

# Fast fashion revolution: Assessing UR brand through SWOT analysis

Xinyue Bao \*

Beijing Keystone Academy, 101318 Beijing, China

**Abstract:** In the past decade, with the growth of technology, social media, fashion demands, and economic growth, these all show great opportunities and potential for fast fashion brands to grow and develop. This article takes an example of a Chinese brand UR to look at the whole fast fashion industry and analyze it through the SWOT, therefore looking at its position and the fast fashion industry as a whole. This essay analyses and summarizes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats faced by domestic fast fashion firms using the SWOT analysis approach. It examines the UR brand's success elements across other fast fashion businesses, serving as a model for the growth of China's quick fashion apparel industry. Moreover, take a panorama look at the potential solution for solving the future issues that UR is facing, then it could solve the problem easily according to the possible combination of the S, W, O, and T perspectives.

## 1 Introduction

In an era of technology brutally advancement, fashion has always been paid attention to by the public, under this backdrop, fast fashion thrived as the diversity of different trends and beauty standards changes burst forth. Therefore, to adapt to the needs of the public to always be appealing with new garments, fast fashion was established in this circumstance, and then all the fast fashion brands became popular internationally.

Fast fashion is a business model that features by production of garments in bulk, and as quickly as possible, in response to current trends. The main brands that represent fast fashion are H&M, ZARA, and UR. UR, a Chinese fast fashion brand from the company UR LIMITED, was founded and entered the Chinese market in 2006. There are already 614 offline stores located all over China. In 2015, UR adapted and successfully entered Europe and other nations' markets, their vision statement is to develop the worldwide market [1].

The design planning process for UR begins around 3-4 months in advance, with product planning starting even earlier. How the fast fashion chain works is that the merchandise department would provide regular feedback to the design department regarding sales and allocation. Therefore, UR introduces new products twice a week, which accumulated around 12,000 styles annually, which is comparable to ZARA. While UR's style and model resemble ZARA, the pricing is likely closer to H&M, being slightly lower than ZARA (offering a 30% price advantage) [2]. UR boasts a leading design and development team of over 500 internal

---

\* Corresponding author: [Xinyue.bao@student.keystoneacademy.cn](mailto:Xinyue.bao@student.keystoneacademy.cn)

designers, as well as a global creative and design center in London. They have offline stores in China, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and other Southeast Asian countries, with a total of over 360 offline stores around the world. UR's product line consists of Women, Men, and Youth. The Women's line, which includes Glamour, Elegance, and Holiday series, focuses on different style elements [3]. Based on market trends, the monthly design planning includes themes, popular elements, colours, fabrics, prints, key products, and visual displays. Because of how popular women's garments are, UR has focused on women's clothing, especially dresses.

This article will aim at the revolution of fast fashion, using UR as an example, and discuss and analyze it using a model called SWOT. SWOT stands for "Strength, weakness, opportunities and threats". Using this model, the internal evaluation of the "strengths and weakness" of fast fashion can be analyzed using the example of UR, as well as the external evaluation of "opportunities and threats."

## **2 Strength of UR**

The strength of fast fashion is that the design of garments can always follow the trends, which leads to the fact that designers do not need to always think of new styles. Moreover, the cost is low for the stocks, also, the update of collection would have a fast speed. Fast fashion has its collection updated very quickly and is always able to follow certain trends, which formulate a steady selling mode [4]. Customers can know that they would probably find the trend garment they like as if entering any UR offline store.

