

Marketing Primer



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1. Introduction

Marketing refers to all the activities to get people interested in your company and products, and includes building your brand, promoting your products, generating sales, and growing your business. Once considered only after the product exists, now it is crucial to developing the product itself. From the very idea that inspired you to create your garment to putting it in the hands of your customer and beyond, marketing is fundamental to your success.

The aim of this module is to introduce the basics of marketing and how to start marketing a sustainable fashion company and its products. While not an exhaustive resource, this guide will enable you to understand what must be considered when creating a brand and launching it or its products into the market.

2. Market Research

Before establishing your business and marketing goals, it is important to research your market and your products' place within. You need to understand your company, your brand, and your products, your target customers, and your competition. Further analysis of market trends, constraints, and other impacts is also important. You should also be well aware of the challenges and opportunities with regard to creating sustainable fashion.

Research does not end once you have established your business. Continual research allows you to identify new opportunities and keep up-to-date with your competitors and the industry as a whole. When you maintain a constant eye on emerging and evolving trends, customer behaviours, and your brand presence and visibility, you will be able to put in place action plans to improve your marketing activities and support your business goals.

2.1. Your Target Customer

Who are you designing and creating for? Knowing your target customer enables you to market directly to them through targeted campaigns and well-crafted messaging design to appeal to that target. When creating a customer profile, you should consider several factors, such as age, location, lifestyle, and shopping preferences and behaviours. As a sustainable clothing producer, you will also want to consider expanding that profile to include those who care about sustainable and fair trade initiatives as it may be easier to reach them. Be as specific as possible. You may want your product to appeal to and be used by everyone, but such generic marketing will not reach your customer. Think back to when you first imagined or created your collection; you should have a pretty good idea of who you want to wear it and why.

Once you have enough sales data, revisit your target customer definition and see if it matches with reality. Perhaps you succeeded in reaching a demographic you were not targeting. Or you can identify a disconnect in your marketing and what attracts your target customer.

2.2. Market Testing

Market testing is a valuable part of your market research; clothing companies of all sizes do product testing to ensure their clothes actually wear well and would make money. Testing a sample of your collection can be as simple as lending your garments to people within your target customer group. They try the garments for a short period and return them along with their thoughts about the clothes: their likes, dislikes, comfort and form factors, feelings, what they would pay, etc. Market testing shows you any unforeseen problems with your collection with regard to the wearer. It can also reveal any production issues. What may be overcome on a small scale could increase when producing larger volumes.

2.3. Competition

It is important to understand who your competitors are, their strengths and weaknesses, and their position within your market. Look at their pricing and quality as well as overall competitive advantages, and study their marketing successes or failures to get an idea of what may work or what you should do differently. Note also upcoming collections or other events that may impact your brand or marketing efforts. Analysing the market and your competitors enables you to understand your unique selling proposition (USP), that which sets your products apart from your competitors. You may have more than one. You should also consider what is important to your target customer when thinking about your USP. One major advantage you may have over your competition could be your dedication to sustainable and circular fashion.

In today's world, consumers hold more power than ever before. They have tools to compare thousands of brands and products, so it is important to show people why your company or product is better than others on the market.

3. Branding and Positioning

Your brand is how people will perceive and identify your business. New businesses need to build brand awareness. Established companies use their brand equity and branding and product strategies to launch new collections and garments, penetrate a new market, and appeal to people outside of their current audience.

Branding is more than your logo and tagline; brand development enables you to create a clear vision of how you want your brand and products to be perceived, ensuring a consistent identity and image across all platforms and channels.

Value proposition is your promise to the customer, and it can be at the company level and product level. It describes the benefits to customers when they choose your company or product and enhances the perception of your brand in their mind. While your USP describes how you're different from others, your value proposition makes consumers care about that difference. Sometimes, this means educating them not only on the particularities of your brand and garments, but on overall sustainability in fashion and why it is important.

Positioning is where your brand or your product fits into the market with regard to other brands, products, and competitors. But it also refers to establishing your brand or product in the customer's mind. It's where you want to be and how you want to be perceived. It comprises several factors – your product, your target market, your competition, your branding, your USPs, your value proposition – and enables you to create a positioning statement that describes what you do, for whom, why, and why consumers should choose your products over the competition.



4. Messaging and Storytelling

Businesses and products are launched every day. The successful ones capture their audience's attention with clear messaging and a compelling story. Your messaging provides a vision for how you consistently present your company both internally and externally and shows the

value of what you do to your customers. Your story is an extension of your messaging and is used to persuade your target audience and appeal to their needs and desires.

