

MERCHANDISING  
CASE  
STUDY  
2026

FASHION  
SCHOLARSHIP  
EST FUND 1937

# Fashion Crosses Industries

**Objective:** Curate a collaborative assortment between a fashion brand and non-fashion brand demonstrating product and distribution opportunities.

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2026 CASE STUDY

The borders between industries are narrowing and fashion brands are finding new collaborations that enable them to reach broader groups of customers and create long-term business value. According to the State of Fashion 2024 ([BOF Team and McKinsey & Company, 2023](#)), fashion brands will increasingly partner with adjacent industries to enrich consumer experiences and increase engagement. Collaborations provide an opportunity for brands to engage a broad array of consumers with their story, expanding their reach. Subsequently, collaborations drive revenue. Collaborations are not new to the fashion industry, but as the boundaries between industries narrow, a broader array of collaborations has emerged. Fashion brands are partnering with museums, universities, airlines, and car companies to bring beauty, comfort, and luxury to a broad array of consumers.

In the 2026 case study, you will explore how fashion brands can partner with companies in external industry, such as entertainment (music, gaming, film), technology (computers, software, technical instruments), transportation (automotive, air), hospitality (hotels, restaurants), or service industries (sanitation, postal delivery) to create intriguing and intentional collections. You will explore a collaboration between two businesses, not between a business and an individual.

**Merchandising applicants must curate an assortment for a new collaboration between a fashion brand and their non-fashion brand partner.**

# Industry Examples

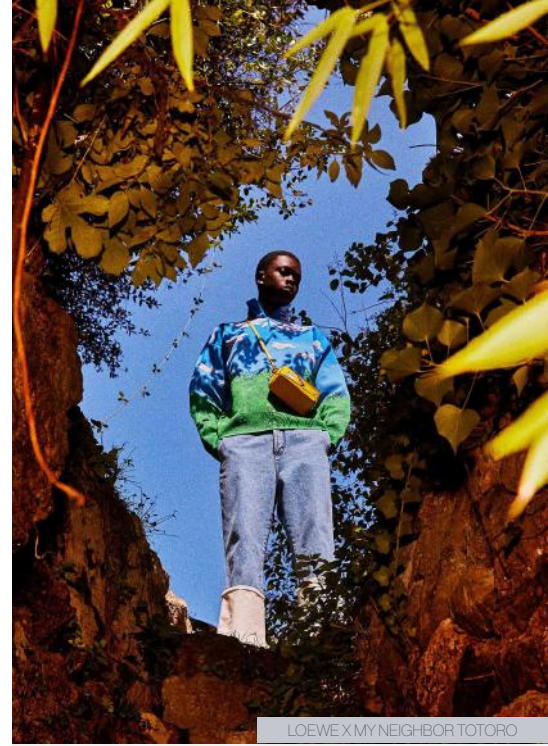
Consider examples of fashion brands collaborating with external industries.

Loewe collaborated with the Japanese movie studio Studio Ghibli to launch Loewe X Howl's Moving Castle and Loewe x My Neighbor Totoro ([Lischke, 2023](#)). These collections build on a series of successful previous collections dedicated to the cinematic classics.

In the spirit of non-conformity, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. Collaborated with Maison Margiela to create a limited-edition Galaxy Z Flip4 Maison Margiela Edition ([Samsung Mobile Press, 2022](#)).

Bath and Body Works has announced a limited edition, 50-product holiday collection inspired by Netflix's Emily in Paris ([Vembar, 2024](#)).

Kitchen appliances continue to add fashion appeal through brand collaboration. In 2018, SMEG first collaborated with Dolce & Gabbana to launch a maximalist, retro collection ([Besser, 2021](#)). Since then, many more fashion brands have entered the kitchen, such as Rhude's recent collaboration with InstantPot.



# Merchandising Case Study

## CURATING FASHION FOR NON-FASHION INDUSTRIES

Your objective is to curate an assortment for an existing fashion brand/retailer in collaboration with a non-fashion company/organization. The collection should demonstrate the opportunity for fashion to infiltrate an external industry. Your collaboration should highlight how the goals of the two companies align. The assortment should serve a purpose, addressing a specific challenge or opportunity of the proposed companies and their target markets. You should address which company/organization your collection will primarily serve and design your collection accordingly. Your collaboration should drive overarching business success, so consider how the collection aligns with the brand identity and related assortments.