Fast fashion brands could provide garments that immediately follow the fashion trends. For instance, the manager level of UR would often attend fashion shows in New York, London, and Milan. Therefore, extract the fashion inspirations and pour them into their collections. For instance, the viral trend "ballet-core" that went viral on different social media and worn by celebrities and K-pop stars can be seen in the shoe design of UR. UR combined ballet flats with normal flat shoes, keeping the original style of ballet flats, but at the same time can be worn in daily life. UR also has bags that have similar designs to the most popular bag appearances. For instance, the Lady Dior bag, the Chanel denim CF bag, the Le MAIRE croissant bag, the Chanel 22 bag so on can all be seen in UR bags, and that allows customers who like those bags but cannot afford to purchase a similar substitute in UR, to exhibit the immediate adaption of new trends [4]. Moreover, the newest trending element "Falbala" which is a ruffled way to present clothes, is widely favoured, and UR immediately catches up on that. The new collection of 2024 Summer already has 5-6 garments using this element. All these examples show that UR can catch up on viral trends fast, always satisfying the immediate needs of customers, therefore dominating the market of fast fashion with its sensitive adaption [5].

The frequency of inventory return rate is 1-2 times a week, and therefore the brand must catch up very fast with a diversity of products even though the trend is the same. Also, the price and cost of the garments in fast fashion brands are relatively cheap, around 200 RMB to 600 RMB [3]. customers, these two features are viewed as great strength why to choose fast fashion. In a backdrop of society focusing on personality, it is prevented from dressing alike with others. Therefore, always updating garments for each week is a great strength favoured by the new generation. Moreover, some stocks that are not sold for a relatively long period would usually have great discounts for customers to purchase. In offline stores, some of these garments can go down to the price of 30-50 RMB, and that would lead customers to constantly check for clothes that are on sale, leading the inventory return rate fast, and making sure the stock quantity is at a safe level [4].

Overall, the strength of fast fashion is the adaption of new trends, updating the collection at a fast speed, and then formulating a steady selling mode, allowing customers to purchase the style they like and see the brand as a brand to always adopt these brands.

### **3 Weakness of UR**

The weakness of fast fashion brands can be, firstly, the quality of the product cannot be promised. According to the fast fashion brand sampling data released by the national as well as the provincial market regulatory authorities from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2019, ZARA was detected in a total of 18 batches of unqualified quantity, ranking first in the ten “fast fashion” brands. Moreover, according to the data of the Sina Black Cat complaint platform from 2024 until 2024 March 12, UR has received a total of 1087 complaints and had replied to 807, with a response rate of 74.2%, 676 pieces have been completed, with a completion rate of 62.2% [6]. The rate of response for the complaints is relatively high, but the rate of completion needs to be improved as well. Moreover, entering keywords of “UR quality”, the related results showing in the search engines are mostly negative, which proves the point that the quality of the product needs to be promised in the future of UR. On the other hand, UR was fined 20,000 RMB for substandard clothes in 2022, and it was apparently not the first time [6]. All this evidence shows that fast fashion could have a lot of problems that occur due to the fast production, therefore the standardization process might not be done properly.

Moreover, the large waste that fast fashion has added a lot of burden on earth, creating a bad reputation for the brand. For the past 15 years, the fashion industry has doubled its production of garments. The disposal way is that 73% will be burned or buried in a landfill, which adds a burden on carbon emissions. What does get collected and recycled is only around 12%, in this case, the fast fashion industry needs to be more aware of the recycling usage of reusable fabrics [7]. For instance, a lot of garments in UR are made from plastic fibers that cannot be decomposed or remade into new clothes, which is a weakness that cannot support sustainability.

No cultural content support: UR designers and buyers are imitating and transforming with the help of a highly integrated supply chain, but within the high quantity, independent innovation is lacking. The brand is blindly copying all the time; therefore, it is just a brand that follows the trend but does not have anything unique right there. Therefore, such fast fashion in UR lacks recognition in the Chinese market and lacks of the element of Chinese marketing, catering to the East and the West [8]. This would lead to spiritless clothing and soulless people wearing it. Therefore, even with the process of catering to the trends that everyone is chasing, but still keeps the brand connotation and maybe some Chinese cultural connotation support within.

Overall, all these data and evidence can exhibit the two major weaknesses of fast fashion, the quality of the product and standardization within, as well as the burden it adds on natural water resources. The solution to the second weakness seems to be hard to find in the short term.