Garment features are nice, but what attracts your customer is how they look and feel when wearing your pieces. Crafting a story around your brand or your clothes is important when starting out. People today are bombarded with choice; success depends on how unique and innovative your story is.

One thing to consider when using storytelling is how to weave in sustainability, circularity, and fair trade. In terms of appeal, remember that what is important is not that your clothes are sustainable, but that they feel nice and wear well. So while you should definitely mention the sustainable nature of your pieces, it should not be the primary message.

You should also avoid greenwashing, which is when a brand will say their products are environmentally friendly when they are not. Examples of greenwashing are everywhere these days, and consumers are becoming more and more aware of it as well. You should always have facts and figures to justify any sustainability claim that you make.

5. Marketing Channels

Marketing channels are the platforms and tools you use to promote your brand, show your garments, and tell your story to your target audience. Most companies use an omnichannel approach, integrating several channels and methods to offer one coherent brand and storytelling experience. Choosing the most effective channels for your brand or collection depends on your market and customer research, your marketing strategy, and your marketing plan, in which factors, such as tactics, budget, and context, have been considered. No matter which channels you use, you should ensure the overall customer experience is prioritised.

Following are some of the most important channels for you to consider for your collection.

5.1. Showcasing Your Garments

How, where, and when you showcase your collection depends on the strategies and tactics defined in your marketing plan and your storytelling. The theme and composition of your photoshoots will also vary according to the channels and media, both online and offline, that you will use to promote your garments. Creating a lookbook and making it available on your website will give you more freedom and flexibility in how you promote your company and present your collection than selling items in isolation on a third-party webstore. However, both options can be a part of your promotional strategy.



Photo by [Armen Aydinian](#) on [Unsplash](#)

There are many avenues for showcasing your collections, such as: regional and local fashion shows, trade shows, showrooms, and events and exhibitions.

As a sustainable business, you should also consider fairs and events dedicated to sustainability, circularity, and fair trade. While not necessarily dedicated to fashion, you will be able to showcase your garments and reach new audiences in a different context.

5.2. Open Studio

Open Studio is a concept similar to artist open studios wherein the designer's studio or workspace is opened to the public. Anyone can view completed garments or those in progress and see how the designer works and how the clothes are produced, from idea to finished piece. This is a low-cost way of promoting your garments to a wider audience. In addition to promotion, consumers will be exposed to how you create sustainable garments thereby increasing their knowledge of the concept.

5.3. Your Website

Having a website is perhaps the most important thing when you are just starting your marketing. It is your home on the web and a reflection of your business and marketing strategy.

You have complete ownership of it and everything publish on it allowing you to communicate one coherent story to your target audience. You can showcase your garments and even add online shopping to sell directly to your customers. Modern website tools allow users to easily add ecommerce capabilities to their websites.