Address how your collaboration will advance the brand/retailer's product assortment. Your merchandise assortment should engage customers of both the fashion brand and non-fashion collaborator. It must apply to one or more specific channels, such as physical retail (i.e., brick and mortar, pop-up stores, etc.) or e-commerce (i.e., online, m-commerce, social commerce). Address if the product will be available only on selected channels or across many channels. Additionally, consider if the assortment will be distributed by the fashion brand or non-fashion partner.

## Your Role:

### Head of Merchandising

You are the Head of Merchandising for an existing brand/retailer of your choice. It is your responsibility to establish the mix of product, determine the channels of distribution, and establish the proper assortment across all channels. You are responsible for curating the product mix that best meets your customer's needs, driving a balance of the right product in the right place at the right time.



# Brand & Retailer Selection



[01]

## Generally Well-Known

The brand/retailer(s) that you select should be generally well-known.

[02]

## Fashion or related industry

The fashion brand/retailer that you choose must be a fashion apparel, accessories, footwear, home, beauty, or health & wellness brand.

[03]

## Publicly Traded

It is suggested (not required) that you choose a company that is publicly traded so that information regarding the company is easily accessible.

[04]

## Non-Fashion Collaborator

The collaborator cannot be another fashion brand. For instance, collaborations between a designer brand (e.g., Diane Von Furstenberg) and a mass fashion retailer (e.g., Target) would not fit the requirements.

[05]

## A Company, Not an Individual

The collaboration cannot be with an individual, such as a celebrity, influencer, designer, or politician (e.g., Pharrell Williams, Gwyneth Paltrow, Taylor Swift). However, either brand can belong to a designer's namesake brand (e.g., Jessica Simpson, Rachel Zoe, Rachel Ray, Martha Stewart), the collaborator brand must be an existing, fully formed business.

# Checklist: Required Case Study Content

Case studies must be submitted as a **17–21-page slide deck** including title, body, appendices, and references (suggested breakdown included below). The slide deck should be in landscape orientation, with slides sized for on-screen show 4:3 or 16:9 display (approximately 10" x 7.5").

Files can be created in any software of the applicant's choosing, such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Adobe InDesign, or Adobe Illustrator. However, **all cases must be submitted in a flat PDF format without video or sound.**

**Need extra guidance?** Access 'Step-By-Step Directions' in the FSF student Dropbox.

## ☐ Section 1: General Introduction (2-3 slides)

- ☐ Title slide
- ☐ Executive summary
- ☐ (Optional) Table of contents

## ☐ Section 2: Establish Your Brand (3-4 slides)

- ☐ Compare two fashion brands, one being your selected fashion brand
- ☐ Introduction of two chosen brands (fashion brand, non-fashion collaborator)
- ☐ SWOT analyses of your chosen fashion brand and chosen collaborator

## ☐ Section 3: Research-Driven Background (2-4 slides)

- ☐ Research in suggested areas: Industry landscape, society, consumer and lifestyle, macroeconomics

## ☐ Section 4: Collaboration Purpose & Goals (1-2 slides)

- ☐ Purpose of collaboration
- ☐ Align with key company goals
- ☐ Outline objectives achieved through collaboration

## ☐ Section 5: Targeted Consumer (1-2 slides)

- ☐ Describe the target customer considering collaboration goals
- ☐ (Optional) Create 2-3 consumer personas

## ☐ Section 6: Brand Merchandising (2-4 slides)

- ☐ Develop a 5-10 style assortment plan
- ☐ Create a 6-month merchandising plan includes the KPIs of sales, gross margin, inventory turn and detailing projected monthly receipts and markdowns

## ☐ Section 7: Planning & Allocation (1-2 slides)

- ☐ Outline your merchandise distribution plan and launch timing
- ☐ Develop a distribution plan across business partners and chosen channels

