

Change Management of Zara



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Introduction

There are endless options to choose from when it comes to clothing in fashion and accessories. This is why in order to be successful; a clothing brand needs to be on their toes all the time to catch the consumer's eye. Zara is a world-renowned brand in the clothing and fashion industry making it the most profitable clothing brand among all of its competitors. Zara has placed itself among the best by offering the latest and trendy clothing with top-notch quality at affordable prices. This report will critically analyse the recent history of the organisation and how the environmental change including COVID-19 have impacted the retail market. Information will be obtained from various sources such as; journals, books and the internet. The company's internal and external environment will be analysed using relevant theoretical models such as PESTLE, SWOT and Porter Five Forces. Furthermore, the leadership style will be explored as well as developing a model of change for Zara. Finally, the impact of organisational culture will be evaluated and how it affects the organisation. From the findings,

a suitable change management plan will be highlighted for the future of Zara to remain a competitive advantage

History of Zara

Zara is a part of its parent brand Inditex, which is a company based in Spain whose founder is Mr. Amancio Ortega. Zara is the flagship of the Inditex group and was founded in 1975 under the name Zorba, later changed to Zara. Mr. Ortega also happens to be one of the wealthiest person in Spain and the 4th richest man in the world who owns multiple fashion brands operating over 7469 stores worldwide (Blázquez, 2020a). Zara is the most profitable among all the other brands owned by Inditex which started off as a small store in Spain and is now the world's largest retailer and contributes an estimated 80% of the total revenue of Inditex (Blázquez, 2020b). The industry, the public and even Mr. Ortega's competitors have often appreciated him for his board in strategic business decisions which has led to the success of his company.

The most prominent reason for the accomplishments of Zara is that it keeps up with the rapidly changing trends in fashion and offers quality clothing at reasonable prices (Hansen, 2012). It has proven itself since the beginning and has earned the trust of the customers through some

bold entrepreneurial decisions by introducing new designs into the markets every two weeks while competitors take two or three months to incorporate new designs in their arsenal effectively (Mhugos, 2020). Statistics show there are over 2,250 Zara stores and almost 600 Zara Home stores in operation throughout Europe, America, Asia and the rest of the world (Sabanoglu, 2021a). Further research states Zara being the second most valuable clothing brand on the planet as of 2018 (Shahbandeh, 2020). According to a recent research by Owler (2021) Zara have employed 152,854 and the annual revenue of the company in 2020 was 21.9 billion dollars.

However, the coronavirus impact on businesses around the world has been rapidly taking on a life of its own in terms of how people have been reacting to it. There's many different approaches to the COVID-19 pandemic; some industries have reacted to the emergency immediately and handled this unprecedented situation. For example; schools started conducting online classes and companies working from home which has been a huge experiment. It is believed people in this situation are making the best of this reality. However, retail has been very hard with people being off the streets due to the national lockdowns. According to the Guardian, Inditex reported a loss of about \$460 million between February and April 2020, coinciding with the shutdown of worldwide locations due to the pandemic. On June 12 2020, the fast-fashion retailer's parent company; Inditex, planned to shut down between 1,000 and 1,200 brick-and-mortars over the next two years and divert resources into online sales strategies (Reda, 2020).

Other fashion executives and brands were not dealing with the pandemic very well; as soon as the crisis escalated, completed garment orders worth \$2.8 billion were refused to be accepted from places where they normally source from; like Bangladesh (Roberts-Islam, 2020). Brands working with factories in Bangladesh include Adidas, H&M, Marks and Spencer and many more. As a result, 58% of factories report having to shut down most or all of their operations and resulted in worker dismissals. Furthermore, a survey revealed that 1.2 million workers were impacted by the cancellations. In contrast, unlike many fashion brands, Zara is listed amongst the companies which state they will pay for production during the lockdown (Ali, 2020). Many retail companies have been focusing on crisis management, such as switching to making face masks and hand sanitizers; preventing damage to the society as well as controlling the virus by closing stores and providing furlough to workers. Under that plan, Inditex CEO Pablo Isla confirmed the company will "increase the online customer service teams," as well as offer customers "uninterrupted service no matter where they find themselves, on any device and at any time of the day." Moreover, online sales, rose by 50% during the same quarter, compared with the previous year. Isla added that the company plans to invest \$1 billion into its online shopping platforms over the next three years and another

\$1.7 billion on upgrading stores to be better equipped by "deploying advanced technology solutions."

