

# FASHION SCHOLARSHIP EST FUND 1937

## DESIGN & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT 2027 CASE STUDY

### 2027 Theme

Learn more about the topic of the 2027 Case Study, **Unlocking Hidden Potential: Identifying High Value Consumer Groups**, and the importance of this topic in the fashion industry.

### General Guidelines

There are specific requirements in how your case study is completed. This section will explain general expectations.

### Design & Product Development Focus

Each discipline takes a unique approach to the annual theme to most directly align with the needs of the discipline. In this section, learn about the expectations for Design & Product Development.

### Required Content

Specific content is required within your case study submission. Use the required content as a checklist to ensure you have included all necessary components within your case study.

### Judging Criteria

Judging is a blind process following specific criteria. Checkout the criteria to understand what considerations are most important in case study development.

### Getting Started

Once you have an understanding of the expectations and layout of the 2027 FSF Case Study, use the resources provided in this section to get started with your own case study concept.

Introducing the 2027 Case Study Theme

# Unlocking Hidden Potential: Identifying High Value Consumer Groups

The fashion experience is rapidly changing. According to the [State of Fashion 2025](#), “a new era of brand and product discovery is on the horizon.” Industry-wide, both major fashion brands and emerging micro-brands are evolving to be ever-present, meeting consumers wherever they are, at each moment of the day. This change is helping consumers to find brands that fit their unique lifestyles. Yet, the plethora of choice and availability in fashion commingles with a critical challenge; “fashion shoppers are overwhelmed with choice, which negatively impacts their engagement and conversion rates with brands.” While consumers are demanding more utility from each brand experience, they are also exhausted. As a result, many consumers feel they are overlooked and underserved, with their needs not being focused on by brands. As brands seek to build deeper connections to consumers, understanding the needs and wants of unique consumer groups is critical to establishing brand staying power ([Napoli & Rees, 2025](#)).

In the 2027 Fashion Scholarship Fund Case Study, you will explore how a fashion brand or retailer of your choice can unlock hidden potential and build a connection with the unmet, overlooked, and underserved needs of a specific, unique consumer group that has the potential to be highly valuable to the brand. You will identify and define the specific consumer group, proposing an opportunity for the chosen brand or retailer to meet the demands of their lifestyles. Your consumer group may be aligned by factors such as generation, region, lifestyle, or hobbies. Further, they are likely to be affected by shifting societal and cultural priorities, generational or intergenerational trends, emergent communities, and/or shifting manners of living. The consumer group you select can be a small microcosm or a large entity.



You must demonstrate how the identified consumer has been hidden, overlooked, or underserved and why the consumer group presents high value to the brand going forward. The identified consumer cohort must logically align with the priorities of your selected fashion brand or retailer. The consumer group must also benefit from the brand serving them in an intentional manner. Given the diversity of consumers within the United States, your case study must focus on a consumer group within the USA. However, your selected brand may be based in the USA or another country.

**You will need to bring this theme to life in the case study you present.**

## Topic Selection

You will develop a case study exploring the current challenges and future opportunities for an existing fashion brand or retailer as they relate to high value consumers. The following guidelines will support your selection of a suitable fashion brand/retailer and how your ideas are presented in a creative and professional format.

## Brand & Retailer Selection

1. **Fashion or related industry.** The fashion brand/retailer that you choose must be a fashion apparel, accessories, footwear, home, beauty, or health & wellness brand.
2. **USA-based consumer.** Given the diversity of consumers within the United States, your case study must focus on a consumer group within the USA. However, your selected brand may be based in the USA or another country.
3. **Generally well-known.** The brand/retailer(s) that you select should be generally well-known. Given the diversity of consumers within the United States, your case study must focus on a consumer group within the USA. However, your selected brand may be based in the USA or another country.
4. **Publicly traded.** It is suggested (but not required) that you choose a company that is publicly traded so that information regarding the company is easily accessible.
5. **For Business Strategy Applicants:**  
**Alix Partners Consumer Sentiment Index.** While it is not required, it is suggested that you select one of the brands/retailers highlighted in the Alix Partners Consumer Sentiment Index for Fashion, Beauty, or Home (available in the 'Resources' section). These reports provide insights to what is driving brand performance and consumer desire, allowing you to maximize your insights and knowledge as a foundation for your case study.

## Case Study Slide Deck

Case studies must be submitted as slide decks 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.

## Format Your Way

Your case study must be presented as a slide deck, however, there are no specific requirements regarding visual design or text format. 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.

## 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.

## Stick to the Page Length

The slide deck should be 18-22-pages in length including title, body, appendices, and references. A breakdown guide is provided alongside each section to help you determine the cadence of information. However, it is your responsibility to ensure you do not exceed the maximum allowed slides. 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.

## Exclude Your Name and School

Your name should NOT be included in your case study. 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. However, your name will be included on other required documents including your resume and unofficial transcript; those documents are not a part of the case study judging process.

## 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.

# DESIGN & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT DESIGN FOR LIFESTYLE PRIORITIES



WGSN

**Objective:** Create a collection that serves unmet needs, overlooked desires, and/or the unique lifestyle of a specific, unique consumer group while maintaining a connection to your brand ethos.

