How to cite this article: Choosak Pornsing, Noppakun Sangkhiew, Nattharika Chirachetsadang, Napasorn Tanti-arporn, Tongtang Tonglim & Choat Inthawongse. (2022). Fast Fashion Strategies in Logistics and Supply Chain Management. *Journal of Logistics and Supply Chain College.* 8(2), 126-139.

Received: March 3, 2022 Revised: July 23, 2022 Accepted: September 13, 2022

Fast Fashion Strategies in Logistics and Supply Chain Management

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Abstract

At present, there are more than 20 leading fashion brands in Thailand responding to fashion-conscious demand. Many clothing brand companies are unable to meet the market's demand for fast equality fashion. The objectives of this article were to (i) to study the best practices in the production process of the fast fashion industry; (ii) to compare the performance, economic, environmental, social, and social media information technology of the best practice in the fast fashion industry; (iii) to analyze the relationship and supply chain management. The study uses primary data of fast fashion patterns and strategies in a supply chain management system, along with a review of management theory, concepts, and fast fashion strategy as a piece of secondary information. From the benchmarking analysis, this study found that the ZARA brand scored the highest (4.8 in the economy and the environment) compared to the other companies. However, the UNIQLO brand scored highest (5.0) in the social impact due to a system to support work-life balance, better indicators of labor practice, and human rights than other brands. Fast fashion differs from traditional supply chain strategies, which consist of a quick response; shortening the production time in each phase, reducing inventory, and being able to respond to the changing needs of consumers quickly.

Keywords: Fast fashion, Logistics and supply chain management, Fashion industry

Type of Article: Research Article

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กลยุทธ์การจัดการซัพพลายเชน กรณีของอุตสาหกรรมแฟชั่นรวดเร็ว

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บทคัดย่อ

ในปัจจุบันประเทศไทยมีตราสินค้าแฟชั่นชั้นนำมากกว่า 20 แบรนด์ที่ตอบรับความต้องการต่อการ เปลี่ยนแปลงของแฟชั่นอย่างรวดเร็ว อย่างไรก็ตามแบรนด์เสื้อผ้าหลายแห่งไม่สามารถตอบสนองความต้องการ ในตลาดแฟชั่นได้ทันที่วงที บทความวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) เพื่อเทียบเคียงสมรรถนะ (Benchmarking) ด้านเศรษฐกิจ ด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม ด้านสังคม และด้านสื่อสารสนเทศ ของอุตสาหกรรมเสื้อผ้าแฟชั่นรวดเร็ว (Fast fashion) ที่มีการปฏิบัติที่เป็นเลิศ 2) เพื่อศึกษาวิธีปฏิบัติที่เป็นเลิศ (Best practice) ในกระบวนการ ผลิตของอุตสาหกรรมเสื้อผ้าแฟชั่นรวดเร็ว และ 3) เพื่อวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างกลยุทธ์กับการบริหาร จัดการซัพพลายเชนและผลกระทบอุตสาหกรรมเสื้อผ้าแฟชั่นรวดเร็ว โดยงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงพรรณนา (Descriptive research) ใช้วิธีการเก็บรวบรวมเอกสารแบบการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ (Qualitative research) จาก กลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 3 ตราสินค้า ได้แก่ ซาร่า (ZARA) เฮชแอนด์เอ็ม (H&M) และยูนิโคล่ (Uniqlo) ร่วมกับ การทบทวนทฤษฎีการจัดการ แนวคิด และกลยุทธ์ของอุตสาหกรรมเสื้อผ้าแฟชั่นรวดเร็วเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของข้อมูล รอง ผลจากการศึกษาพบว่า ตราสินค้า ซาร่า (ZARA) ได้คะแนนสูงสุดในด้านเศรษฐกิจและสิ่งแวดล้อม คิดเป็น 4.8 คะแนน เมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับตราสินค้าอื่น โดยตราสินค้า ยูนิโคล่ (Uniqlo) ได้รับคะแนนเต็ม 5.0 ในด้าน ผลกระทบต่อสังคม เนื่องจากมีระบบสนับสนุนความสมดุลระหว่างชีวิตและการทำงาน ตัวชี้วัดด้านการปฏิบัติ ้ด้านแรงงาน และสิทธิมนุษยชนที่ดีกว่าตราสินค้าอื่น ดังนั้นอุตสาหกรรมเสื้อผ้าแบบรวดเร็วแตกต่างจากกลยุทธ์ โซ่อุปทานดั้งเดิม เนื่องจากมีการตอบสนองอย่างรวดเร็ว ลดเวลาในการผลิตแต่ละขั้นตอน ลดสินค้าคงคลัง และ สามารถตอบสนองความต้องการที่เปลี่ยนแปลงของผู้บริโภคได้เป็นอย่างดี

