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Building Fashion: The Product Lifecycle from Raw Materials to Retail

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Area of study:	Fashion and Design
Area Code:	IB/CM380
Method of Instruction:	In-person

Description

This **product-oriented** course provides a comprehensive understanding of the fashion industry, covering key players, business models, market trends, and the entire lifecycle of a fashion product from ideation to retail. Students will explore creative and business processes, sustainable materials, pricing strategies, supply chain management, branding, merchandising, and post-launch evaluation. The course is designed to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of the fashion industry successfully.

Course objectives can be synthesized as follows:

- Understand the structure and key players of the fashion industry.
- Analyze market trends and consumer behavior.
- Develop sustainable and ethical fashion practices.
- Gain expertise in pricing, sourcing, and supplier management.
- Learn effective branding, merchandising, and inventory management strategies.
- Understand legal and compliance issues in the fashion industry.
- Apply knowledge to real-world case studies and projects.

COURSE CONTENTS

The course begins with an introduction to the fashion industry, outlining its key players, business models—such as luxury brands, fast fashion, and direct-to-consumer (DTC) approaches—and the prevailing market trends. From there, students will explore the journey of an idea becoming a product, learning about trend research, consumer needs, and competitive analysis.

A significant focus will be placed on textiles and sustainable materials, ensuring students understand how to build a sustainable product through knowledge of fabrics, innovative materials, and certifications. The financial aspect is also covered through lessons on costing and pricing strategies, enabling students to develop products that are both competitive and profitable.



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The fashion supply chain is dissected to explain its complexities, from raw materials to finished products and distribution. Students will learn about sourcing ethical suppliers, managing supplier relationships, and the logistics behind bringing products to market. Additionally, branding and collection development will be explored to help students define a strong brand identity and create cohesive product lines.

Production planning and inventory management play a crucial role in fashion business operations, balancing costs, forecasting demand, and reducing waste. Legal considerations, including fashion law, compliance, and sustainability certifications, will also be examined to ensure students understand the regulatory landscape.

In response to the growing need for sustainable fashion, the course will discuss circular fashion and waste reduction strategies, such as recycling, resale models, and other innovative approaches to reducing environmental impact. Theoretical lessons will be reinforced with assignment tutorship sessions, where students can seek guidance on their coursework.

Later in the course, students will delve into merchandising and assortment planning, understanding how to curate and manage product selections for different seasons and markets. Retail buying and consumer behavior will be analyzed to help students grasp purchasing decisions and demand forecasting. The course also covers inventory and stock management, detailing strategies for optimizing production volumes and logistical efficiency.

Finally, the course will conclude with an in-depth analysis of product performance and post-launch evaluation, ensuring students can assess the success of a collection using data-driven insights. The final sessions will consist of an online exam and assignment presentations, where students will showcase their projects and demonstrate their understanding of the course material.

PREREQUISITES

None

METHOD OF TEACHING

The course will be conducted through a combination of lectures, case studies, interactive discussions, and hands-on assignments. Students will engage with real-world fashion industry scenarios and projects.

The course is fully in presence.



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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Active participation in class discussions and group projects.
- Completion of all assignments and case studies.
- A final project and presentation.
- A written final exam.

No previous fashion knowledge is expected.

CREDITS

6 ECTS

GRADING

Group assignment + Class presentation	30% of final grade
Final exam	60% of final grade
Attendance, behavior and participation	10% of final grade

COURSE READINGS AND MATERIALS

Required readings:

Readings and slides: all mandatory readings and lecturers' slides will be available on Blackboard.

Suggested readings, books and articles:

- Rinaldi F.R., Testa. S, "The Responsible Fashion Company", Greenleaf Publishing, 2014 (e-book available [here](#))
- Rinaldi F.R., "Fashion Industry 2030", Egea – Bocconi University Press, 2019 (Kindle format available [here](#))
- Corbellini E., Saviolo S. "Managing Fashion & Luxury Companies", ETAS 2009
- Bertola P., Colombi C., Vacca F. (2018), Fashionabilities: Planning and Managing Design Processes in Fashion, Mandragora, Florence (ebook available [here](#))



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INSTRUCTORS BIO

Cristina Poianella

After graduating from Bocconi University in 2003 in Business Management with a Fashion Management major, she has worked with many luxury brands such as Fendi, Bottega Veneta, Christian Dior, Fratelli Rossetti and Tod's. During her career she has held various roles specialising in Buying and in accessories Merchandising. After 5 years of experience as a Buyer for Europe Leather Goods & Accessories at Fendi, she specialises in Leather goods Merchandising through the collaboration with Bottega Veneta and Christian Dior. Since December 2012 she has served as WLG Global Merchandising Manager for Tod's. She taught two years in two masters of the Milano Fashion Institute and has been collaborating for a long time with Luigi Bocconi University. In 2021 she became Academic Fellow for the Department of Management and Technology.

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Francesca Boni (course tutor)

Founder of Il Vestito Verde, a digital platform to discover sustainable fashion brands and stores in Italy, she is also a researcher at Università Bocconi and SDA Bocconi School of Management. Her background is in venture capital, working with high tech and space startups.

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Elisa Altini

Elisa Altini is the Founder of *CLEA Merchandising & Branding Advisor*, a consultancy specialized in supporting fashion and luxury brands with buying, merchandising, brand strategy, digital development, and retail optimization. She brings over 15 years of industry experience, having held key roles at Giorgio Armani, Miu Miu, and Valentino.

With a consolidated experience in navigating the complexity of product strategies, her expertise spans the entire product lifecycle, encompassing both the strategic precision of buying and the artful curation of collection merchandising. Furthermore, her understanding extends across diverse distribution channels, from the dynamic landscape of digital platforms to the immersive experiences of retail environments.

Elisa adopts a sustainability-focused, tailor-made approach that helps brands grow while preserving their unique identity.

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