, passion, authenticity, positivity and success. That framing is already a clue: Golden Goose is not buying a forehand, it is buying a personality that can live inside a brand’s community narrative.

The Rome editorial story pushes the concept further, describing the STAR collection as something conceived for everyday moments and presenting a constant dialogue between sport and lifestyle, with explicit attention to “off-court” moments as the point where product and athlete’s life meet. A sentence that summarises the shift, it is this: the value is no longer concentrated in match-day exposure, it is concentrated in how convincingly the athlete can make the brand wearable when the match is over.

There is also a corporate logic behind why Golden Goose would care so much about lifestyle framing. The company has been on a growth trajectory that makes global scalability central, not optional. Reporting has described 2024 revenue around €655 million, adjusted EBITDA around €227 million, and deal context valuing the business at roughly €2.5 billion including debt, alongside a broader narrative of international expansion. In that environment, an athlete ambassador is not just a marketing face; they are a channel for community-building, and tennis is attractive precisely because its audience profile is premium, global and relatively brand-safe.

So, does Paolini represent similar or opposite brand values to Sinner? Similar in the way brands price risk, different in the emotional packaging. Sinner is sold as precision, control and quiet excellence, an identity luxury sponsors can attach to without fear of contradiction. Paolini, based on how partners describe her, leans more toward warmth, energy and relatable authenticity. That is not a weaker archetype, it is a different one, and for several consumer categories it may be more monetisable because it travels better into everyday life.

This brings to the uncomfortable final question: can authenticity be replicated, or is it unique to Sinner? The honest answer is that brands can replicate the playbook but not the signal. They can sign early, lock in long-term, curate a coherent portfolio, avoid contradictory partners, and build a lifestyle narrative that does not rely on weekly results. They can even copy the language of authenticity. What they cannot do is purchase the audience's belief that it is real, because that belief is created by consistency over time. The moment an athlete's commercial portfolio starts to look crowded or opportunistic, "authenticity" becomes a slogan instead of an asset, and the model breaks.

If brands are trying to reproduce the "Sinner model" through Paolini, the smartest version is not to turn her into a clone, but to keep her portfolio coherent and let her own archetype stay intact: credible, high-performing, low-noise, but emotionally warmer and more lifestyle-compatible. Golden Goose's Rome positioning works only if Paolini can make "off-court" feel natural rather than staged. In modern sponsorship economics, authenticity is not replicable like a template; coherence is. And coherence is what turns an athlete into a long-term commercial asset.

VIII. The future of tennis marketing

Over the last few years, the Italian tennis movement has experienced an exponential growth, transforming from a traditionally elite and niche sport to a broader cultural and lifestyle platform.

Recent data tells us that Tennis (for the first time in recent history) has overtaken football in terms of federation revenues (FITP closed 2025 with over €230M vs FIGC €200M). 2025 was an extraordinary season for Italian Tennis and revenues for 2026 are forecasted over €250M. Factors behind this success are definitely sport results achieved by Sinner, Paolini and Davis and Billy Jean Cup; but FITP did also a governance restructuring, focusing on industrial logics and identifying international events as a strategic lever (e.g. Internazionali D'Italia's shift from struggling in the early 2000's to generating an overall economic impact of €900M today). Other data show there are 6.2M of tennis and padel players in Italy (vs 6.5M football players), more than 1.2M registered members (200% increase compared to 2020), more than 4400 affiliated clubs. The professional ecosystem includes around 15,000 coaches and more than 10,000 match officials, Racket sports count approximately 20 million enthusiasts, a figure higher than volleyball, swimming, athletics, and basketball, and only slightly lower than football.

Overall value of television broadcasting rights reached €40M per year, audience attention towards tennis has increased significantly. The most relevant example is Wimbledon 2025, which had an average audience of 5.67M viewers vs 2.1M viewers for the most watched Serie A match: Juventus-Milan.