คำสำคัญ: แฟชั่นรวดเร็ว การจัดการโลจิสติกส์และโซ่อุปทาน อุตสาหกรรมแฟชั่น **ประเภทบทความ:** บทความวิจัย

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1. Introduction

One of the four basic needs is clothing not only being what humans wear to protect the body from climatic and environmental conditions but also reflects society and culture as well as tastes, which can reflect the wearer's image and status (Mimapun, 2013). For the fashion industry in Thailand, according to the W&S research market, there are currently more than 20 leading fashion brands (W&S Group, 2015), which shows that fashion business, fast fashion clothing that is an internal brand, has invested in and expanded the market in Thailand. From the purchasing power and lifestyle of customers who have turned more fashion-conscious and want to promptly acquire the latest styles from abroad. The business strategy, known as fast fashion, has become a core strategy of the contemporary fashion industry that aims to reduce the buying cycle and timing of event planning and production as short as possible and deliver new fashion products to the store as quickly as possible (Mongkolsin, 2015).

The fast-fashion strategy consists of a quick response, an inventory reduction, short production time in each phase, and able to respond to the changing needs of consumers quickly (Baghi et al., 2013). Thus, helping to increase production capability both reduce the number of outdated products in the warehouse no need to discount the sale price. The next part is the timing. Since the fashion products go on sale in the fastest possible time, timing is the key (Camargo

et al., 2020). Each shipment from the supplier has to consider the delivery of the products to ensure the delivery time as fast as possible. Next comes the fashion buying cycle. Production forecasts are planned before launching new collections (Hayes & Jones, 2006). There is still a risk for fashion items that cannot be sold, therefore, the company should focus on the rapidly changing fashion trend so that the products can be sold continuously. The last one is Enhanced design (Caro & Martínez-de-Albéniz, 2015). Fast fashion can manufacture and respond to consumers rapidly with enhanced product design capabilities. There are few design products with consumer trends in mind, leading to minimal production to meet uncertain supply needs (Gallaugher, 2008).

By integrating primary and secondary data, this study aims to compare economic, environmental, social, and media information technology of the fast fashion industry with best practices. Primary data are fast-fashion patterns and strategies in supply chain management. This includes business management and operations of the organization as well as studying problems and obstacles. Secondary data include a review of management theories, concepts of fast fashion strategy, and related research.

2. Research Objective

The objectives of this article were to

(i) To study the best practices in the production process of the fast fashion industry.

(ii) To compare performance, economic, environmental, social, and social media information technology of the best practice in the fast fashion industry.

(iii) To analyze the relationship and supply chain management to the fast fashion industry.

3. Literature review

3.1 Supply chain network

A Supply chain or logistics network is the collaboration of the system of agencies, people, technology, activities, information, and resources for the movement of goods and services from suppliers to customers of the fashion industry. The council of logistics management has defined supply chain management as a process to integrate, coordinate and control the movement of the entire inventory of raw materials and finished products, and related information in the process from the supplier of raw materials through the company to the consumer to meet the needs of the consumer (Passariello, 2008).

By the activities of the supply chain will convert raw materials or resources into finished goods, and then send them to the customer in which the used materials may be recycled (Jones, 2002). Table 1 summarizes the definitions relate to the supply chain, several of which are significantly different.

Table 1 Variation of supply chain definitions.

Authors	Definitions			
Jones and Riley (1985)	Distribution of products from raw materials from the supplier to the			
	manufacturer to process the product and distribute to consumers			
	further.			
Steven (1989)	A series of activities interlocking, starting from planning,			
	coordinating, and working together. Raw material control and prod-			
	ucts from raw material suppliers to consumers.			
Scott and Westbrook (1991)	Emphasizing in terms of the components of the manufacturing			
	process and the process flow from raw materials to consumers. It			
	is also important to focus on raw materials that cross the organi-			
	zation to other business entities. Showing the connection among			
	businesses in the form of a partnership.			
Ellram (1991)	The form of a network that connected and related			
	organizations for delivering products and services to consumers. It			
	links from raw materials to use until the end of the product and			
	service life cycle.			

Table 1 Variation of supply chain definitions.