Changes in the External Environment

Various internal and external factors can affect the functioning of an organisation. PESTLE is a tool/framework used to analyse the external factors affecting the business. However, these factors cannot be controlled by the business, but can influence decision making.

PESTLE Analysis

The six categories of the PESTLE analysis tool will be used to focus on the macro environment faced by Zara. This analysis is based on the several aspects that directly or indirectly impact the working condition within the organisation.



Figure 1: PESTLE (Gandhi, 2020)

Political Environment

Political factors concern governmental influences on the organisational environment. In case of the retail sector, profitability and revenue are enormously affected due to the political factors and the pandemic is putting pressure on governments, economies and households. A report published by McKinsey found that the expected sales growth for 2020 in Europe region was expected to grow between one and two percent which was the lowest sales growth (Sabanoglu, 2020b). Political factors are influencing the fashion retail industry by more liberalism of imports and general changes in regulations which have impact on costs. Globalisation is affecting companies worldwide; while fighting against competitors to cheaper and better-quality products from subsidiaries and in order for them to stand against. Although Zara have an impressive presence it has grown highly competitive; H&M is one of the brands

in fierce competition with Zara. However, Zara has a negative effect on this and remains better in the fast fashion industry according to (Tyler, 2018).

Economic Environment

Economic factors include inflation rate, exchange rate and economic growth. The economic outlook on the retail sector is very uncertain these days which impacts the overall profitability. However, the economic condition of Zara is quite stable, as they overcame this problem by limiting their supply chain operations in their home country and some neighbouring nations; which has a positive effect on their business operations. Nevertheless, the company was hit by recession in 2009 due to which profits were down (Evening Standard, 2009). As a result, Inditex said Zara will go online during the Autumn-Winter season in 2010 for the first time. Economic factors are important; since price is crucial and customers are also price sensitive.

Recently, there has been a huge drop in consumer demand due to coronavirus pandemic which is a major factor that has transformed businesses (Statista Research Department, 2021a), therefore, operating worldwide helps Zara to avoid the effects of regional economic crisis. It has been a huge challenge for many industries including shutdown of stores and worldwide lockdown causing an uncertain environment. Statista Research Department (2021b) found that the global retail sales were expected to fall by 5.7 percent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, recent research has found that in the first quarter of 2020 Inditex Group (parent company of Zara) generated net sales of 3.3 billion euros, a drop of about 2.6 billion from the same period in the previous year. This was likely due to the impact of the coronavirus crisis. In this period, the group lost about 409 million euros in net income (Sabanoglu, 2020c).

Social Environment

Social media influence the way of shopping for consumers under the retail business. These days, customers are more driven towards branded clothes and accessories to maintain their social status. Zara are familiar with growing trends and customers attitudes where they focus on providing customers with a trendy variety of clothing at affordable prices (Pratap, 2019). This is an impressive feature of Zara as they have always relied on word-of-mouth marketing from satisfied customers; they have only used the marketing tactic of displaying their latest designs in the windows of their stores to attract new customers. As a result, the expectations and preferences of the demographic trends such as the ageing population and target market are dealt with appropriately.

Technological Environment

Technological factors are influencing the online retail market. The flexibility and customer friendly nature of e-commerce has made it grow into one of internet's most widely used services. Online shopping opens new ways of distribution and to address the customers. Zara has a strong social media base as well as good online presence. From clothing to home products; it delivers goods directly to the customers. The company has a number of self-service checkout systems across its stores. In contrast, Primark which is a big UK brand, and one of the high street staples do not have any e-commerce but only have physical stores (Primark, 2021). This indicates, when they remained closed for the pandemic, they had no business of any kind. Some retailers in the UK have million pounds worth of inventory sitting in warehouses, as they have ordered that had already come in because of the rolling cycle of clothes being made. So, once they do open, they will have all the leftover seasonal clothes to sell. As for brands like Zara have not been affected as such because of their online presence, in the place of stores which they've closed.