## Your Role: Design Director

**Y**ou are the Design Director for an existing fashion brand or retailer of your choice. As Design Director, you bring your creative vision to life in a manner that connects with your target consumers' desires, lifestyle, and habits all while maintaining the brand ethos and heritage. Your designs should move the company forward while aligning with the company's priorities and goals.



Fast Retailing



@wlasrey / @lcsign\_signfactory / @lunasourcingchina

## Expanded Objective Explanation

**Y**ou will design a collection for an existing fashion brand/retailer to meet the needs of a specific consumer group. The collection should demonstrate the brand/retailer's ability to serve an existing or expanded consumer group while maintaining the brand ethos. The consumer group should be intentionally selected; aligning with growing brand priorities and opportunities. The collection should benefit the consumer group without creating confusion among other key customer segments.

As an example of a brand connecting with a specific consumer group and their unique lifestyle, Atelier Jolie recognized the desire of luxury consumers to be a part of the creation process. Alongside the store launch, the brand presented a collection entirely designed in muslins and flat tones, intended to be customized by the wearer. Created by artists for artists, the wearable art is a means of creation, expression and education ([Atelier Jolie, 2025](#)).

# DESIGN & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED SECTIONS

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

- Title slide
- Executive summary

## Section 2: Establish Your Brand (1-3 slides)

- Introduce your chosen brand or retailer

## Section 3: Case Study Research (2-4 slides)

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

## Section 4: High Value Consumer (1-2 slides)

- Consumer and lifestyle research
- Target market

## Section 5: Conceptual Direction (1-2 slides)

- Introduce your collection concept
- Address how the collection will uniquely meet the needs of the consumer
- Demonstrate how your collection aligns with the brand's ethos

## Section 6: Design Development (3-4 slides)

- Concept board or mood board
- Documented design process (development sketch work, iterative strategies, etc.)
- Color and fabric board

## Section 7: Creative Collection Presentation (2-3 slides)

- Creative designs of the 10-15 items that will make up your collection

## Section 8: Technical Collection Presentation (1-2 slides)

- Technical front and back flat sketches for three of the products in your collection including design callouts and construction details

## Section 9: Conclusion & References (2-4 slides)

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

## (Optional) Section 10: Use of AI (1 slide)

- Address advanced technology, such as AI, will be used within your proposed strategy. For example, you may address if it will support the customer experience, platform integration, or other aspects of your proposed plan.
- Alternatively or additionally, you may address how advanced technology, such as AI, was used in the creation of your case study.
- In addition to the 'Use of AI' section, please be sure to clearly reference any use of AI in your case study in text or within the reference list.

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

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

**Important:** The recommended slides per section are suggestions only. It is your responsibility to ensure your total slide deck, from the very first to very last slide, falls within the 18-22 slide requirement.



# DESIGN & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY EXAMPLES

Consider examples of collections created by existing fashion brands and retailers to target underserved consumer segments.



Pristine Cotton Bank

## PRISTINE'S COTTON BANK

The organic cotton brand Pristine created CoTTON BANK engaged sustainably-minded customers engaged in slow fashion, allowing them to grow their own pesticide-free cotton and exchange it for clothing, building community and reviving the cotton industry in Japan ([Ned, 2025](#)).

## BOLD HELMETS

Bold Helmets created helmets designed especially for Sikh boys, to accommodate their parkas or top-knotted turbans ([Bold Helmets, 2025](#)).



Bold Helmets



H&M Adorables

## H&M ADORABLES

H&M launched a premium childrenswear range, H&M Adorables, to serve the growing array of mass market consumers looking to invest in long-lasting, high-quality garments. The brand explains that the garments “stand the test of time, so that you can pass them down to younger siblings and other children” ([H&M, n.d.](#)).

## Arc'teryx x Beams

Arc'teryx leaned into the rise in spirituality alongside increased burnout among consumers, leading them to partner with clothing brand Beams on a collection with a colour palette inspired by nagomi, the Japanese sense of ease, wellbeing and calmness created by emphasising harmony and balance ([Beams, 2024](#)).



Arc'teryx X Beams

### Learn more about how brands are using design to meet the needs of unserved consumers.

Bloomberg. (2025, October 10). Victoria's Secret Is Desperate to Learn How to Sell Bras Again. *Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/retail/victorias-secret-is-desperate-to-learn-how-to-sell-bras-again/>

Butler-Young, S. (2025, August 13). How the New York Liberty Became the WNBA's Most Fashionable Team. *Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/sports/new-york-liberty-most-fashionable-wnba-team/>

Butler-Young, S., Pearl, D., & Chen, C. (2025, October 22). Does Fashion Still Know What Women Want? *Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/podcasts/luxury/the-debrief-does-fashion-still-know-what-women-want/>

Morosini, D. (2025, October 22). What Comes After the 'Clean Girl'? *Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/beauty/>

[clean-girl-trend-over-whats-next/](#)

Morris, M. (2025, October 21). True Classic Launches Women, Kids Lines. *Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/direct-to-consumer/true-classic-launches-women-kids-line/>