Authors	Definitions
Thomas and Griffin (1996)	In addition to the above definitions, a study of the flow of materials,
	the flow of information between suppliers, manufacturers, and
	distribution centers are important as well.
Copper (1997)	It focuses on the end customers about the products, services, and
	information they need. Then, those pieces of information are passing
	back to the manufacturer for further coordination with the supplier.
	A network of interconnected processes based on previous priorities,
Trienekens (1999)	product flow, information, and finance.

3.2 Fast Fashion Strategy

The supply chain in the fashion industry is about the movement and storage of products from the beginning to the end, to the end of the customer. The process at each step will increase product value, which is achieved through effective coordination of supply chain members and efficient integration of logistics at all stages throughout the supply chain. For the lowest cost possible, make the most of the limited resources that respond to the needs of consumers in a fast and efficient manner. Some industries have adopted a supply chain management strategy called Quick Response (QR) which is crucial for

the fast fashion industry.

It can be concluded that a QR strategy can be used to optimize the supply chain system. Since it is a complement to the lean manufacturing process that can help reduce the cost of many functions, eliminate waste from the production process, and increase the level of customer service. Timing is very important in a QR strategy that uses in the fast fashion industry. Therefore, the distribution of products (or services) to consumers is another important activity in this strategy. Each product will have distribution channels that are different.

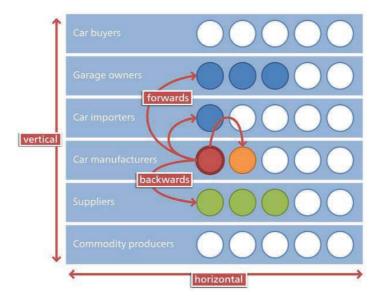


Figure 1 The theory of vertical and horizontal integration in the automotive industry (Nick, 2016).

Figure 1 shows the theory of vertical and horizontal integration in the automotive industry. It can be concluded that the horizontal integration method is easier and faster to obtain results. With a single purpose to an existing business, the expansion provides more market share and sales. As for the vertical combination, the method is more difficult than the horizontal combination, and takes a longer time to achieve the goal. As a result, a "Verizontal" integration strategy uses to promote the supply and lean manufacturing strategies.

The benefit of using a Vertizontal integration strategy is that it can improve the end-to-end visibility of a fast-fashion industry and allow the company to understand the overall supply situation. It can also help to improve the outsourcing of finished products. Fast-fashion companies that implement the Vertizontal integration strategy will be better

equipped with today's complex production and complex supply chain networks but is also suitable to cope with the challenges.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research method

This study was conducted by descriptive research using the method to collect qualitative data by researching documents and related theories. The best practices compare core competencies: economy, environment, social media, and information technology as a determination of benchmarking. In which the researcher has established research guidelines for the entrepreneurs to use in new product development. This research methodology is carried out as 1) sample groups of the fast fashion industry, 2) research tools, 3) research data collection, and 4) data processing and analysis.

4.2 Population and sample

The sample group for this qualitative research of three fast fashion clothing brands, namely ZARA, H&M, and UNIQLO brands, were selected by the researcher. Based on the sales ranking for the year 2020 from the website Fastretailing.com provides the rankings information of fast fashion clothing brands with the most sales and market share in the world.

4.3 Research instruments

This research is using benchmarking as the systematic and continuous search process for the best practices. This enables organizations to learn best practices from other organizations and be able to apply them to their organization.

4.4 Data collection

Data are collecting from documentary

research where academic journals, research studies, information from academic documents, and information technology and media related to the fast fashion industry both in Thailand and abroad are collected.

4.5 Data analysis

For Benchmarking, performance comparison analysis from sample groups in the research, namely ZARA brand, H&M brand, and UNIQLO brand, to be matched and then compared the performance based on a scoring guide from the question design institute, RobecoSAM). To explore a company's sustainability using an assessment response called three-dimensional CSA (Corporate Sustainability Assessment), it is divided into three dimensions as follow:

Table 2 Three-dimensional Corporate Sustainability Assessment (3D-CSA for the study).

Dimensions	Description	Weighted Criterion		
Economic		49%		
	1. The use of Information Technology media	20%		
	2. Customer services	30%		
	3. Supply Chain Management	50%		
Environment		29%		
	1. Environmental management policy	40%		
	2. Economic efficiency	40%		
	3. Packaging	20%		
Society		22%		
	1. Labor and human rights practice indicators	35%		
	2. Stakeholder relationships	35%		
	3. Organizational incentives and talent promotion	30%		

This study utilizes the results from the benchmarking analysis of the sample group, namely the ZARA brand, H&M brand, and UNIQLO brand to find the best practices among the peers.

