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Implement Fast Fashion Strategies with SGS Support

SGS offers a range of services to fashion retailers to enable them to move to a quick response production model. This helps them maintain an advantage in today's global fashion market.



The quick response model focuses on shortened production lead times. Implementation of this model allows businesses to retain a competitive edge in the face of pressures produced both by the global financial crisis, an increasingly competitive fashion market and increasing labour and supply costs.

Fast Fashion - a Quick Response Model

The recent move to fast fashion models represents a revolutionary change for the fashion industry. Where production lead times were previously structured around periods of months, fast fashion enables design and production cycles to occur over just weeks. This acceleration gives stores the ability to carry fashions that are fresher, with production cycles that are less expensive than has traditionally been the case. Such a model is particularly suited to the teenage and young adult women's markets, where there is a strong demand for clothing that is both trendy and inexpensive.

Why Fast Fashion = Success

Fast Fashion is the product of a range of factors emerging in the face of strong global competition. These factors have led businesses to want to increase the speed and efficiency of fashion retailing operations. Important among these changes is the geographic location of manufacturing facilities close to retail outlets, enabling rapid market response to changing customer demand. **Supply chain efficiencies** are also essential to fast fashion. These rely on communications and data sharing technologies to increase the responsiveness of the supply chain. Such technology can aid the deployment of a highly efficient distribution system, geared to maximise the value of small lot sizes produced through lean, low-waste manufacturing processes. With these factors in place, competitive advantage arises through increased variety and turnover of products, resulting in higher sales.

To ensure that the process operates effectively, it is essential that fast fashion retailers are able to effectively forecast fashion trends and identify particular styles and designs that will best suit their markets. Relatively small lots of highly saleable items bring excitement to the retail environment, stimulating impulse purchasing.

Supply Chains in Detail

Maintaining a responsive supply chain is key to fast fashion. Several major retailers including Zara, H&M, Mango, Forever 21 and Gap have created highly responsive supply chains. Supply chains for such retailers routinely operate around cycles of just a few weeks, rather than months. These supply chains allow for the manufacturing of sample garments within a day. Favourable samples can be produced in small batches for market testing at a single store. Those items that perform well can then be rapidly produced in larger quantities for distribution to other stores. For items that don't sell well, production can be halted.

Preparing for Coming Fashion Industry Challenges

The fashion industry is currently in a position where it must respond to several emerging challenges, including cases of unethical manufacturing prompted by pressures to reduce production costs; increased consumer demand for both **quality and safety of fashion items**; increasing fashion industry contribution to textile waste in landfills due to high levels of disposal of unworn clothes; and industry contribution to climate change as a result of high levels of energy and resource consumption as a result of clothing manufacturing.

Fast fashion can play a role in meeting these challenges. Fast fashion can assist retailers to **use resources more efficiently, reducing waste and energy consumption**. Product safety and quality can increase and labour can be employed ethically. This strategy can further be enhanced by creating market demand for sustainable fashion and by encouraging post purchase re-use and recycling of unwanted clothes, along with lower levels of garment consumption.

In this way, fast and sustainable fashion can be achieved, but only through the cooperation and commitment of all parties involved in the supply chain. Is your business ready to meet these challenges?

Find out more about SGS [solutions for sustainable fashion](#).

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