Legal Environment

The government legislation and policies have a direct impact on the performance of the organisation. Due to covid-19 outbreak Zara has closed 3,785 stores globally; Inditex, the Spanish owner of the high street retailer, warned the pandemic has had a 'very significant impact' on its operations. (Jolly, 2020; Tingle, 2020). Nevertheless, Zara will still have to abide by the certain rules provided by the government even though if this affects the performance of the company. As soon as the Coronavirus pandemic hit, Zara committed to pay their suppliers in full for all orders produced or currently in production (Jha, 2020). Furthermore, according to Forbes, Mr. Ortega also made sure that Zara's Spanish employees received their full salaries during the crisis — all of which won him plenty of great press and support in Spain.

Environmental

Zara is recognised as one of the most eco-friendly companies in the world. Its headquarters in Spain produces most of its energy through the use of solar panels and wind turbines. It is also one of the only few clothing brands that produce clothes that are 100% free of toxins. Zara presents itself as a complete environment friendly company through their mission statement and business policies. This has enabled them to gain the reputation of being a more responsible and rational company towards the environment and community welfare

concerns. According to (BBC NEWS, 2019; Inditex, 2021) Zara will be introducing containers in their stores to collect old clothes in order for them to be reused or recycled in to new items. Furthermore, Zara is already among one of the several high street stores to use paper bags instead of plastic.

Internal Environment

Swot Analysis is the basic and the most effective tool used for identifying various internal and external factors such as; Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that may affect the performance of an organisation, group or individual.

Strengths • Powerful presence- 2,250+ stores worldwide (Sabanoglu, 2021a) • Exclusive designs; famous designers on board • Brand value-because of its affordable prices • Excellent supply chain- brings new design in stores in just 2 weeks • Low cost of production • Efficient supply chain as a competitive advantage	Weakness • No advertising-restricts itself from promotion-one of the biggest marketing moments for Zara was when Kate Middleton wore Zara dress • Limited stock available • Imitator, not creator-no doubt they provide high-end designs, but its designers play smart a trick by copying designs of fashion week, rather creating some original on their own
Opportunities • E-Commerce-use online market to double sales • Artificial intelligence-use of technology for better customer experience • Offer "local collection" tailored to local tastes-this	Threats • Change in customer's attitude • Increasing competition from brands like H&M, ASOS etc • Legal and political regulation-regulating business as per the

shows consumers that their countries are important to Zara Recycle & reuse program- Zara installed collection boxes in a few test stores for clothes to be donated to minimize environmental impact	government and legal agencies - Business disruption due to coronavirus outbreak - Financial risk due to currency exchange fluctuations - Imitation products- resemblance of Zara's designs
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Figure 2: SWOT Analysis

Porters 5 Forces

Porters five forces framework is used to analyse the nature of competition in a market. The tool identifies five competitive forces; Threats of new entrant, Bargaining power of buyers, Bargaining power of suppliers, Threat of substitute products and Competitive rivalry within an industry.

The competitive power of Zara can be analysed using Porters five forces.



Figure 3: Porters Five Forces (Porter, 1980)

Threats from New Entrants

Since Zara is the world's largest retailer owned by Inditex (Danziger, 2018) the threat of new entrants is relatively low because a huge investment is required to enter the industry. The size of the business and the actual capital value in the factories is too big to consider entering. The capital requirements within the retail industry are very high; therefore, making it difficult for new entrants to set up businesses. High expenditures need to be incurred which makes it incredibly tough. These factors make the threat of new entrants a weak force within this industry.

Bargaining Power of Customers/Buyers

Non-essential retailers such as those selling clothes, and in this case Zara; were forced to close stores (Zara, 2021) and experienced a steep decline in sales as a result of COVID-19 pandemic (Statista Research Department, 2021c). Nonetheless, retail companies saw upturn in sales through e-commerce but this was not enough to mitigate the decline as consumers began prioritizing and limiting their spending. However, Sabanoglu (2021d) argues online shopping is one of the most popular online activities worldwide and the e-retail revenues are projected to grow to 5.4 trillion US dollars in 2022. Nevertheless, competitors such as H&M, Topshop, ASOS, Misguided and Primark are likely to affect the competitive environment and profitability for Zara; which also affects the bargaining power of buyers as products can be purchased at similar prices. This affects the company's external environment and makes the bargaining power of the customers a strong force.