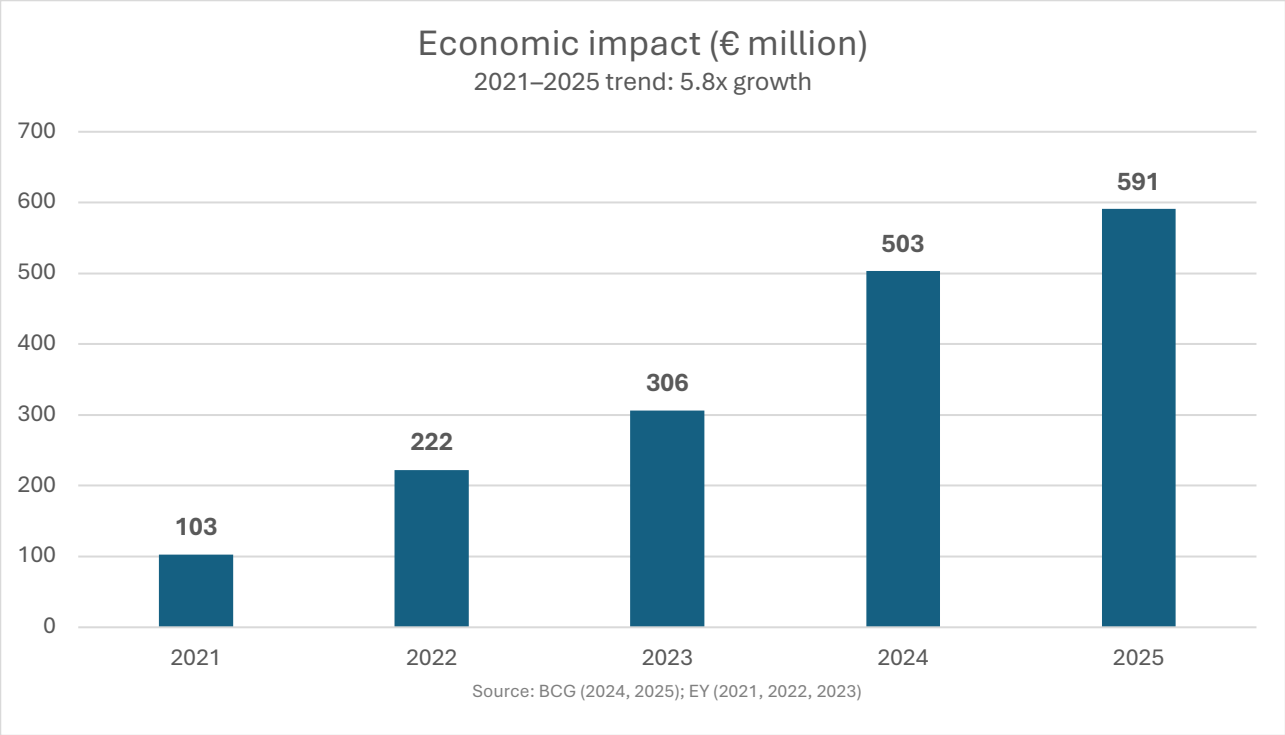


Figure: Economic impact generated by Nitto ATP Finals hosted in Turin (2021-2025), source: FITP.it

