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FFM404  
FASHION  
INDUSTRY  
PROCESS

AN EXPLORATION & ANALYSIS OF FASHION AS  
PROCESS AND CYCLE



GIORGIO ARMANI

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## ***1. Introduction***

This project will look into how the fashion brand 'Giorgio Armani' follows the processes inherent to the fashion industry and how it could represent similar brands in the same market level. It will discover theories in fashion to explain where and how trends are adopted and its application to the Giorgio Armani brand in comparison to other market levels.

## 2. Brand Specifics

Giorgio Armani is a luxury fashion brand founded by Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani in 1975 best known for his designs of men's suits. He came to the fore in America when his designs were popularised in the 1980 film *American gigolo*, starring Richard Gere. Since then, the fashion brand has expanded and successfully entered into new markets such as the home interior (Armani Casa), cosmetics (Giorgio Armani Beauty) and recently the hotel and resorts industry; proving to continually reach all types of consumers.

### 2.1 Target Customer Profile

Fig.1. Giorgio Armani's Pen Portrait Mood board



The brand targets many different types of consumers through the products it sells, but for the Giorgio Armani line, it has a specific customer who is:

A stylish affluent mature man/woman whose work involves a lot of travelling; therefore having a versatile wardrobe is essential. Their choice of clothing expresses elegance, professional and classic pieces. They have high standards and believe that fashion should be of good quality which lasts for much longer than a season. Some style icons might include those such as Helen Mirren, Julianne Moore, Meryl Streep, George Clooney and Cary Grant.



The Giorgio Armani line consists of tailored two-piece suits, dresses, blouses, tops, skirts and jackets as well as accessories and footwear. Armani is consistent with his choice of colour palette, which is made up of pastel greys, blues and pale pinks with accent colours of dark blues, greens, pinks and black. The types of fabrics he uses are all usually very lightweight materials such as chiffon, cotton and silk, which emphasises the quality and luxurious feel of the designs. Through his style, Armani proves to successfully cater for his particular

customer. He emphasises that he “...wanted to dress the woman who lives and works, not the woman in a painting.” (Armani, n.d.). This is translated in his designs and is proven through customer satisfaction:

My style is Armani...It is always and only Armani...I like the lightness of the fabrics, which follow the body's line without ever encumbering it. My movements are free, and in harmony with my life as an active, free, and contemporary woman.

Claudia Cardinale (Giorgio Armani, p.45)

## **2.2 Product Ranges**

In addition to the original Giorgio Armani ready-to-wear line, the house also produces a couture range (Armani Privé), diffusion ranges and sub labels such Armani Collezioni, Emporio Armani, Armani Jeans, Armani Junior and A/X Armani Exchange. Therefore, as well as continuing to target the Giorgio Armani consumers, the brand also chooses to explore different segments by having different ranges.

## **2.3 Stockists**

Giorgio Armani trades through its flagships stores having over 1,300 stores/boutiques worldwide. Apparel and accessories are also sold through luxury department stores such as Harrods, Selfridges and Harvey Nichols. Other department stores such as John Lewis sell Armani merchandise such as perfumes, watches and accessories, emphasising the popularity of the brand and its profound recognition.

## **2.4 Promotion**

The company uses different channels in order to promote the brand. This includes magazines (e.g. Vogue), catwalk shows, social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and celebrity endorsement. Social media has proven to be very popular, with Armani having over 6 million followers on Facebook, 1.38 million on Twitter and over 400,000 on Instagram. An article by Mellery-Pratt (2014) highlights the importance and effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and use of social media as a key promotional strategy. It suggests that not only does the celebrity have to fit the brand, but also the amount of followers they

have on social media. Armani reacts to this by having faces such as Megan Fox, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Victoria and David Beckham to promote their products. With Cristiano Ronaldo reaching over 76 million followers on Facebook alone, Armani benefits from this, gaining instant brand recognition from world-wide fans.

