

Book Review

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The Garment Economy: Understanding History, Developing Business Models, and Leveraging Digital Technologies

**by: Michelle Brandstrup, Léo-Paul Dana, Daniella Ryding,
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The fashion and textiles industry, commonly known as the garment industry, serves as a multifaceted cornerstone within the global economy. This sector encompasses a diverse array of activities, spanning from fashion design and textile manufacturing to retail and supply chain management (Choi and Choi, 2012). Within this dynamic industry, entrepreneurship emerges as a powerful catalyst, driving innovation, job creation, and wealth generation. The garment industry is a hotbed of creativity and change, where trends evolve rapidly, and consumer preferences vary. Entrepreneurship, characterised by a spirit of innovation and a willingness to take calculated risks (Alkaabi, 2020; Alkaabi and Ramadani, 2022; Ünay et al., 2012), finds a natural home in this environment. Entrepreneurs within this sector are the visionaries who breathe life into new fashion concepts, pushing the boundaries of design, material innovation, and sustainability.

In terms of financial performance, the apparel market has demonstrated remarkable growth, reaching an impressive value of \$652.94 billion in 2023. This growth is indicative of a robust compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.0% since 2022. Moreover, industry experts anticipate a continued expansion of the apparel market, with a projected value of \$830.69 billion by the year 2027 (Research and Markets, 2023; Report Linker, 2023).

In the past, the garment industry was largely characterised by manual labour and traditional craftsmanship. The production process was labour-intensive, with skilled artisans creating clothing items by hand. The industry's growth was relatively slow, and fashion trends evolved at a measured pace. In contrast, the contemporary garment industry has evolved into a global, highly dynamic, and technologically driven sector. Several key developments mark its transformation:

- 1 *Globalisation*: The industry is now interconnected on a global scale. Supply chains span multiple countries, allowing for cost-effective manufacturing and rapid distribution (Abecassis-Moedas, 2007; Kusi-Sarpong et al., 2016).
- 2 *Technology*: Automation and digital technologies have revolutionised the production process. From 3D modelling and digital printing to advanced machinery, technology has greatly enhanced efficiency and design capabilities (Casciani et al., 2022; Nobile et al., 2021; Shaik et al., 2022).
- 3 *Fast fashion*: The rise of fast fashion brands has accelerated the pace of fashion cycles. Trends emerge quickly, and consumers expect new collections regularly, putting pressure on manufacturers to produce rapidly (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010; Knošková and Garasová, 2019; Ren, 2023).
- 4 *Sustainability*: There is a growing emphasis on sustainable and ethical practices within the industry. Consumers are more aware of the environmental and social impacts of fashion, leading to a shift toward eco-friendly and ethical production methods (Mizrachi and Tal, 2022; Pinheiro and Wachholz, 2017; Wu et al., 2022).
- 5 *E-commerce*: Online shopping has transformed retail, with e-commerce platforms offering consumers a convenient way to browse and purchase clothing (Ogbiti and Uddin, 2023; Wei and Zhou, 2013). The surge in online shopping has contributed to the industry's growth, expanding manufacturers' customer bases globally. For instance, in countries like India, e-commerce has facilitated the sale of traditional garments to a wider audience, transcending geographical boundaries. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of online shopping (Paraschiv et al., 2022).
- 6 *Customisation*: Mass customisation is on the rise, allowing consumers to personalise their clothing items (Kumar, 2007; Yeung et al., 2010). Technologies like 3D body scanning and AI-driven design are enabling this trend (Apeagyei, 2010; D'Apuzzo, 2007; Idrees et al., 2023).

The garment industry's transformation from a traditional craft into a complex global powerhouse, marked by its far-reaching economic, social, and environmental implications, makes it a compelling area of research. Understanding its past and present dynamics is essential for addressing the challenges and opportunities it presents in the future. Researching into various facets of the garment industry is of paramount importance, as it offers invaluable insights and data across a spectrum of areas like:

- *Consumer behaviour*: Understanding how consumers interact with fashion, make purchasing decisions, and respond to gender, communication forms, and trends is crucial for brands and retailers (Rekha and Jain, 2019; Cai, 2023; Mandarić et al., 2022; Xiang, 2021). Research helps uncover consumer preferences and behaviours.
- *Technology and innovation*: Ongoing technological advancements continue to reshape the industry. Researchers explore how these innovations impact production process, design endeavours, marketing, and the overall consumer experiences (Ahmad et al., 2015; Haleem et al., 2022; Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2018; Rehder et al., 2023).