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

The bargaining power of suppliers in the industry is low. Multiple suppliers are available in this market and in the production locations of Zara. Globalization makes international trade possible and makes it easier for buyers like Zara to switch suppliers.

Threats to Substitutes

The retail industry is experiencing a huge change during the pandemic. Statista Research Department (2021c) shows the global retail sales growth in 2020 were expected to fall by 5.7 percent as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Zara faces intensifying competition from alternative retailers. Customers have high switching costs and compare prices before purchasing. Although Zara operates to sell products at lower price than its substitutes; the competitors provide adequate quality products including delivery services therefore consumers can choose to go to other stores. This external factor contributes to the strength of the threat of substitution in the retail industry.

Competitive Rivalry within the Industry

Since the retail industry is growing higher in numbers, and consumers are always looking for discounts and alternatives. It is easy to substitute the products of Zara and a high number of substitute products are available in the market. The competitive rivalry is fairly strong as there are many competitors in the fast fashion industry; one of which is H&M. However, Zara has the competitive advantage to be fastest to copy and to deliver new collections. The advertising expenses are very low in comparison to the competitors. Zara is competitive in both online market and the offline market.

Change Management Zara Followed & Leadership Style

Change is one of the top fears in an individual or an organisation. The market industry is changing continuously and recently with cities in lockdown because of the global pandemic. Zara have managed to make shopping safe and effective using Kurt Lewins change model which made it easy to understand involving just 3 steps; Unfreezing, Changing and Refreezing (Lewin,1947 in Cummings et al, 2016). The framework represents a very simple and practical example for understanding the change process.

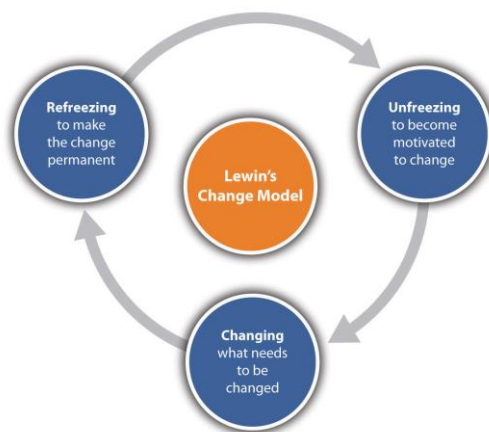


Figure 3: Three Stage Model of Change (Lewin,1947)

Zara's open communication and values state their management and leadership style of **transformational leadership**. There are various advantages of transformational leadership such as; excellent communication of new ideas, good balancing of short-term vision and long-term goals. Zara has beat the global players in just a few years and become the market leader in the fashion industry with stores on the most expensive streets in the world. Zara's style of leadership encourages leaders to work with teams and identify needed change, creating a

vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change with committed members of a group. Since the whole world has been struck by coronavirus and countries are at different stages of the pandemic; retailers around the world have scrambled to meet the threat. However, Zara adapted well and implemented new innovation and social distancing measures in their stores to ensure the customers can shop safely. They also have an open mindset to new technologies; this enables the business to adapt with the change so that it is sustained for a long time.

Unfreezing stage: Defining what to change is followed by communicating with the people involved in the entire process and describing the procedure in detail. Communication is key during the unfreezing stage so that employees can become informed about the change; the logic behind it and how it will benefit each employee. The more the employee knows about the change and is aware of the necessity and urgency of the change the more motivated they will become to accept the change. The global lock down kept shoppers at home and retailers state the rapid drop in sales had since slowed down. Similarly, Zara's owner Inditex confirmed its first quarterly loss after the Spanish company was forced to shut almost 90% of its stores from February to April 2020 due to the outbreak of coronavirus. Inditex recorded a net loss of 465 million dollars. Nevertheless, the online sales have raised 95% in April 2020; as a result, the firm persist with big plans for the near future. The owners of Zara carefully examined the current global situation and invested their time to create awareness to maintain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Changing stage: Once the process and people are aligned; the second step **change** begins, also referred to as transition or move into the new state of being. In this step the action plan is executed. It is important to communicate with the concerned people and make sure that all the actions are carried out to the right direction. During the changing step people begin to learn the new behaviours, processes and ways of thinking. The more prepared they are for this step the easier it is to complete. For this reason, education, communication, support and time are critical for employees. Here, most people struggle with the reality.