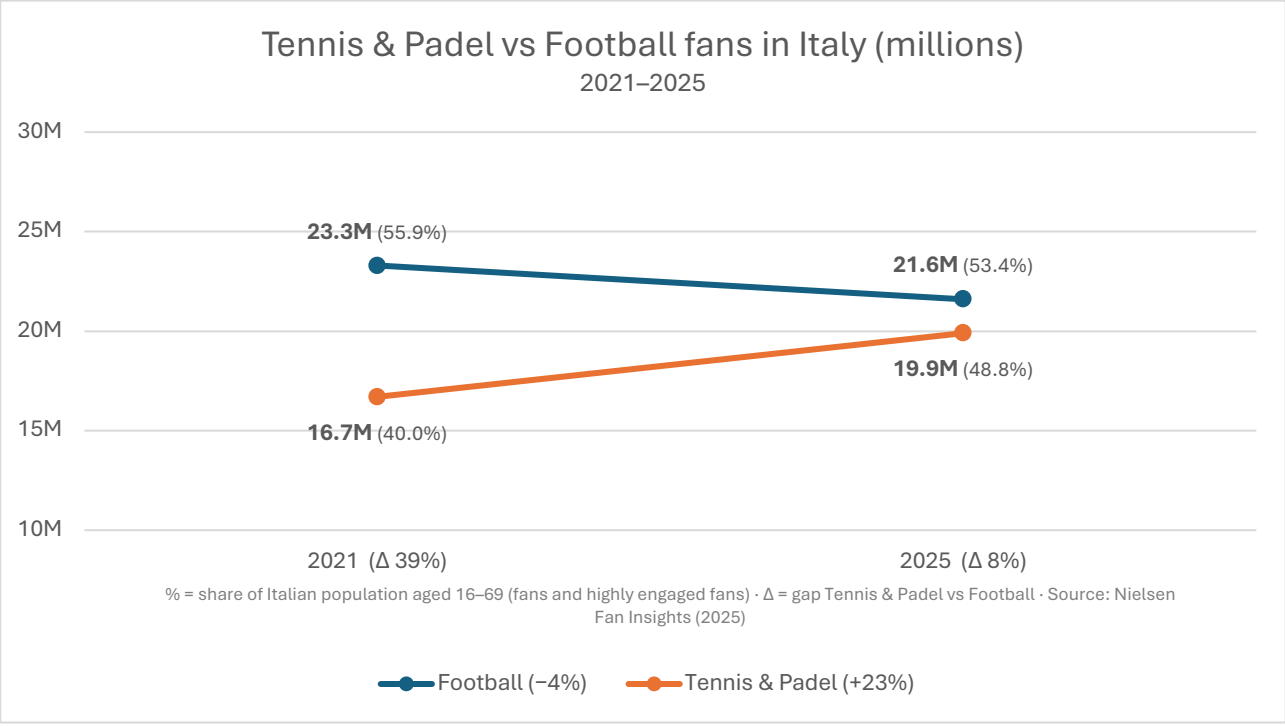


Figure: Football vs Tennis&Padel fans in Italy (2021-2025), source: FITP.it

This growth has been strongly accelerated by the rise of Jannik Sinner, who brought tennis to the centre of the Italian cultural conversation. However, this rapid growth raises a crucial question: is the current expansion of tennis in Italy just a temporary trend driven by "Sinner phenomenon", or does it represent a deeper, structural transformation of the sport's cultural and economic role within the Italian market?

8.1. Opportunities for growth

Tennis marketing presents several strong opportunities for future growth, particularly through its unique positioning at the intersection of sport, fashion, and culture. Unlike many other disciplines, tennis carries an inherent elegance rooted in its history, aesthetics, and values, allowing it to function not only as a competitive activity but also as a lifestyle reference. This makes it especially attractive for collaborations with luxury and lifestyle brands, where athletes become ambassadors of broader concepts such as identity, taste, and aspiration. The rise of trends like "quiet luxury" and the "old money" aesthetic among Gen Z further reinforces this connection, as both emphasize discretion, timeless style, and heritage—qualities deeply embedded in tennis culture. Classic tennis imagery, from traditional outfits to refined settings, naturally aligns with these trends and circulates widely on digital platforms, often beyond the boundaries of the sport itself. As a result, tennis has the potential to establish itself as the most fashion-oriented mainstream sport.

At the same time, tennis offers a credible platform for sustainability and value-based marketing. The sport inherently promotes discipline, respect, and long-term performance rather than excess, making it particularly compatible with brands seeking to communicate ethical production, durability, and responsibility. This alignment is already visible in the strategies of companies such as Lacoste, which invests in sustainable materials while maintaining its heritage positioning, and equipment brands like Wilson and HEAD, which are introducing lower-impact products. In the luxury segment, Gucci's sustainability initiatives also resonate with tennis' refined image. As a result, tennis operates not just as a visibility platform but as a credible space for long-term, value-driven narratives.

