

Global fashion company Paul Smith tailors a bright, headless future

Cloudinary **advances move** to modern, headless e-commerce tech stack

+40% reduction in asset management costs

45% boost in video-enabled sales

Major **efficiency gains** thanks to new B2B partner workflows

Distinctive fashion retailer **Paul Smith's** recent move to a headless e-commerce architecture based on MACH (microservices, API-first, cloud-native SaaS, and headless) principles put Cloudinary at the center of its global ambitions. The strategic move to Cloudinary is automating and optimizing new and efficient approaches to the way Paul Smith handles its vast library of high-quality fashion imagery, and sells online.

Paul Smith

INDUSTRY

Retail and E-commerce

HEADQUARTERS

London, UK

EMPLOYEES

800



"Cloudinary is our standard now when it comes to media management. It's very rare to find a company where the products and the care and support – from implementation, onward – is as strong. To me, Cloudinary is a must have and a relief to use."

—Hannah Bennett, Paul Smith Head of Digital

ABOUT

Design leadership spanning 50 years

In 2020, Paul Smith celebrated 50 years of independent design success. Founded in 1970 in a small British city, Paul Smith is today a world-famous style icon known for its distinctive tailoring and fluorescent pink flagship store in Los Angeles.

Now active across 60 countries and more than 130 shops, industry-leading department stores, airports, and online, the company prides itself on using traditional techniques to make high-quality, tailored clothing for men and women. Key to its highly successful business model: seamless cooperation with its global business partner and franchisee network.

THE CHALLENGE

A need for MACH-based working

Its website has always been central to the Paul Smith brand, but during the COVID-19 global pandemic, online sales peaked at 40%. As the world emerged from lockdown, the brand's internal IT leadership decided that it could achieve even greater success by moving to a fully modern, composable, and headless architecture known as MACH. According to its Head of Digital Hannah Bennett, "We started learning about and digging into headless pre-pandemic, as we saw great potential about what it could give a customer in terms of not only site speed but flexibility of content."

On the back end, a new MACH architecture stood to offer a range of operational benefits, such as enabling a best of breed strategy and increasing the company's overall agility.

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"We were very happy with our decision to adopt Cloudinary and it's been a big part of our evolution to look deeper at updating our overall tech stack. With Cloudinary we know we can work quite easily with other MACH vendors now that we're fully headless."

—Hannah Bennett, Paul Smith Head of Digital

THE CLOUDINARY SOLUTION

Ease, efficiency, and cost savings

At the heart of the updated Paul Smith architecture is Cloudinary's headless DAM, Storyblok's CMS, and Adobe Commerce.

Paul Smith initially adopted Cloudinary to help expand the digital offering for its wholesale business. Cloudinary's DAM immediately transformed what once was a tedious manual process into a faster, more efficient way to showcase the company's collection and optimized the way it managed visual media with B2B partners.

That early investment in Cloudinary paid off greatly when Paul Smith's robust internal B2B website was easily extended to provide a wholesale channel to aid partners during the pandemic.

"Today we use Cloudinary in so many ways," says Web Development Manager Nish Patel. "We've built an interface that lets us dynamically create collections that third party vendors and suppliers can download. Cloudinary's close integration with both Adobe Commerce and the new Storyblok CMS lets us easily process a number of custom workflows we've set up, as well as giving us an efficient backup for past season images created for particular campaigns."



"As a 50-year old company, we have a lot of legacy that we want to bring along with us, and Cloudinary's DAM has allowed us to do so. We also really like the way we can keep on flexing the Cloudinary APIs to suit our business needs."

—Nish Patel, Paul Smith's Web Development Manager

Unsurprisingly, digital asset management is a key issue for a company that wants to release four collections a year, stresses Bennett. "As a luxury designer brand, we have to manage and retain a huge number of pictures—not only for our own retail, but for our big wholesale business. We want to create imagery in a streamlined way where we avoid duplication and make it as easy as possible for wholesale customers to work with us."

Cloudinary is the lynchpin of a digital image handling process that connects the whole Paul Smith creative team — everyone from photography to marketing. Moving all clothing images around used to be a laborious task. But using Cloudinary has massively reduced the overhead associated with uploading imagery while ensuring consistency. For example, the creative team uses Cloudinary to enable seamless image handling using a naming match that automatically assigns a SKU in Adobe Commerce.

For Patel, the breakthrough with Cloudinary is its API-first approach: "Once we've ingested something into our database, then we can do anything with that data — be that changing transformations, exposing it into CSVs, or putting it into PDFs. So we've got a really clever API-based mechanism now, which Cloudinary has allowed us to do with ease."

THE RESULTS

Easier, faster, more dynamic media experiences lead to stronger engagement and increased sales

Even before launching its official headless strategy, Paul Smith realized significant savings with Cloudinary's DAM. For example, the company now spends at least 40% less time on image management. A more recent benefit has been using Cloudinary to add more video to the sales mix.

"When we added video to the product page, we started to see a strong level of engagement conversion with video over straight images," explains Bennett.



"The fact that we could easily drop product videos into the DAM led to an impressive 45% increase in sales of those products, because of the Cloudinary improvement to the campaign around it."

—Hannah Bennett, Paul Smith Head of Digital

Patel adds, "And because Cloudinary gives us the flexibility to adjust the sizes we want to put in between the images and any transformation, we can set the size needed to make it retina-friendly and just pass those values as a URL, dynamically."

The bottom line is that Cloudinary has become an indispensable part of the fabric of Paul Smith's web architecture and visual media workflow. "In all honesty, I don't know a world without Cloudinary or its DAM solution now," concludes Bennett.

About Cloudinary

Cloudinary's mission is to empower companies to deliver visual experiences that inspire and connect by unleashing the full potential of their media. With 60 billion assets under management and nearly 10,000 customers worldwide, Cloudinary is the industry standard for developers, creators and marketers looking to manage, transform, and deliver images and videos online. As a result, leading brands like Atlassian, Bleacher Report, Bombas, Grubhub, Hinge, NBC, Mediavine, Minted, Peloton, and Petco are seeing significant business value in using Cloudinary, including faster time to market, higher user satisfaction and increased engagement and conversions. For more information, visit www.cloudinary.com