## **2.5 Competition**

Similar luxury/premium brands to Giorgio Armani such as Mulberry, Yves Saint Laurent and Hugo Boss could be seen as its main competitors. All have tapped into the same markets (e.g. apparel, fragrance, cosmetics, accessories etc.), targeting similar consumer types. All are high-end brands with similar apparel prices retailing from £300 - £5,000. Some key similarities include Hugo Boss' diffusion ranges such as 'Boss Kidswear' and 'Boss Orange.' It also offers a 'Made-to-measure' service found on their website; similar to Armani's.



### 3. Processes & Cycles

The 'Fashion Process' refers to the series of stages taken by all fashion personnel in order to turn an initial idea/concept into a final product that will essentially be sold and marketed to the public. The design and buying process differs for each market level as the culture of the company varies.

The diagram below follows the fashion process of a luxury designer level brand such as Giorgio Armani.

#### 10. Distribution

Products are displayed in Armani stores to be sold (or in department stores) where visual merchandisers decide window displays and the store layout.

#### 9. Collection launch

Catwalk shows (Fashion Weeks), static exhibition, press day etc. Armani, other designers, merchandisers, along with PR team are all present.

#### 8. Promotion

Samples are photographed for marketing purposes e.g. campaigns, in-store visuals etc. PR team sends press release/news story out to magazines such as Vogue to feature in editor's picks or editorial photo shoots.

#### 7. The final collection

Refining and creating a cohesive collection. All samples reviewed together with all designers and merchandisers in the meeting.

#### 1. Initial idea/concept

Armani/assistant designer(s) has ideas/concepts for direction of the new season's collection.



#### 6. Prototypes, samples and construction

Designers work with Armani in pattern making, draping and construction for couture range. For RTW, in-house fashion tailors produce samples.

#### 2. Initial design research/sourcing

Trend research, observations from primary and secondary sources. Mood boards of ideas.

#### 3. Fabric inspiration/sourcing

Fabric and colour trends from fabric fairs.

#### 4. Initial range planning meeting

Merchandisers analysing budget, designers plan basic range for the season i.e. jackets, skirts, dresses etc.

#### 5. Design meeting

Mood boards/sketches presented to Armani (from assistant designer(s)) and merchandisers. Armani decides which designs to produce (plus his own sketches).

For each stage, particular personnel play a key role in order for the whole process to come together effectively and efficiently. The stages can also vary for the brand as the design process changes for couture, prêt-à-porter and diffusion lines. For example, Armani's diffusion range, 'Armani Exchange' will be mass-produced compared to the couture