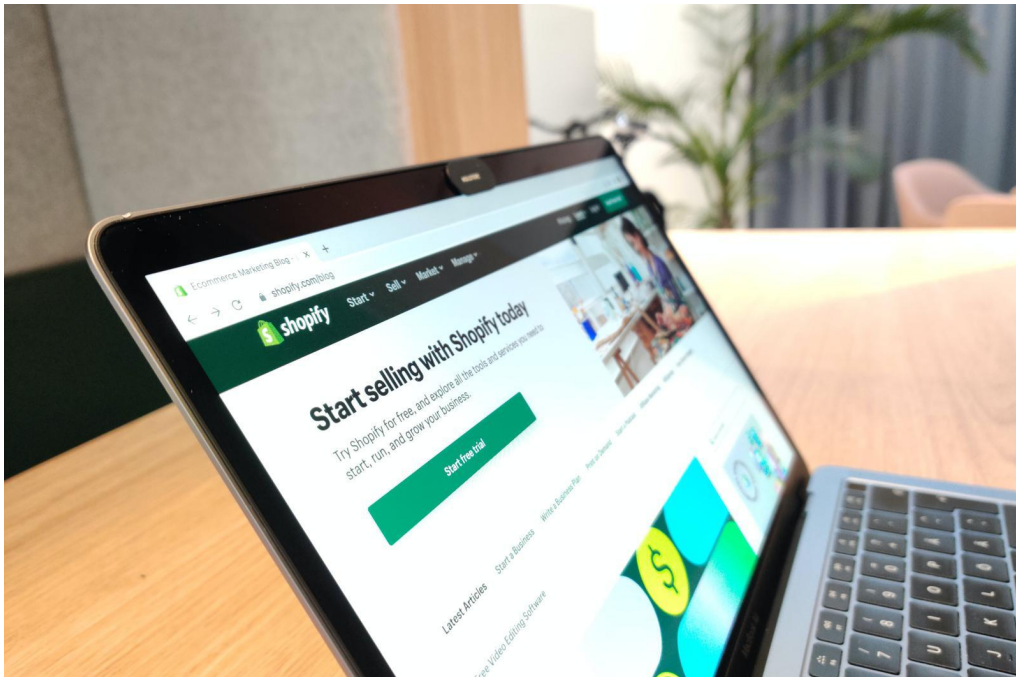


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5.4. Social Media Marketing

Social media networks enable you to reach and actively engage with your target audience. You can build brand awareness and bring you and your products closer to your community. Through social media, you can give a face to your company and build a special connection with your audience.

5.5. Online Marketplaces and Webshops

If you prefer to not have your own ecommerce website, then you can offer your garments for sale on other platforms. Again, your market research should inform your choices with regard to which shops will be the most appropriate and effective for you. Using an established ecommerce site means you do not have the effort or expense of creating and managing your own webshop. However, capturing user attention to your clothes is not as easy since you are competing with other brands and garments on the site.

Even if you sell your clothes through your own website, you can reach more audiences by being present on other marketplaces. You can even use these shops to introduce your garments to new geographical areas or markets.

5.6. Content Marketing

Content marketing uses content to build brand awareness and enhances your product positioning. It can increase engagement with your target audience, drive more traffic to your website, and generate more sales. Your content marketing plan will use several platforms, such as your website/blog, social media, email campaigns, and advertising.

5.7. Community Marketing

Community marketing is all about building a brand and becoming a social enterprise: creating a community, building relationships with them, and nurturing and growing the community. Brands no longer have one-way conversations with potential customers; more and more, consumers are interacting directly with companies and recommending them or their products to others based on their experience with that interaction.

5.8. Partnerships and Collaborations for Promoting Your Collection

Partnering and collaborating with brands and other organisations are excellent ways to promote your company and your garments, providing clout and creating instant social proof, especially important when you are just entering the market. You could collaborate with an artist and use their designs on the textiles you use in your collection. Partnering with organisers of a special event, wherein you offer your garments freely for them to wear, allows you to reach new audiences that would not necessarily have heard of your brand. You can build an experience around your clothes by partnering with a complementary company to offer services, such as yoga courses when you are creating fitness apparel. Both brands benefit from the additional exposure such a partnership brings.



When choosing brands for partnerships and collaborations, be sure to consider where they place themselves with regard to sustainability, circularity, and fair trade. You do not want to partner with an organisation who does not value these things as it will lessen your own reputation in the eyes of your customers.

6. Marketing Strategy and Planning

Your marketing strategy establishes a clear direction for achieving your business goals. It is the high-level approach you will take to reach your customers and generate sales and includes your company vision, mission, and messaging, your overall marketing goals, your product positioning, your target customers, and your competitors, with all parts of the marketing strategy working together. Market research will give you information about your target customers. Your target customers' needs and behaviours will show you what you need to communicate to them and which channels to use to reach them in the best way.



Your marketing strategy establishes where you are today and where you want to be; your marketing plan is the roadmap for how to get there. It takes the “how” of your strategy and lays out the actual plan of what you will do and when. Marketing plans may be long term, such as when launching your overall brand, or short term, such as when launching one collection or garment.

Marketing planning begins with understanding what you want to accomplish, success markers, time frame, resources, and budget. Then you will define realistic goals and objectives, evaluate and identify strategies and tactics to reach your objectives, and plan the execution and timing of each tactic.

A successful marketing plan is one that is continuously monitored and improved. You should identify the metrics by which you will measure the success of your activities and compare your results with your goals, thus enabling you to change tactics if something is not working.

7. A Final Word

Effective marketing relies on research and data, but it is not an exact science. External factors and unforeseen events also play a huge role in the success or failure of any marketing endeavours. It is important to experiment and try things, measure their impact, and then adapt or cancel them if necessary. And while your marketing and sales data will give you hard numbers, in today's world, the relationship you have with your audience will also be highly effective in evaluating if you are on the right path.