### **4 Opportunities for UR**

The rise of the fast fashion market can become a part of Opportunities for UR. Fast fashion grew during the late 20th century as the manufacturing of clothing became less expensive – with technological development, more efficient supply chains, new quick response of manufacturing methods, and taking advantage of low-cost labour from Southeast and East Asia [3]. Moreover, the uplifting trend of social media has made the spread of fashion trends

fast. Fashion shows are constantly updated in social media, and if celebrities and influencers on media like TikTok, Xiaohongshu (Red), or Instagram, these trends can go viral in one or two days or even a few hours. Against this backdrop, the fashion market become a great opportunity to establish fast fashion brands, with the wide attention paid to the fashion industry, and the advanced technology, all of these make up a huge opportunity for brands like UR.

The second opportunity is that “Gen Z” young fashion designers have gradually entered the fashion industry. Unlike “people born in the 70s and 80s” these young fashion designers were born under the backdrop of the internet era. The adaptation to technology and the new trends brought them wider aesthetic vision and creativity. They could think more creatively and adapt quickly to the trends that are going on and changing rapidly. At the same time, they can compare and build up their beauty standards, because there is a wide range of garments in the market, and they can constantly view this style and get inspired and imbue their own fashion aesthetic [5].

The last opportunity is that foreign fast fashion brands are gradually stepping out of the Chinese market, which lowers the competition and stress that brings on UR. Zara’s parent company Inditex had closed “Bershka, Pull&Bear, Stradivarius” three fashion brands. The reason why these companies have collapsed is because how the supply system is not functioning effectively anymore [2]. As of 2019, 62 Bershka, 65 Pull&Bear, and 35 Stradivarius stores were rooted in China. However, with the thrill of the pandemic, they have struggled to stay. According to the company’s 2020 financial report, global sales of Pull& Bear fell 33.79%, Bershka 35.9% and Stradivarius fell 35.3% in the first half of 2020 [9]. This is due to the price and quality also the promotion cannot compare to local fast fashion brands in China. A lot of brands that cater more to Chinese aesthetics appeared and left no more place for these brands in the Chinese market.

Overall, the opportunities from the technology improvement, designers’ development, and foreign market investigation have developed a bright future for UR, therefore, showing great potential for UR to apply these opportunities to solve some weaknesses that appear in UR.

## **5 Threats for UR**

The accessible luxury brand has gradually larger its market share. As the living standard of people is gradually uplifting, therefore, people might want to buy some brands with better quality and a little bit more expensive. Some brands that have specific styles that could show social status and personal taste are widely welcomed and loved by young customers. Therefore, cheaper brands might not take too much place in the market.

Moreover, the competition from online retailers is fierce. This is because of how social media has live streams and shopping opportunities. It offers customers more choices, and the individual online shop retailers would follow the trends, with an even cheaper and faster time, and at that time, the fast fashion brand cannot compare with those two advantages, leading more customer base to get attached and there is less room left for a fast fashion brand.

Regulation and Compliance are threatening the fast fashion industry because the government is increasingly focusing on the fashion industry’s labor practices, environmental impact, and supply chain transparency. Especially on environmental impact, from 2012, the consumption of garments is around 62,000,000 tons, placed second for the world’s contamination, which caused the regulations to be stronger [7].

The competition from the other fast fashion brands could be a threat. As the risen of fast fashion stores, more and more new brands are gradually taking place for the overall market share in the fast fashion industry. In 2019 April, forever 21 announced that they were going to leave the Chinese market, but after 2 years, they claimed that they were coming back.

Another brand, C&A is rapidly opening new stores in China [8]. However, a lot of old fast-fashion brands are fading away. H&M 's sales revenue has been decreasing since 2021, and the stores offline have gradually decreased. In June this year, the H&M store in Sanlitun, Beijing, announced they were leaving. For UR, it is vital to keep in a steady position and to be constantly aware of the big fast fashion brands Zara, Gap, and so on [8]. Yet at the same time, it is aware of not being replaced.