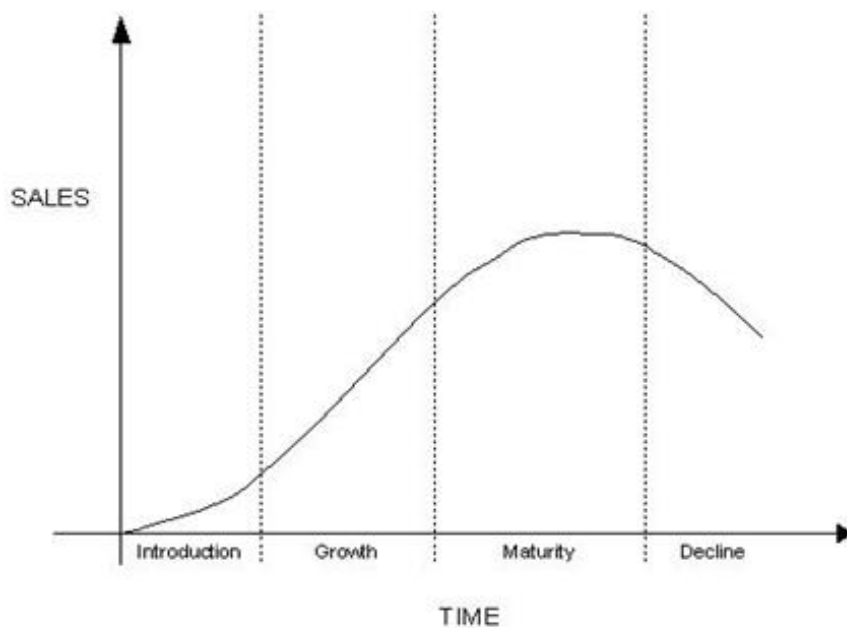


collection, 'Armani Privé as prices will be considerably lower. The draping and construction stage may be replaced by manufacturing garments in a factory rather than being individually constructed in an Atelier by the designer.

### **3.1 The fashion product cycle (PLC)**

Once the product has been distributed, the company can then measure its 'Product Life Cycle.' The PLC describes the stages a product goes through from when it was first introduced until it has reached its end of life. The PLC differs for each market level, but almost all follow the standard PLC curve:

Fig.2. Product Life Cycle (PLC)



Sales would hopefully begin to pick up once the product has been introduced and would reach its peak around the maturity stage before sales begins to decline. Extension strategies such as advertising the product in a different way or reducing price are used to help boost sales. For Giorgio Armani, and other brands working at luxury designer level, their PLC may be shorter compared to fast fashion brands such as Zara as it is very high fashion and may be a one off item appealing to certain consumers. Also, extension strategies are more likely to appear in fast fashion than designer level as fast fashion relies on sales, whereas luxury brands are more on image and the consumer experience.

### 3.2 Fashion and trend cycles

The fashion trend cycle refers to the cyclical nature of a particular trend (micro/macro) that is adopted and evolves over time. An example is the recurring 'White/Transparency' trend which continues to occur in Armani's collections and which we can see being translated today.



Nystrom's theory of the Zeitgeist can be put forward to explain the cyclical nature of this trend. 'Dominating groups' in the 1970s included disco enthusiasts where white was present in every outfit to which Armani uses the white boots to incorporate the trend. It was then evolved into power suits i.e. Armani's monochrome jacket as 'Yuppies' and conspicuous ostentation became a 'Dominating attitude.' The 90's moved away from this and saw the

movement of grunge from individuals such as Kurt Cobain to which white was translated into sheer clothing. The trend is still evident today to which Vogue (2014) forecasted a come-back of the 'white' trend for the spring/summer 2014 with the addition of transparency and floral prints. 'Dominating technology' encourages designers to digital prints and AirDye to which Armani translates in his spring/summer 2014 collection. Nystrom's theory suggests that the cyclical nature of trends occur due to dominating factors of the time which brings back macro trends with modifications.

### **3.3 Trend identification & analysis**

A trend is *"the direction in which something...tends to move and which has a consequential impact on the culture, society or business sector through which it moves."* (Martin Raymond, 2010, p.14).

There are several theories which explain the directions of trends:

- **'Trickle down'** – This theory was developed by Thorstein Veblen (1899) and Georg Simmel (1904) suggesting the traditional direction of trends came from royalty/aristocracy which trickled down to the working class.
- **'Bubble up'** – A contrast to the 'Trickle down' theory proposed by Ted Polhemus (1950s) suggesting trends originate from the streets and work their way up to the catwalk; inspiring fashion designers.
- **'Trickle across'** – King & Robinson (1969) argued trends move horizontally between similar social group levels.

It could be argued that all three theories are applied in the Armani brand from his haute couture to RTW to diffusion ranges. For example, haute couture is designed for specific customers, usually of upper class, where Armani's designs can 'Trickle down' and be translated onto the high street. On the other hand, it could also be trickle across as ideas from similar luxury brands could be influential. The 'Bubble up' theory could be further explained through WGSN's Spring/Summer forecast for 2014 to which Armani adopts the 'Next Nature' trend.