## ☐ Section 8: Visual Merchandising (1-2 slides)

- ☐ Create visual merchandising guidelines for the assortment presentation

## ☐ Section 9: Future Growth (1-2 slides)

- ☐ Outline plans to scale or exit your collaboration depending on its success

## ☐ Section 10: Conclusion & References (2-4 slides)

- ☐ Conclusion
- ☐ Bibliography (also known as, references, works cited)

## ☐ (Optional) Section 11: Appendix (0-5 slides)

- ☐ Present additional, supplemental ideas that support your project and add significant value

## Executive Summary

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY: ONE LEG AT A TIME

Anyone who's ever worn a pair of tights knows the frustrating reality behind the saying: **"One bad apple can spoil the barrel."**

**For decades, tights have been sold as a pair; one leg sewn to the other.**

Therefore, one small snag (or rip, or run...) signaled the imminent—and ultimate—demise of a pair of tights, despite their wearer's dismay.

To combat unnecessary waste, overconsumption, and resource depletion, Sheertex will today again revolutionize the hosiery industry by adding a new product to its merchandise assortment:

**SINGLE-LEG TIGHTS.**

By selling the legs of its Rip-Resist hosiery separately, Sheertex will grant its wearers the ability to reuse each leg of their tights as many times as possible and only replace individual legs as needed.

By selling on a "reuse" merchandising strategy, Sheertex will introduce this new product to its best-selling collection of tights, transferring the way industry think about, purchase, and wear hosiery.




SECTION 1

## Merchandise Assortment

Individual Legs

SKU Code

MSRP

More on about pricing in Appendix A

SECTION 6

## COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

**sheertex**

**Leading with Eco-friendly mentality**

**Anti-Luxury**

**231K** **90 day** **\$25-\$110**

**les belles**

**Leading with Eco-friendly mentality**

**Anti-Luxury**

**12.7K** **30 day** **\$10-\$40**

SECTION 2

## 6-Month Sales Plan

6-Month Normalizing Plan

MARKDOWN

ST3 Ratio

Consumer Demand & Peak Sales

SECTION 6

## Current ESG Initiatives

**8 Billion**

**Vertical Supply Chain**

**SRTX's Goals:**

- Net Zero by 2030
- Full Circularity by 2030
- Fossil Fuel Free by 2030

**Up to 90-Day Guarantee**

**16 Million**

SECTION 3

## Single-Leg Tights

THEY'RE DOUBLE LINE GRAINS NOT BETTER

Mini Sheer Rip-Resist

Essential Sheer Rip-Resist

Semi-Opaque Rip-Resist

Sheer Rip-Resist

Super Sheer Rip-Resist

SECTION 6

## Who even cares about ESG?

**Gen Z and Millennials**

**Who even cares about Hosiery?**

**Who even cares about Sheertex?**

SECTION 4

## Merchandise Strategy

**Evergreen Inventory**

**CAN'T GO RIGHT WITH A CLASSIC**

**BLACK (HOSIERY) IS THE NEW WHITE (CANVAS)**

SECTION 8

## Divide & Conquer

**Why Sheertex?**

**Why Sheertex?**

**Why now?**

**THE FUTURE: Secondhand Tights**

**QUALITY**

SECTION 4

## Hosiery with Horizons

"Unless we change the foundational model of overproduction and overconsumption, there will be no future for fashion, because there will be no future for humanity."

**THE GOAL:**

**Recycled Tights**

**Skin Tones**

**Colors & Patterns**

**Compression Tights**

SECTION 9

# General Guidelines

## Exclude College / University

Do not include your name or college/university affiliation on the title page or anywhere in the case study as the review process is anonymous.

Your name should be included on your resume and unofficial transcript; those documents are not a part of the case study judging process.

## Format Your Way

No specific font or format will be enforced. You are encouraged to utilize visuals throughout your presentation. It is advisable to not overload each slide with information, and to keep your presentation concise and to the point: each slide should take no more than 1-2 minutes to absorb by the reader.

## Stick to the Page Length

Do not exceed the page limit. Ensure your content connects from section to section to tell the story you are trying to convey. This is the first time judges will be exposed to your case study and they should be able to fully interpret your intended plans.