Zara introduced some changes to make sure everyone feels safe and comfortable as possible such as; implementing 2-meter distancing from each other in their stores particularly in most crowded areas; providing clear signage with markers on the floor to remind customers. Face covering has been introduced for both customers and colleagues to wear masks in store (unless exempt) (Zara, 2021). To obtain social distancing; Zara limits the entry of customers into stores at any one-time dependent on store size and staff numbers. Lifts being limited to one person at a time or customers together from a single bubble or household. Zara also encourages the use of contactless payments with limits increased to £45 as well as providing

hand sanitising solutions at entry to all stores for customers and additional sanitiser station points for staff encouraging them to be used frequently. Zara also disinfect their surfaces on a regular basis.

Since Zara's owner Inditex confirmed its loss having to close almost 90% of its stores due to the pandemic, Inditex said it will invest 900 million euros a year or just over 1 billion U.S. dollars in the next 3 years towards their online presence. Transformational leaders cultivate their teams professional and personal development and Zara's leaders have invested time and energy knowing their effort will eventually bear fruit and they recognise both individuals' effort as well as their performance. The aim is to focus on their online presence and large stores in prime shopping areas while closing around 1,000 of their smaller stores. Zara expects virtual sales to account for more than a quarter of business by 2022.

Refreezing stage: The third and final step of the model is refreezing; where new norms are sustained as the new normal and change is integrated with the company's culture. Consumers have successfully adapted to the restructuring of the store experience while online has accelerated greatly. Infact, online has become the lifeline for both consumers looking for products, but also for retailers looking for profit. Zara have adapted in their ways of working to the new realities of the market and have increased their strengths in the online presence. Here, Zara has refrozen the new method into the organisations culture. Leaders encourage team members to recognise the system as the new norm and the manners which they will need to abide by going forward.

Online shopping will continue to grow in the long term as Zara ship their focus more predominantly to e-commerce. Teams with transformational leaders are constantly being transformed for the better; adopt a growth mindset, who promote creativity and new ideas. Zara's leadership focuses on the basic distinction between leading for change and leading for stability. According to this viewpoint most of what a leader does occurs in the course of work-related transactions such as evaluating performance and making decisions. The speed behind Zara is that most of the fashion houses outsource their production to control the cost. Zara has in-house production, such as its own factories and designers. Zara's designers are in contact with the stores to track the items which are selling the most and plan the future production accordingly. The trendiest items of Zara are made closest to home; so that the production process, from start to finish, takes only two to three weeks. This helps Zara to quickly respond to the emerging trends and changes. The rest of its clothes are produced in China, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Brazil, among other countries. Zara do not believe in

economies of scales, instead they produce in small batches; they deliver their underproduced goods to the stores every fortnight, which helps to create hot demand. Customers purchase the goods keeping in mind that the goods will go out of stock quickly. The empty shelves of the showrooms create a scarcity value; which helps to generate demand.

Organisation Culture

to how change will affect the organisation.

As Zara is a part of a global corporation, providing a diverse range of product portfolio; from footwear, apparels, casual wear for women men and children. Zara home offers home décor products like bedding tableware, bed bath linen, dishware etc. Its internal cultures make a difference from every other retailer in the market. The positive organisational culture not only makes the company a great place to work but also increases productivity and reduces employee turnover. Zara fosters innovation and instils in into their culture. Mr. Ortega shared his unique viewpoint by calling clothes a perishable commodity implying that people always want fresh clothing choices; soon after this, the phrase freshly baked clothes was adopted for the clothing range by the brand. Zara purchase only basic textiles and do all the capital-intensive activities by their own. Their factories have computer control machines which maintains consistency and quality. Transformational leaders are focused on making tomorrow better. They do this in four ways; **vision, authenticity, a growth mindset and creativity**. Transformational leaders create a noble vision to work towards that inspires others. They are authentic in their commitment to the mission not just to pursue gain but their integrity inspires the team to take action.

Conclusion

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