The concept of the trend could be interpreted as evolving from streetwear through 'Dominating events' such as music awards (MTV/Brits) influencing the young to dress in expressive ways found through music. Artists such as Rihanna launching her collection with River Island may inspire young fans to express their individual style, which in turn may 'bubble up' to influence designers to adopt this trend, which is evident in Armani's EA7 collection.



### 3.4 Fashion Forecasting

Martin Raymond (2010, p.12) defines trend forecasters as *“lifestyle detectives...who spend their time detecting patterns or shifts in attitudes, mind-sets or lifestyle options, that run against current thinking or how people normally behave, live, dress, communicate and trade.”*

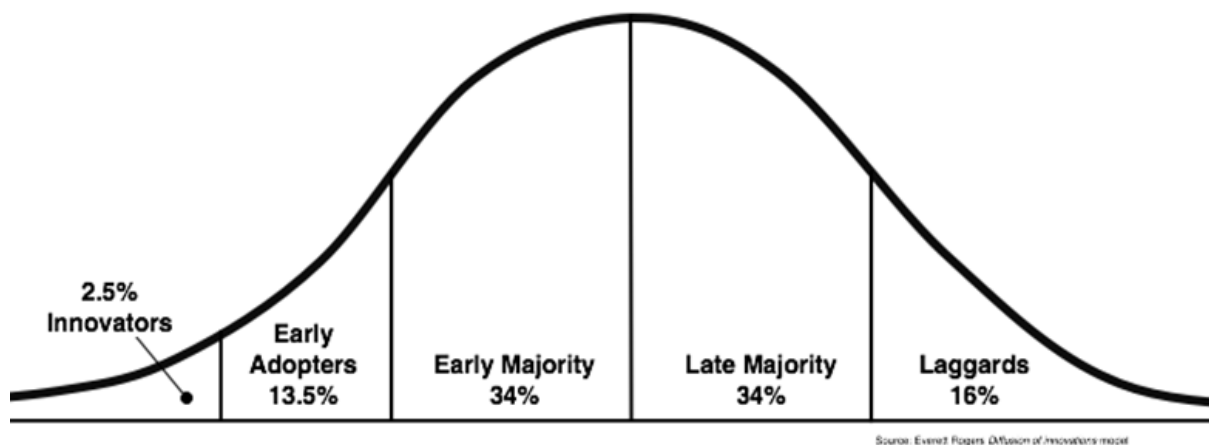
Some key forecasters include WGSN, Li Edelkoort, Premier Vision and Pantone; predicting future fabric, colour, and micro/macro trends. The influence of these forecasters differs for each market level and the extent fashion brands accept them. For luxury brands similar to Armani, certain trends are less dominant as it may not appeal to their particular customer. Fabric fairs may also be less relevant as luxury brands may have exclusivity to top quality sources of fabrics/prints, although it may be of use when gathering inspiration during the third stage of the fashion process.

The nature in which fashion forecasters work has to take into account the time in which we live in and its influential factors. Again, Nystrom’s theory of the Zeitgeist reflects society’s

ideals, social groups and the technology that is embraced which shapes the acceptance of trends. One way which forecasters work and measure the adoption of trends is through 'Cultural brailing' created by American forecaster, Faith Popcorn (Raymond, 2010, p.36) along with Roger's theory of the 'Diffusion of Innovation.' This theory is put forward to explain how a trend is adopted and spread among society, putting them into the categories of Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority and Laggards.

This could be explained through a research conducted in Brighton's Kensington Gardens and Sydney Street. The study consisted of observing both locations and investigating certain aspects such as façade, retail stores and the types of people walking past. The results showed both locations are homes to quirky/vintage shops which are reflected in its environment. The majority of people fell into the 'Innovator' category in Roger's 'Diffusion curve.' Their sense of individual/contemporary style can be translated onto the catwalk e.g. in 1970 'Punk' was adopted by designers such as Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren. This theory can be very useful for all market levels as it could be used to forecast upcoming trends and map out its success.