For Improvement, the study provides a process for implementing best practices for organizational improvement. It will use the principles of the PDCA consists of 5 main steps: plan, implement, monitor, standardize, and control. Which after all steps have been completed will return to the comparison phase (phase 1) again to assess the performance of their organization, repeated this matter, compared to other organizations. It can be seen that the benchmarking process is the

process of continuous improvement and development.

5. Results

This section presents a benchmarking using a three-dimensional Corporate Sustainability Assessment (see Table 2). The key benchmarking area is economic analysis, environmental analysis, and social analysis. The selected three fast fashion companies benchmarking results with pairwise comparison are presented in Tables 3, and 4.

First, the benchmarking result between the ZARA brand and the H&M brand is presented in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3 Benchmarking between the ZARA brand and the H&M brand.

Topic	ZARA	H&M	Comparison of Performance		
Economics			ZARA brand has the		
1) Information Technolo	ogy and media (no. of follo	wers)	efficiency in dissemination		
- Instagram	40.3 M	35.6 M	of information is less than		
- Facebook	28.6 M	38.5 M	H&M brand.		
- Twitter	1.3 M	8.2 M			
- YouTube	78.6 K	393 K			
- Pinterest	1 M	1.1 M			
Total followers	71.3 M	83.8			

2) Customer services

Both brands use the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system to store data helping employees to respond quickly to customer needs and reducing service time. But the H&M brand lack enough information for customers data

For the brand, ZARA has more stored data than the H&M brand, which is sufficient to meet customer needs.

Table 3 Benchmarking between the ZARA brand and the H&M brand. (Cont.)

Topic	ZARA	H&M	Comparison of Performance	
3) Supply Chain Mana	agement			
	Focus on the sustainability of the supply chain by owning 11 factories for total control.	Does not own any production facility and is manufactured by independent suppliers.	The ZARA brand has better control over the supply chain process. This reduces the occurrence of risks in the process.	
Environment				
1) Environmental management policy	The policies of both brands safety, employment, fair cos and working duration includ climate and the impact on the use of chemicals and pr	The environmental management policies of both brands have the same brand development goals.		
2) Eco efficiency	According to Inditex's 2017 annual report on energy consumption of stores, 1,655,454 MWh, logistics 148,118 MWh, carbon dioxide emissions caused by industry 489,179 tons, community solid waste 20,929.751 kg, and 1,302,539 m3 of water consumption, including developing a wastewater treatment system and participating in the United Nations CEO water program.	The H&M brand does not offer exact power consumption. According to the 2017 annual report, 35% recycled material is used, 59% recycled cotton, 17,771 tons of clothing production volume, 64% waste recycling system, 51% operational facilities requirements. Quality is 84%, process renewable energy 96%.	The resource efficiency of the ZARA brand is better than the H&M brand due to its involvement with the United Nations. And there is a clear presentation of the resource consumption.	
3) Packaging	To use renewable energy. The ZARA brand packaging promotes the reuse and recycling of cardboard from boxes and others. The ZARA brand materials are certified under the PEFC/FSC standard.	No promotional information was available for the recycled materials of the H&M brand packaging.	The ZARA brand promotes the use of recycled materials and is up to standard.	

Table 3 Benchmarking between the ZARA brand and the H&M brand. (Cont.)

Topic	ZARA	Н&М	Comparison of		
			Performance		
Social					
1) Labor and	The ZARA brand has a	The H&M brand	The ZARA brand has its		
human rights	human rights policy that	human rights policy	manufacturing factories,		
practice indicators	is based on the principles	stated by the	therefore, have better		
	of the United Nations. And	universal declaration	control of employees and		
	also has a working princi-	of human rights, an	production processes.		
	ple that can identify the	e that can identify the international			
	malfunctions that occur.	covenant, civil and			
		political rights.			
2) Stakeholder	It is convenient for auditing	in both brands; the	Stakeholders' relations		
relationships	brands have constant comm	have the same continuous			
	stakeholders.	communication.			
3) Organizational	Both brands have training pr	Organizational incentives,			
incentives and	to learn and receive training	talent promotion, and the			
talent promotion	helps to develop and promo	development of various			
	taking care of the health and	fields are the same on			
	employees.	both brands.			

Next, the benchmarking proceeding in the same manner between the ZARA brand and the UNIQLO brand, between the H&M brand and UNIQLO brand respectively. The rest of this section presents scoring results adjacent to the previously benchmarked fast-fashion selected companies (see Table 4).

