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HOTELS



Fashion

Zara - the Brand from La Coruña

Most of us are familiar with the retail outlet Zara but few of us know its origins and how it came to be such a successful brand - let's find out.

Amancio Ortega was born in 1936, in Busdongo de Arbas, León. He lived a humble life with his parents and three siblings. His father worked on the railways and his mother was a domestic maid, but the wages were low and they struggled to make ends meet. In his early teens, Amancio relocated to La Coruña due to his father's employment. It was in this Galician city that he took on his first job as an errand boy for a clothing store. The Spaniard then went to join his brother and sister as a salesperson working for Gala, a shop that sold quality, handmade shirts. It was there he met Rosalie Mera, who was to become his business partner and first wife and whom he married in 1966 and divorced twenty years later. His next step into the world of fashion was in his early twenties, making quilted bathrobes in the classic Matelassé design but at knockdown prices.

Ortega and Rosalie Mera opened their first Zara outlet in 1975 in La Coruña. Ortega wanted this store to bear the name, Zorba, after the film featuring the Greek by the same name. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortuitously, a bar just two streets away, was already called after the film, so he opted for Zara instead.

Mera was an astute businesswoman who had an eye for design and was handy with a needle and thread. She believed in working speedily. Mera would see a trendy design, quickly replicate it and get it out on the racks to sell at a low price. This working process was later named as fast fashion and both entrepreneurs believed in giving the customers what they wanted as quickly as they could.

Today, Zara produce around 12,000 new designs each year. Ordering stock is a slick operation. Each store alters its stock twice a week and new orders arrive within two days. Store managers have to be at the top of their game, they are trained to have a keen eye, to know what sells and what customers are looking for and want to wear. Logistics also play a key role in Zara's business model. As 50 percent of the clothes are manufactured in Europe, delivery times are swift. New designs can be delivered from the cutting room and be on to the shelves in the shops within three weeks.

Zara's headquarters are located in Arteixo near La Coruña. There are over 2,000 stores in 88 countries including Spain, Portugal, the USA, Belgium and the Netherlands. You can find clothing for men, women and children in their stores as well as footwear, accessories and cosmetics. In 2016, the company is listed 53rd on Forbes List of the World's Most Valuable Brands with an estimated brand value of USD 10.7 bln.

Zara's popularity as a fashion brand is remarkable to say that the company hardly does any advertising compared to other top fashion retailers like H&M and Benneton. The company doesn't believe in getting entangled in huge, showy campaigns and its marketing department is minimal. So why is Zara so popular? Firstly, the name is a great choice - it's catchy and flows nicely. Secondly, the fashions are up to date and within most people's price range. Thirdly, the choice of locations and styles of architecture bought to house Zara stores is one of great beauty and sophistication. Finally, in the words of Daniel Piette, chairman of Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH), *'Zara is possibly the most innovative and devastating retailer in the world.'*



Vocabulary

Humble - very modest

Siblings - brothers and sisters

To struggle to make ends meet - to have difficulties earning enough to live on

Errand - a short journey to collect or deliver something

Knockdown prices - very reduced prices

Fortuitously - luckily

To opt - to choose

Astute - sharp, having business acumen

To have an eye for something - to have a skill or aptitude for something

To be handy with something - to have skill and dexterity

Replicate - copy

Slick - fast and efficient

To alter - to change

To be at the top of one's game - to be at the peak of one's abilities

A keen eye - good observation and design skills

Cutting room - a room in a clothing factory or workshop where clothes are cut into designs

Entangled - wrapped up, mixed up, involved

Showy - ostentatiously noticeable



Sentence completion - without referring back to the text,
match the two halves of sentences.

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|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | His father worked on the railways and his mother was a domestic maid | a | as an errand boy for a clothing store. |
| 2 | In his early teens, Amancio relocated to La Coruña | b | who was to become his business partner and first wife and whom he married in 1966 and divorced twenty years later. |
| 3 | It was in this Galician city that he took on his first job | c | was already called after the film, so he opted for Zara instead. |
| 4 | The Spaniard then went to join his brother and sister as a salesperson working for Gala, | d | but the wages were low and they struggled to make ends meet. |
| 5 | It was there he met Rosalie Mera, | e | after the film featuring the Greek by the same name. |
| 6 | Ortega and Rosalie Mera opened their first Zara outlet | f | due to his father's employment. |
| 7 | Ortega wanted this store to bear the name, Zorba, | g | in 1975 in La Coruña. |
| 8 | Unfortunately, or perhaps fortuitously, a bar just two streets away, | h | a shop that sold quality, handmade shirts. |



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