Fig.3. Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Curve



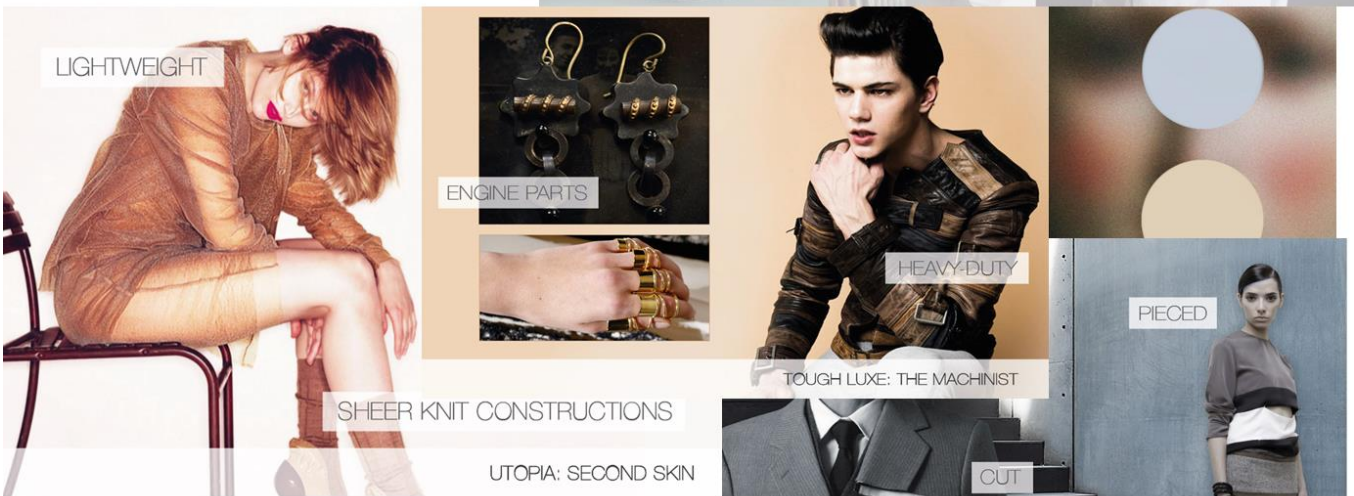
In relation to Armani, its customers fall into the 'Innovators' and 'Early Adopter' category depending on the collection. Couture consumers would almost definitely be 'Innovators' as it is specific to their preferences. RTW/diffusion ranges may be adopted from street styles which may influence fashion designers ('Bubble up' theory).

Of WGSN's Autumn/Winter 2014/15 forecast, the macro trend Armani is likely to adopt is 'Industrial Revolution.'

*The changing relationship between man and machine takes utilitarian design in an artisan direction. This balances man-made lines and engineered hardware with soft uniform styling and synthetic comfort. Deliberate cuts and precise folds are offset with rugged molten coatings and rough factory finishes, while future workwear focuses on stripped-back functionality and superhuman technical updates.*

# Industrial Evolution

Fashion forecast  
Autumn/winter 2014/15



The trend can be interpreted as a 'Bubble up' from the nature of the trend with influences from 'Innovators' as it considers working conditions of industrial level from the engineer parts which could be used as accessories in the Giorgio/Emporio Armani collections. The 'White' trend reappears in this season which Armani is likely to adopt, given his previous take on to this trend.

### ***3.5 The fashion calendar***

The fashion calendar maps out key events in the fashion industry but varies for all market levels as not all will be relevant. Those highlighted below are the most relevant events for luxury/premium brands such as Giorgio Armani.