Table 4 Scoring between the ZARA brand and the H&M brand.

Topic	Weight	Score Criteria*	Threshold	Z	ZARA		H&M		UNIQLO	
			Weight	Eval.	W.	Eval.	W.	Eval.	W.	
Economics	49%	1) IT and media	20.0%	4	0.8	5	1.0	5	1.0	
		2) Cust. Services	30.0%	5	1.5	4	1.2	3	0.9	
		3) SCM50.0%	5	2.5	2	1.0	4	0.8		
				Total	4.8		3.2		2.7	
Environment	: 22%	1) EvMgt.Policy	40.0%	5	2	5	2	5	2	
		2) Sh. Rel.	40.0%	5	2	4	1.6	4	1.6	
		3) Packaging	20.0%	4	0.8	2	0.4	5	1	
				Total	4.8		4.0		4.6	

Threshold ZARA H&M **UNIQLO** Weight Score Criteria* Topic Weight Eval. W. Eval. W. Eval. W 3 Social 29% 1) L&H Ind. 35.0% 4 1.4 1.05 5 1.75 2) Eco efficiency 5 5 1.75 5 1.75 35.0% 1.75 3) Org. Promote 30.0% 5 1.50 5 1.50 5 1.50 Total 4.3 5 4.65 Grand total for each brand 4.78 3.70 3.79

Table 4 Scoring between the ZARA brand and the H&M brand. (Cont.)

6. Discussion and conclusions

6.1 The results of economic analysis

From the economic performance comparison process, it can be concluded that the ZARA brand has the highest score when compared to other selected fast-fashion companies with a score of 4.8 points. That is to say, the ZARA brand, although in the Information Technology and media categories, they have fewer social-media followers than the H&M brands, resulting in lesser opportunities for consumers to have access to the products, by managing consumers through social networks and the adoption of the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) systems to store data, so employees can be better organized and more responsive to customers demand quickly.

In addition, ZARA's supply chain management focuses on the sustainability of its supply chain. With its own 11 factories, there is fewer risk in the process. Unlike the H&M brand that utilizes outsourcing and the UNIQLO brand that uses the SPA model, the ZARA brand still has a higher turnover rate

due to the smaller product group.

6.2 The results of the environmental analysis

From the environmental performance comparison process, the ZARA brand had the highest score when compared to other selected fast-fashion companies with a score of 4.8 points. Although each company's environmental policies gave importance to both environmental management policy and stakeholder relations, the ZARA brand also emphasizes the selection of efficient resources and the use of renewable energy for maximum benefits. Especially in the packaging, there is a promotion for recycling and certification under the PEFC/FSC standard. The amount of resource utilization is presented for continuous and sustainable development.

6.3 The results of the social analysis

From the social performance comparison process, it can be concluded that the UNIQLO brand scores the highest when compared to other selected fast-fashion companies with a full score (5 points). All three brands are managed by the relationship of

^{*}Refer to Table 2 for full name of the Score Criteria.

the stakeholders. The same stake across the comparisons is the continuous communication, training, and healthcare & well-being of its employees. The UNIQLO brand has a key performance indicator of labor and human rights better than other brands. The UNIQLO brand also has a support system for work-life balance, supporting LGBT, and the employment of people with disabilities and asylum seekers.

7. Recommendation and future research7.1 Recommendation for implementing

From the benchmark data for best practices from the research sample, it was concluded that the ZARA brand scored the highest compared to the other samples. This indicates that a fast-fashion strategy consists of Quick Response (QR), which reduces inventory (Mehrjoo & Pasek, 2015). Reduce the production time in each phase and can respond chiefly to the disruption of customer demands. This eliminates the need to keep the goods in the warehouse, yielding the reduction of storage costs and unnecessary expenses. With QR strategy, the fast-fashion

company can produce fashion products with short production times according to the season and fashion trends.

The product has competitive pricing without reducing the price by decreasing the number of inventories in the warehouse according to the increased productivity (Joung, 2014). Fashion items can be sold faster and respond to consumers quickly with the ability to enhance product design.

7.2 Future research direction

The limitations of this research are due to the secondary data usage in the study. Even though, it can be seen that benchmarking is a process that results in improvements and infinite continuous improvement. Future research should include primary data such as interviews with fashion suppliers, experts' opinion concerning fast fashion industry.

8. Acknowledgement

This research project was supported by Silpakorn University Research Innovation and Creative Fund.

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