## References

All references should be included within a references/ bibliography page at the end of your slide deck or annotated in footnotes visible within the slide. Do not use hyperlinks in a footnote as the content cannot be accessed once the case study is uploaded.

## Proofread

Be sure to proofread your case study. Points will be deducted for not following format directions, as well as for grammar and spelling errors.

## AI Disclosure

You may use AI programs (e.g. ChatGPT) for brainstorming and help in generating ideas. However, note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be properly cited like any other reference material.

# Judging Criteria

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Your case will be reviewed by industry professionals including the FSF Board of Governors, FSF Mentors, and FSF Alumni.

## **Creativity & Feasibility (40%)**

- Is the applicant's idea unique, inspiring, and innovative?
- Is the applicant's idea well-thought-out and conceivably executable?
- Is the applicant's idea clearly connected to the selected brand(s)/retailer(s)?

## **Research & Development (40%)**

- Has the applicant researched the selected companies (i.e., brand/retailer and collaborator), demonstrating depth of knowledge of the company's activities and competitive positioning as relevant to the presented concept?
- Has the applicant conducted thorough research regarding the retail landscape and the attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle traits of the intended consumer?
- Has the applicant conducted thorough market and consumer research, such as instances when an idea similar to their own has been executed in the past, and summarized relevant findings that will help them fulfill their objective?
- Has the applicant presented their research and merchandise plans in a manner that is clear and supports the overall strategy?
- Has the applicant developed an assortment and distribution strategy that is cohesive and reflects the intentions of their concept?
- Has the applicant presented a 6-month merchandising plan that is realistic and clearly explained?

## **Clarity (15%)**

- Does the applicant clearly and consistently tell their story, aligning direction from executive summary, through core content, and into the conclusion?
- Does the applicant's case follow logical development and a clear structure; is it easy to follow and summarize?
- Did the applicant clearly complete each portion of their prompt?

## **Format (5%)**

- Did the applicant use correct grammar and spelling?
- Did the applicant include a title page with one sentence to summarize the case?
- Was the applicant's name and school kept anonymous?

# Getting Started with Research

A variety of tools and supporting files are available in the [FSF Student Dropbox](#). Research-specific resources are available for all case study tracks in the subfolder: [FSF Student Resources](#).

## **(1) Start by getting familiar with this year's theme.**

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Amed, I. et al. (2024, November 11). The State of Fashion 2024: Finding pockets of growth as uncertainty reigns. McKinsey & Company and Business of Fashion. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-fashion>

Besser, R. (2021, November 3). Cookware gets the fashion-treatment with these designer collabs. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.com/article/designer-kitchenware>

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Coggins, B. Adams, C., Alldredge, K., and Teichner, W. (2024, August 23). An update on US consumer sentiment: Consumer optimism rebounds – but for how long? McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/the-state-of-the-us-consumer>

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Valasquez, A. (2024, April 18). New partnerships help denim mills scale sustainability. Rivet. <https://sourcingjournal.com/denim/denim-mills/new-partnerships-help-denim-mills-advance-sustainable-goals-circularity-recycled-fibers-504978/>

Valasquez, A. (2024, September 26). OVS extends partnership with Haelixa to trace Italian cotton. Rivet. <https://sourcingjournal.com/denim/denim-sustainability/ovs-extends-partnership-haelixa-dna-maker-trace-italian-cotton-528167/>

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Wilson, S. (2024, February 6). Discover growth opportunities in disruptive trends in fashion. Kantar. <https://www.kantar.com/north-america/inspiration/analytics/disruptive-trends-in-fashion>

## **(2) Dig into insights specific to your discipline, Merchandising.**

Brain, E. (2023, March 13). Christian Cowan's 'Teletubbies' Collaboration Is an Ode to the '90s. HypeBeast. <https://hypebeast.com/2023/3/christian-cowan-teletubbies-dipsy-boots-jeans-t-shirt-hoodie-viral-laa-laa-po-tinky-winky>

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## Join Us in 2026!

### Contact Information

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