International Fashion Weeks (Paris, Milan, London and New York) are the most prestigious events for almost all fashion brands, in all market levels. It is where major, influential fashion brands such as Armani launch current collections which is publicised widely in the media. This is relevant to Premium, Mid-Market and High Street brands as it is a way of discovering trends ('Trickle down'). Fabric fairs are more significant to mid-market/high-street brands as it adheres to delivery-into-store schedules. The relevance of trade shows varies as not all will be substantial. Pitti Immagine and Coterie are aimed at premium brands, whereas shows such as Bread & Butter are geared towards denim/urban/streetwear brands. Depending on the type of brand, buyers, merchandisers and designers will be present for all/most of the key events.

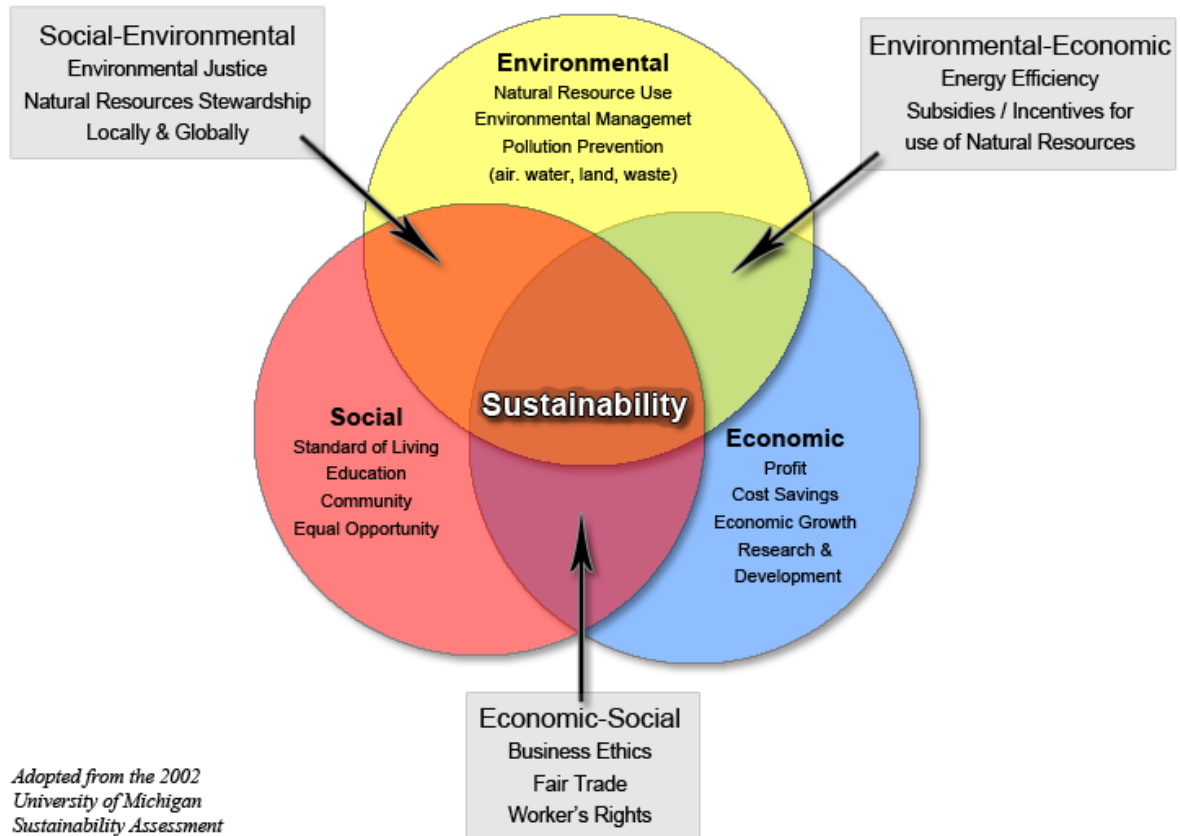


*Fig.4. Fashion Calendar*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
New York Fashion Week		A/W Collections (Feb 6-13 2014)							S/S Collections (Sep 4-11 2014)				
London Fashion Week		A/W Collections (Feb 14-18 2014)							S/S Collections (Sep 12-16 2014)				
Milan Fashion Week		A/W Collections (Feb 19-23 2014)							S/S Collections (Sept 17-23 2014)				
Paris Fashion Week		A/W Collections (Feb 23-Mar 3/5 2014)							S/S Collections (Sept 23-Oct 1 2014)				
Paris Haute Couture							Jul 7-10 2014						Jan 19-22 2015
Pitti Immagine Trade show (Milan)						Womenswear (Jun 17-20 2014)	Filati Yarn Fair (Jul 2-4 2014)						Womenswear (Jan 13-16 2015)
Bread & Butter Trade show (Berlin)	Jan 14-16 2014						Jul 8-11 2014						
Pure Trade show (London)		Feb 9-11 2014						Aug 3-5 2014					
Coterie Trade show (New York)		Feb 23-25 2014							Sept 2014 TBC				
Paris-sur-mode Trade show		Feb 28-Mar 3 2014							Sept 26-29 2014				
Tranoi Trade show (Paris)							Preview (Jul 4-6 2014)		Femme (Sep 26-29 2014)				
Tissu Premier Woven/Knit (Paris)					May 14/15 2014								
Premier Vision (Paris)									Sept 16-18 2014				

### 3.6 Ethics and sustainability

Fig.5. The Three Spheres of Sustainability



Ethical, ecological and sustainable fashion implies social responsibility. Paulins and Hillery (2009, p.3) describes ethics as “*the study of standards of conduct and moral judgement.*” They also propose that ecological and sustainability requires the use of renewable resources in order to help the environment. All three are important in the fashion industry, but proves to be difficult to acquire as many issues such as child labour, animal welfare and pesticides in production of fabrics still arise.

