



Popular fashion brands

Levi's

Levi Strauss & Co. is now one of the most successful apparel brands in the world with shops scattered all over 110 countries. The company is always creating new, innovative products with the latest finishes, fabrications, and colours. Everything started about 150 years ago when a German-Jewish immigrant went to the United States and founded the first company to manufacture blue jeans. Everybody went to California to look for gold at that time but he opened a wholesale business, Levi Strauss & Co., imported goods, and sold them to general stores. In the 1870s, he became the business partner of a tailor, Jacob Davis, who bought fabrics from him and made work pants for men: he wanted to patent the process, so he turned to Levi Strauss and they received the US patent for using copper rivets to strengthen the pockets of denim work pants. Levi Strauss & Co. began manufacturing the famous Levi's brand of jeans.



The company's most famous signature designs are Levi's 501, the original Levi's engineered jeans, and Levi's Type 1 jeans collection. Designing jeans means taking inspiration from products in the archives and combining that with future aspirations of the consumer, creating a complete jeanswear image for young people, from denim basic jeans to pioneering new forms of jeanswear. Inspiration comes from people and their potential for change. The company's ultimate goal is to get youth to re-appropriate denim and jeanswear in new ways that suit their own lifestyle and image. Jeans design is based on attitudes and feelings. Designers need to think of the values the guys and girls who buy the jeans associate with the Levi's brand. Jeans design is largely based on collaboration: some of the most talented designers and stylists work in that busi-

ness. Levi's design has not been inspired and influenced by one single person but all the people. They think that the real measure of success is seeing jeans worn by people in the streets. People's response to new ranges is energising and is useful as a feedback for future design.

The Gap



The first Gap store opened in San Francisco in 1969 and sold denim jeans, jackets, and shirts. The name derives from the term 'Generation Gap' and the company was founded by a real estate dealer. By the 1990s, the Gap had become one of the most successful retailers with stores worldwide. Its key elements are casual, relaxed clothing sold at reasonable prices and in coordinating colours, appealing to both men and women between the ages of twenty and fifty.

United Colours of Benetton

This is one of the famous companies with branches all over the world and franchising shops almost everywhere. Its worldwide chain of stores is distinguished by its low-cost, brightly coloured garments and knitwear. The Benetton company was founded in 1965 by Luciano Benetton with his brothers and sister. Seven years later, they introduced 012 shops with clothes for children, then in 1974 they



UNITED COLORS
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took over the Sisley company which had been founded some years before to manufacture denim fabrics.

In 1982, the company image became more international, and they largely increased their production and fame. This was due to the sensational, new advertising campaigns in collaboration with the photographer Oliviero Toscani. One of them even shocked Mikhail Gorbachev and his presidential retinue while they were walking in Paris: an advertising billboard showed two black children kissing each other and holding the flags of the USA and the Soviet Union respectively.

The message he wanted to give was that they represented all the colours of the world.

There were also scandalous campaigns aimed at shocking people: a priest and a nun kissing each other, or a man who had died from AIDS. By 1985, they had invaded the world with 8,000 points of sale, created a lifestyle, and revolutionised retail sales. Their sweaters, casual clothes, range of colours, and reasonable prices were alternatives to traditional boutiques. They produced two seasonal collections and had a revolutionary system of franchising. The shops were characterised by original, unconventional designs, and customers were inspired by the rich display of sales articles. All the shops around the world looked the same and became cult sites. People waited for new lines and models every season in different colours and ranges. Some items also created sensation, such as the blue and white rugby shirt. Princess Diana bought clothes for herself and her children at the Benetton shops and this led to the creation of the slogan

"Benetton dresses queens as well as the masses". Benetton specialises in inexpensive but fashion-conscious knitwear. They have produced sweaters and cardigans in a wide variety of colours, by using wool, lambswool, Shetland wool, and a wool and angora mix. The company also sells T-shirts, jeans and trousers in cotton and cotton mix fabrics.

Fiorucci

Elio Fiorucci inherited a shoe shop from his father but started to travel to London in the 1960s to bring miniskirts and other fashionable garments to his shop in Milan, which then he turned into a larger store selling clothes from London's youth-oriented designers. He collected ideas around the world and passed them on to a team of designers. This allowed him to open stores worldwide with similar features (merchandising, packaging, and displaying) representing the company's image and which sold fresh, new, and amusing items. Among them were colourful, plastic galoshes, jellies, T-shirts, platforms, fluorescent socks, and scarves. He was able to recycle old ideas in new ways. In the 1970s, his tightly cut, streamlined jeans became very popular.



C. Oddone
E. Cristofani
NEW
FASHIONABLE
ENGLISH



ACTIVITIES

1 Answer the following questions.

- 1 What do these companies have in common?
- 2 What are the differences between them?
- 3 Which brand is the oldest? Which one is the most recent?
- 4 Why do you think they are so popular?
- 5 What are their targets?
- 6 What are their ultimate goals?
- 7 Which brand is now becoming less appealing?
- 8 Which one do you prefer and why?

2 Decide which of the four brands above the following information refer to.

- 1 It started with a different purpose
- 2 It made a sensational campaign
- 3 It is famous for special jeans
- 4 It has shops all over the world
- 5 It has reasonable prices
- 6 It sells fashion-conscious knitwear
- 7 It has new, original, colourful garments
- 8 It appeals to all ages

3 Discuss the main differences between the products made by the three companies.