Another key opportunity lies in the evolution of digital storytelling and fan engagement. Younger audiences increasingly consume sport through highlights rather than full matches and tend to follow individual athletes more closely than tournaments. This shift requires tennis marketing to move beyond a match-centered approach and embrace more narrative-driven strategies. Short-form content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels plays a crucial role, offering behind-the-scenes access to training routines, travel, and personal moments that allow fans to connect with players on a deeper level. At the same time, long-form content such as documentaries and series—like *Break Point* or *My Way* featuring Carlos Alcaraz—provides more in-depth insights into athletes' lives, pressures, and personalities, helping to humanize them beyond their on-court performance.

Finally, an important area of growth is the diversification of tennis marketing, particularly in contexts like Italy where visibility is currently concentrated around a single figure such as Jannik Sinner. While his success has generated significant short-term value, over-reliance on one athlete risks message saturation, reduced credibility, and audience fatigue. This challenge, however, also represents an opportunity to build a more sustainable and resilient marketing ecosystem. By promoting a broader range of players with distinct personalities and narratives—such as Lorenzo Musetti or Flavio Cobolli—brands and federations can expand tennis' cultural reach while reducing dependency on a single star. This approach reflects successful long-term branding models like Roger Federer's selective partnership strategy, which maintained value through coherence and scarcity. Applied at a systemic level, diversification enables richer storytelling, more balanced visibility, and a stronger foundation for long-term growth beyond individual careers.

IX. Comparison with football

Football is still the most popular sport in Italy and reaches very large audiences every week. However, this constant exposure creates saturation, and fan attention is often spread across too many matches and competitions. Tennis has a smaller but rapidly growing audience. Because events are less frequent, tennis generates stronger peaks of attention, especially during major tournaments involving Italian players.

Tennis has a competitive advantage right now due to several factors:

Sporting performance and national pride: Italian football has struggled in recent years, both with the national team and with Serie A (low quality championship compared to other major European leagues). These disappointing results have reduced excitement and national pride. Tennis is currently experiencing a very positive phase, with Italian athletes achieving historic results on the global stage. This success strengthens emotional engagement and public enthusiasm.

Media environment and visibility: Football dominates media coverage but suffers from high noise and constant debate. Individual players often lose visibility within team dynamics. Tennis operates in a less crowded media environment, where athletes compete individually. This makes it easier to build clear personal stories and give players strong and recognizable identities.

Sponsorships and brand opportunities: Football sponsorship is highly competitive and crowded. Brands often struggle to differentiate themselves and may be exposed to negative narratives related to poor results or controversies. Tennis offers a more positive and credible platform, associated with values such as discipline, respect, and excellence. This makes tennis particularly attractive for lifestyle, luxury, and sustainability-focused brands.

Multi audience reach: Football in Italy continues to have a predominantly male and performance-driven audience. Tennis, by contrast, reaches a more diverse and fragmented audience. It attracts men and women, younger and older fans, competitive players and lifestyle-oriented followers. Tennis also connects with fashion, wellness, and recreational participation (including padel), expanding its appeal beyond traditional sports fans. This broader audience base increases the sport's commercial flexibility and cultural relevance.

Market saturation and growth potential: Football represents a mature and saturated market, with limited room for innovation. Tennis is still in a growth phase, with expanding participation, media interest, and commercial value. This creates greater potential for future development if managed strategically.

X. Bibliography

ATP Tour. (2026). *ATP Rankings | PIF ATP Rankings (Singles) | ATP Tour | Tennis | ATP Tour | Tennis*. [online] Available at: https://www.atptour.com/en/rankings/singles?region=ITA

Bellinazzo, M. (2026). *Federtennis: nel 2025 incassati 230 milioni, sorpassato il calcio*. [online] Il Sole 24 ORE. Available at: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/federtennis-2025-incassati-230-milioni-sorpassato-calcio-AI7mRzW?refresh_ce=1

Botton, A. (2025). *Jasmine Paolini, tennista mondiale: un 2025 tra luci e ombre*. [online] Sport e Finanza. Available at: https://www.sportefinanza.it/2025/11/04/jasmine-paolini-2025-guadagni-sponsor-classifica-wta/

Bowers, C. (2024). *ITF GLOBAL TENNIS REPORT: PARTICIPATION HITS 106 MILLION IN FIVE YEARS*. [online] Itftennis.com. Available at: https://www.itftennis.com/en/news-and-media/articles/itf-global-tennis-report-participation-hits-106-million-in-five-years/.