The economy in China has decreased, especially shown in GDP reports. Under the pressure economic declining trend, the middle- and low-class consumers' ability to purchase has been impacted. Therefore, they might pay more attention to the practical usage of products. Moreover, people wouldn't want to frequently purchase low-quality products, and that would directly relate to the market share of fast fashion. If people start to have the same consumer will and needs, then it is going to have a huge impact on fast fashion brands.

## 6 Suggestions

Using the weakness as a potential unique selling point. Since China has experienced rapid growth and prosperity in the past 50 years, therefore, environmental pollution is an opportunity cost for, consumers to have more awareness of the protection of the environment. Therefore, the investigation of recycled and reusable fabric and decomposable fabric should be necessary [7]. The "eco-fan" consumers would love to buy these garments in order to support environment-friendly movement and reduce this negative impact. That would increase the competitive advantages of these brands. Using opportunities and strength to create long-term sustainability. To grip and always grasp the fashion trend, which is an opportunity for fast fashion brands like UR, can establish a "cross-border" relationship with designer brands which makes alliances and attracts a new customer base [10]. It is how brands can build bridges with consumers through cross-border communication must be "like-minded" in terms of supporting the brand connotation that is currently a weakness for UR. Moreover, the independent designers might be attracting buyers, resulting in their keen attention and increased sales revenue in this case.

China has a lot of technologies that can be applied in UR. For instance, China has a lot of factories, and it is where the UR factories are located. Therefore, a lot of new garment-making machines can be applied in order to be more efficient at the speed of making garments. Moreover, technologies that are applied to IT systems could also allow more efficient results. For instance, UR now is applying customers' preferences and their favored style, in order to focus on the customers' own needs, allowing the information to be more organized and easier to target this audience. Lastly, producing garments that match more of the market's needs.

## 7 Conclusion

The opportunity and the strength of fast fashion can be very obvious, coming from the rise of new trends and the rise of technology. The new demand, fast spread of social media, advanced technology, and better delivery system. However, the threats and weaknesses seem subtle compared to the positive aspects, because of influences like the environment and the competition of E-commerce. These negative impacts of fast fashion brands like UR seem to be tiny because it is more like the ethical or social impact instead of real threats that would make the firm get impacted immediately. Therefore, it can be concluded that the strengths actually outweigh the negative parts, showing that UR has great potential to gain profit and have great development in the future, without having great negative limitations. Lastly, the strategies show that there are a lot of methods that could potentially increase the sales revenue while at the same time solving the drawback of UR, therefore showing the large potential for

this brand. The weakness and threats that UR is facing, could become a way of unique selling point, also showing the bright future of UR.

## References

1. S. Chen & M. Li, UR: Using Zara's model to create Chinese fast fashion. *Zhongguancun* **10**, 78-79 (2013)
2. X. Zhang, Discussion on marketing and brand culture of fast fashion clothing brands - Taking UR brand as an example. *Tomorrow Fashion*. **22**, 362+336 (2016)
3. P. Lyu & R. Li, Development strategy of Chinese fast fashion clothing brands based on SWOT analysis - Taking UR brand as an example. *Text. Rep.* **40**, 34-35 (2021)
4. X. Feng, UR: The rise of Chinese fast fashion brands. *Splendor* **12**, 42-44 (2017)
5. H. Jiang, Cultural accumulation and development thoughts of Chinese fast fashion brands. *West. Leather* **46**, 132-134 (2024)
6. X. Ting, Fast fashion brand UR punished for selling substandard clothing. *China Fiber Insp.* **01**, 110 (2023)
7. What is fast fashion and why is it a problem? *Ethical Consumer* (2019)  
<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/fashion-clothing/what-fast-fashion-why-it-problem>
8. N. Wu, Urban Revivo Is China's Best Kept Secret. *Jing Daily* (2022)
9. R. Maiti, Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact in 2024. *Earth.org* (2024).  
<https://earth.org/fast-fashions-detrimental-effect-on-the-environment/>
10. UR channel sinking, racing in China's fast fashion market. *Invest. Coop.* **11**, 59 (2014).