

Concept to store: Four steps over 21 days

The secret to Zara's success in fast fashion lies in its responsive, data-driven supply chain.

The brand has 2,213 outlets in 93 markets and e-commerce stores in 41 of them. The individual outlets operate like feedback portals, feeding information daily on product sales, returns and trends to Zara's

headquarters in La Coruna, Spain.

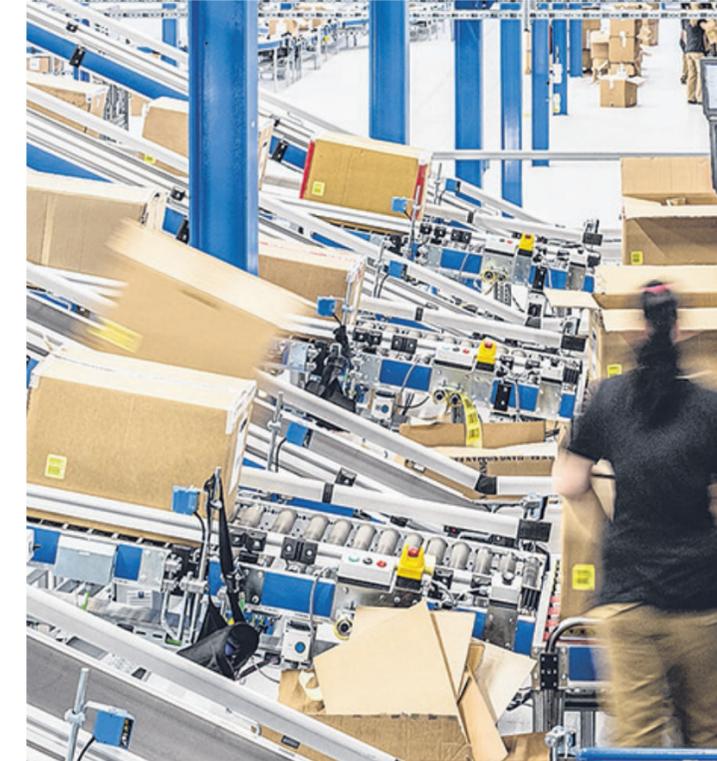
In this hub of activity, market analysts digest the data and relay it to designers and the commercial team. Production is quickly halted for designs that are not selling well, while successful designs are tweaked to fit trends, keeping stocks and wastage low.



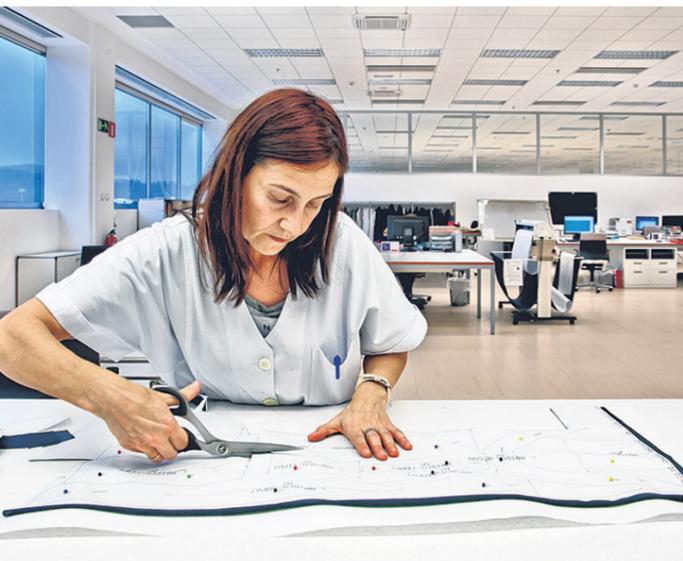
1 Based on feedback from market analysts, global trends are identified and new designs (above) created daily. Designers sit next to commercial teams, which allows for quick discussions about costing and design. Crucial decisions on style, colour and fabric as well as estimates of manufacturing costs can be made in a few hours, allowing resources to be committed quickly for production.



Crucial decisions about style, colour and fabric, as well as estimates of manufacturing costs, are often made between design and commercial teams (left) in a few hours, allowing resources to be committed quickly for production.



3 Zara stores make orders twice weekly – before and after the weekend. Items are shipped (above) with the price labels tagged and most items hung on hangers, allowing stores to replenish stocks quickly. Shipping takes up to 36 hours for European stores and 48 hours for the rest of the world.



2 Once a design is finalised, pattern-makers quickly create a prototype (above), which can then be tweaked for fit. When the green light is given, specifications are sent to cloth-cutting machines in Zara factories – mainly in Spain, but also in countries such as Portugal, Morocco and Turkey – where they are stitched and assembled. The trendiest items are manufactured closest to Spain, so that total production time can be usually capped at two or three weeks.

Zara by numbers

1975
Year founded

\$15.7 billion
Brand value according to Forbes

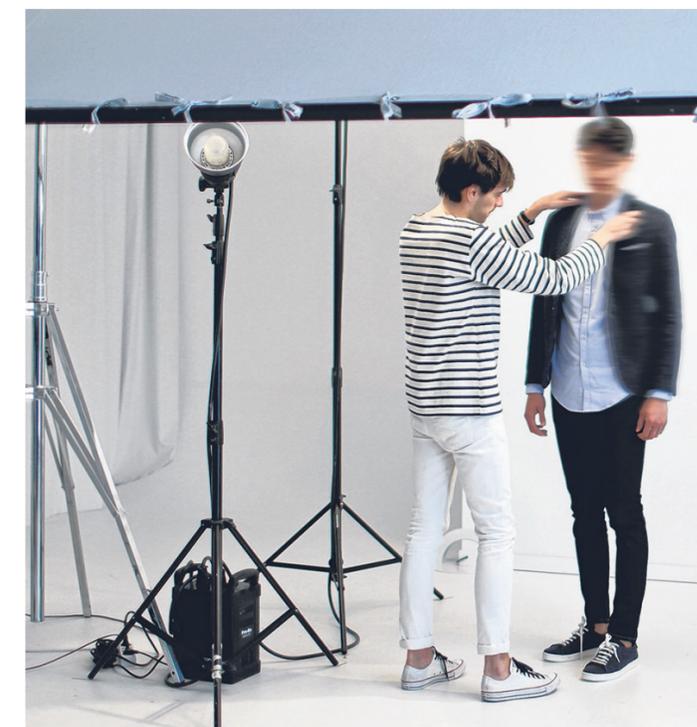
2,213 Zara stores
in 93 countries

313
Zara outlets
in Spain

193
Zara outlets
in China

128
Zara outlets
in France

78
Zara outlets
in the US



4 The quick turnaround time means Zara stores continually look fresh. At the headquarters, there are mock-up stores for Zara Women, Men, Kids and Home, where stylists plan storefront displays and coordinate looks so similar trends can be displayed together. This information is relayed to stores around the world so their store facades look similar. Items are also styled and photographed in-house (left) so the e-commerce experience is seamless across different markets.