Caro, E.D. (2025). *Lavazza: 'Crediamo in Sinner da quando aveva 17 anni'*. [online] Il Sole 24 ORE. Available at: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/lavazza-crediamo-sinner-quando-aveva-17-anni-AH2mWfgB

Cooper, S. (2025). *Who sponsors Jannik Sinner? The companies behind $200m+ payday*. [online] Tennis365. Available at: https://www.tennis365.com/tennis-news/who-sponsors-jannik-sinner-the-companies-behind-200m-payday

Daviscup.com. (2025). *Italy - Davis Cup - The World Cup of Tennis*. [online] Available at: https://www.daviscup.com/en/teams/c30252d7-e011-4a04-a778-d8941309df3d

Engage.it. (2026a). *Jasmine Paolini nuova ambassador Dove. Al via la collaborazione per promuovere autenticità e body confidence*. [online] Available at: https://www.engage.it/brand-e-aziende/jasmine-paolini-nuova-ambassador-dove-al-via-la-collaborazione-per-promuovere-autenticita-e-body-confidence.aspx

Engage.it. (2026b). *Jasmine Paolini nuova brand ambassador di Golden Goose*. [online] Available at: https://www.engage.it/brand-e-aziende/golden-goose-si-consolida-nello-sport-con-jasmine-paolini-e-altri-3-nuovi-global-brand-ambassador.aspx

Eriksson, J. (2020). *Jannik Sinner's Racquet - Player Profile*. [online] Tennisnerd.net. Available at: https://www.tennisnerd.net/gear/racquets/pro-player-racquets/jannik-sinners-racquet/23204.

Federtennis (2026). *Sinner e Musetti in Top 5, Tuttosport: 'L'età dell'oro del tennis che batte il calcio'*. [online] Federtennis. Available at: https://www.fitp.it/Federazione/News/Attivita-internazionale/effetto-sinner-musetti-tennis-sorpasso-calcio-tuttosport.

Goldengoose.com. (2025). *Jasmine Paolini trionfa a Roma con la collezione 'Star'*. [online] Available at: https://www.goldengoose.com/it/it/stories/rome-jasmine-paolini.html

Google.com. (2024). *Explore - Google Trends*. [online] Available at: https://trends.google.com/explore?geo=IT&q=gucci%2520sinner

Guardian, T. (2023). *Jannik Sinner's Gucci Deal Leads Wimbledon Fashion Revolution*. [online] The Business of Fashion. Available at: https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/luxury/jannik-sinners-gucci-deal-leads-wimbledon-fashion-revolution/.

Head.com. (2026). Available at: https://www.head.com/en/tennis/racquets/speed

Jacobs, S. (2023). *'Style icon' Jannik Sinner's big sponsors – A $158m Nike deal, Gucci's statement of intent and more*. [online] Tennis365. Available at: https://www.tennis365.com/tennis-features/style-icon-jannik-sinners-big-sponsors-158m-nike-deal-gucci-alfa-romeo.

Jonathan (2021). *Jannik Sinner's Racquet*. [online] Perfect Tennis. Available at: https://www.perfect-tennis.com/jannik-sinner-racquet/.

La redazione (2025). *Sinner diventa 'un modello per affrontare la crisi economica': ecco le sue cinque qualità d'oro*. [online] Corrieredellosport.it. Available at: https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/tennis/2025/06/23-141547325/sinner_diventa_un_modello_per_affrontare_la_crisi_economica_ecco_le_sue_cinque_qualit_d_oro

Lavazzagroup.com. (2025). *Lavazza Group*. [online] Available at: https://www.lavazzagroup.com/en/our-stories/news-and-media/lavazza-jannik-sinner-together-until-2030.html

Levingston, I. and Borrelli, S.S. (2025). *HSG buys Italian footwear brand Golden Goose for €2.5bn*. [online] @FinancialTimes. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/909acc08-dd8e-4ac8-824e-b18b5bb1720d.