- *Sustainability*: With sustainability emerging as a pressing global concern, research investigates eco-friendly materials, circular fashion models, and the industry's role in addressing environmental challenges (United Nations, 2021).
- *Economic trends*: Economic fluctuations, trade policies, and geopolitical events affect the garment industry's performance (The World Bank Group, 2023). Researchers analyse these trends to provide insights for stakeholders.
- *Cultural and societal trends*: Fashion serves as both a mirror and a shaper of cultural and societal shifts. Researchers explore the profound role that fashion plays in shaping and reflecting cultural identities, values, and broader societal dynamics (Tajuddin, 2018; Vänskä and Gurova, 2021).

The book *The Garment Economy: Understanding History, Developing Business Models, and Leveraging Digital Technologies* is a meticulously crafted and comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted world of the garment industry. Edited by Michelle Brandstrup, Léo-Paul Dana, Daniella Ryding, Gianpaolo Vignali and Myriam Caratù, this book takes readers on a journey through the rich history, current challenges, and future prospects of the global fashion and garment sector.

This book represents the culmination of extensive and enduring efforts, featuring the valuable contributions of 74 dedicated scholars hailing from diverse corners of the world. The authors have excelled in the monumental task of synthesising a comprehensive compendium of insights pertaining to *The Garment Economy*, considering its implications on both local and global scales. Furthermore, the book distinguishes itself by offering a wealth of current and meticulously researched data and statistics. In a rapidly evolving industry, the authors have spared no effort in ensuring that readers are equipped with the most up-to-date information, reinforcing the book's status as a valuable and reliable resource for those seeking an in-depth understanding of *The Garment Economy*.

The book *The Garment Economy* demonstrates meticulous organisation, comprising 24 chapters thoughtfully structured into four distinct parts. Each of these parts offers invaluable insights into different dimensions of the intricate garment industry:

- Part I: introductory chapters
- Part II: the garment business today
- Part III: business models
- Part IV: toward the future.

Part I serves as an introduction to the subject, providing a foundational understanding of the industry's historical context. Chapters 2 to 5 delve into specific cultural and geographical perspectives, showcasing the diversity of clothing traditions and entrepreneurship.

Part II, *The Garment Business Today*, shifts the focus to contemporary issues. Topics such as greenwashing in the fashion industry, modest fashion, and the role of influencers in brand marketing are discussed in-depth. These chapters highlight the industry's evolving landscape, emphasising the need for sustainability and ethical practices.

Part III delves into business models, where readers are introduced to strategies like the blue ocean strategy and mass customisation. Chapter 15 explores digital customer

experience management (e-CRM) in the fashion industry, emphasising the importance of technology in enhancing customer engagement.

In Part IV, the book takes a forward-looking approach, addressing the future of the garment industry. Topics like 3D body scanning technology, AI-enabled chatbots, and the metaverse's impact on fashion brands are examined. These chapters offer valuable insights into how technology and consumer behaviour will shape the industry's future.

One of the book's strengths is its diverse range of contributors, each bringing their unique expertise to the table. From historical perspectives to cutting-edge technologies, readers are treated to a well-rounded view of the garment industry's dynamics. Additionally, the inclusion of pedagogical exercises and case studies adds a practical dimension, making the book an excellent resource for educators and students in the field.

The book's depth is an asset, aided by its structured organisation and chapters summaries that guide readers through the abundant information. Consequently, readers can readily engage with the wealth of information it presents, making it an indispensable reference for those seeking a comprehensive understanding of the garment industry.

The Garment Economy is an essential resource for anyone seeking a deep understanding of the fashion and garment industry. Its meticulous research, diverse perspectives, and forward-thinking approach make it a valuable addition to the literature on this dynamic sector. Whether you're a student, researcher, or industry professional, this book offers valuable insights into the past, present, and future of *The Garment Economy*.

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