Issues found in fast fashion and luxury brands differ as they vary in numbers and quality of merchandise. High-end brands produce very little quantity (especially couture) as they are more about quality and meeting individual needs as opposed to fast fashion brands whose focus is to target a trend-led population for which throw-away fashion applies.

Luxury brands such as Armani produces their products exclusively compared to fast fashion brands who manufactures in large factories, which may involve a higher chance of ethical/ecological issues such as child labour, pesticides in production of cotton or landfill. According to the Ethical Fashion Forum (2010), more than 1 million tonnes of textiles are thrown away every year. A way in which fashion can act upon this is through ‘Upcycling’

which is evident in ethical brands such as 'Who Made Your Pants.' Other fashion labels are also becoming more prominent such as Edun, Komodo, Stella McCartney and People Tree, emphasising the importance of sustainability fashion.

Giorgio Armani follows an ethical guideline in his 'Armani Exchange' range emphasising his ethical responsibility. Nonetheless, it could be argued that Armani's fashion process cycle raises ecological awareness as it shows large amounts of money being spent in production when there are world issues such as limited amount of clean water available in poor countries.

Armani responds to this issue through schemes such as the 'UNICEF Tap Project' where he is the current sponsor.



It challenges people to leave their phones untouched for 10 minutes, for which Armani would donate enough money to pay for a day's worth of safe water for a child in need. Not only does this help solve the issue of the availability of clean water, but also help give the brand an ethical/ecological image.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Giorgio Armani is a good representation of brands in the luxury/premium market level that continues to be relevant to its target customer's lifestyle. Although Armani reacts to ethical issues, it is difficult to alter its fashion process/cycle as the expectations of its consumer remains to be of high standard, which means production of high quality and exclusivity of designs still continues.

From this report, it is clear that Giorgio Armani follows the fashion processes and cycles inherent in the fashion industry; from the fashion cycle, to forecasting a trend and finally adopting it to their particular consumer. It shows that all theories in fashion are relevant to all market levels and are still applicable in today's trend forecasting i.e. Roger's Diffusion of Innovators and Nystrom's theory of the Zeitgeist. It illustrates how this is an influential factor and is still very applicable in the fashion industry.

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