Martino, F. (2025). *Jannik Sinner è tornato sulla neve per la campagna di Gucci Altitude*. [online] GQ Italia. Available at: https://www.gqitalia.it/article/jannik-sinner-campagna-gucci-altitude

Matteo Zorzoli (2026). *Boom del tennis in Italia: record di ricavi e tesserati, superato il calcio per la prima volta*. [online] Geopop. Available at: https://www.geopop.it/boom-di-ricavi-e-di-tesserati-nel-tennis-i-numeri-e-le-ragioni-dietro-lo-storico-sorpasso-sul-calcio-in-italia/.

Nast, C. (2023). *Una borsa da viaggio (Gucci) sul campo da tennis è un fatto davvero unico. A portarla è Jannik Sinner*. [online] Vogue Italia. Available at: https://www.vogue.it/article/borsa-da-viaggio-gucci-per-tennis-jannik-sinner.

Nicolò F and Nicolò F (2024). *Jannik Sinner: un modello per gli adolescenti - Centropsicologia Gorgonzola*. [online] Centropsicologia Gorgonzola. Available at: https://www.centropsicologia.it/jannik-sinner-un-modello-per-gli-adolescenti/

Pop, C. (2024). *4 famous brands that just hit the Jannik Sinner jackpot*. [online] Tennis World USA. Available at: https://www.tennisworldusa.org/tennis/news/Tennis_Stories/142245/4-famous-brands-that-just-hit-the-jannik-sinner-jackpot/.

Reuters (2025). *Net revenues at sneaker maker Golden Goose rose 13% last year*. [online] Yahoo Finance. Available at: https://finance.yahoo.com/news/net-revenues-sneaker-maker-golden-151546908.html

Stellantis.com. (2025). *Jasmine Paolini è la nuova Brand Ambassador di Alfa Romeo*. [online] Available at: https://www.media.stellantis.com/it-it/alfa-romeo/press/jasmine-paolini-e-la-nuova-brand-ambassador-di-alfa-romeo

Team, del (2024). *Jannik beyond Sinner*. [online] Lavazza.it. Available at: https://www.lavazza.it/it/sport/jannik-sinner-collaborazione-rituali.

Tennis.com (2024). *Jannik Sinner's new Roland Garros tennis bag is a Gucci x Head collaboration*. [online] Tennis.com. Available at: https://www.tennis.com/baseline/articles/jannik-sinner-new-roland-garros-tennis-bag-gucci-head-collaboration-fashion-rolex-ambassador

Tennis.com (2025). *Jannik Sinner hits the slopes again, this time with Gucci and Head*. [online] Tennis.com. Available at: https://www.tennis.com/news/articles/jannik-sinner-ski-slopes-new-gucci-altitude-head-winter-campaign.

tennisnet.com. (2022). *ATP: Jannik Sinner signs $150m deal with Nike*. [online] Available at: https://www.tennisnet.com/en/news/atp-jannik-sinner-signs-150m-deal-with-nike.

The Sport Review. (2025). *How much is Jannik Sinner worth? Net worth, career prize money, and endorsements, including $158m Nike deal - The Sport Review*. [online] Available at: https://www.thesportreview.com/tennis/how-much-is-jannik-sinner-worth-net-worth-career-prize-money-and-endorsements-including-158m-nike-deal/

Theplayoffs.news. (2026). Available at: https://theplayoffs.news/en/jannik-sinner-sponsors-what-brand-endorsement-deals-has-the-world-no-1-signed/.

Wikipedia. (2023a). *Head (company)*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_(company).

Wikipedia. (2023b). *Jannik Sinner*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jannik_Sinner.

www.grandviewresearch.com. (n.d.). *Global Tennis Racquet Market Size, Share | Industry Report, 2019-2025*. [online] Available at: https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/tennis-racquet-market.

Zhu, di M. (2024). *Jannik Sinner è la star della nuova campagna Gucci*. [online] MF Milano Finanza. Available at: https://www.milanofinanza.it/fashion/jannik-sinner-e-la-star-della-nuova-campagna-gucci-202405091133319511