Pinterest. (n.d.). Pinterest Predicts. *Pinterest Business*. <https://business.pinterest.com/pinterest-predicts/>

Swithinbank, R. (2025, October 8). TAG Heuer and New Balance Team Up on a High-End Collaboration. *Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/luxury/tag-heuer-and-new-balance-team-up-on-a-high-end-collaboration/>

Access the linked Business of Fashion articles for free with the free [BOF student membership!](#)



Scholarship winners are showcased at the annual FSF Live Gala



Learn more about the Live Gala and other Fashion Scholarship Fund events on the website, [www.fashionscholarshipfund.org](http://www.fashionscholarshipfund.org)



Industry leadership are also honored at the annual FSF Live Gala

# JUDGING CRITERIA

Your case will be reviewed by industry professionals including the FSF Board of Governors, FSF Mentors, and FSF Alumni. The percentages below represent the portion of the score that will come from each respective category.

## Creativity & Feasibility

*Merchandising, Marketing, Business Strategy (40%)*

*Design & Product Development (20%)*

- 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/ retailer?

## Research & Development

*Merchandising, Marketing, Business Strategy (40%)*

*Design & Product Development (20%)*

- Has the applicant researched the selected brand/retailer, demonstrated 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 addressed how consumers will benefit from their proposed concept?
- Has the applicant clearly demonstrated the quantifiable business benefit of the creative concept?

## Collection Presentation

*Design & Product Development ONLY (40%)*

- Has the applicant presented their concept development in a manner that is clear and supports the final collection design?
- Has the applicant presented a final collection that conveys a strong presentation of design and is fitting to the intended concept?
- Has the applicant presented technical design details (through tech flats) that are easy to understand and show how to execute the concept?

## Clarity

*All Disciplines (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?
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## Format

*All Disciplines (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?

# Wondering Where to Begin? Get Started By Researching This Year's Theme

Use the below resources to begin building your understanding of the consumer and brand opportunities relating to this year's case study topic.



@greyhoundoriginal

**Use the below resources to support your identification of important consumer groups.**

Coresight Research. (2025, September 21). Analyst Corner: Understand Who Shops Where in US Retail, with John Mercer. <https://coresight.com/research/analyst-corner-understand-who-shops-where-in-us-retail-with-john-mercer/>

Coresight Research. (2025, September 25). Shoptalk Fall 2025 Wrap-Up: Driving Retail Forward—AI, Agility, Loyalty and Leadership in Volatile Times. <https://coresight.com/research/shoptalk-fall-2025-wrap-up-driving-retail-forward-ai-agility-loyalty-and-leadership-in-volatile-times/>

- Deloitte Insights. (2025, July). Deloitte Global Sustainable Behaviors Survey. *Deloitte*. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/environmental-social-governance/deloitte-global-sustainable-behaviors-survey.html>
- Deloitte Insights. (2023, June 28). Financial well-being and consumer resilience. *Deloitte*. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/retail-distribution/consumer-behavior-trends-state-of-the-consumer-tracker/consumer-resilience-financial-wellbeing.html>
- Deloitte Insights. (2023, July 31). Global anxiety levels in polycrisis. *Deloitte*. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/retail-distribution/consumer-behavior-trends-state-of-the-consumer-tracker/global-anxiety-levels-polycrisis.html>
- Deloitte Insights. (2025, June 24). Understanding the value-seeking consumer. *Deloitte*. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/retail-distribution/consumer-behavior-trends-state-of-the-consumer-tracker/understanding-value-seeking-consumer.html>
- Google Trends. (n.d.). Explore what the world is searching for right now. *Google*. <https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=US>
- McKinsey & Company. (2025, October 16). How today's consumers are spending their time and money. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/how-todays-consumers-are-spending-their-time-and-money>
- McKinsey & Company. (2025, June 9). State of the consumer trends report 2025: When disruption becomes permanent. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/state-of-consumer>
- McKinsey & Company. (2024, November 11). The state of fashion 2025: Challenges at every turn. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-fashion>
- National Association of Convenience Stores. (2025, September 30). Millennials and Gen Z contribute 32% to consumer spending. [https://www.convenience.org/Media/Daily/2025/September/30/3-Millennials-and-Gen-Z-Contribute-32\\_Research](https://www.convenience.org/Media/Daily/2025/September/30/3-Millennials-and-Gen-Z-Contribute-32_Research)
- Porch Group Media. (2025, October 13). Consumer shopping trends and statistics by the generation: Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers. <https://porchgroupmedia.com/blog/generational-consumer-shopping-trends/>
- VML. (2025, September 18). The Future Shopper 2025: Key trends shaping e-commerce. <https://www.vml.com/insight/future-shopper>

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Have you familiarized yourself with the  
**How to Apply Guide?**

Be sure to read it carefully! It outlines additional requirements and the available resources to support your Fashion Scholarship Fund scholarship application.

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The 2027 FSF Case Study was created by the Fashion Scholarship Fund, Board of Govenors, Scholarship Committee and Authored by Danielle Sponder Testa  
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