

# Gemma Hicks

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Being an International Fashion Buying Management student has given me the specialist skills for fashion buying, however, due to the broadness of the course, I have learnt a large range of elements to help me become successful in any section within the fashion industry, including photoshoots, styling, marketing, business management and journalism.

Sustainability is a personal interest of mine and has encouraged me to extensively research all aspects of it. My dissertation and final major project are an accumulation of that knowledge, the commercial, fast fashion aspect of fashion sustainability as well as the scientific inventions, curating an exhibition at the Eden Project.

On my placement at Mother of Pearl, I was able to experience how a successful luxury brand can be environmentally friendly, profitable and desirable. I excelled in this company and it allowed me to apply my knowledge to industry scenarios.

My five years of high-end/luxury retail experience has given me the ability to experience fashion in a variety of retail environments. I am an enthusiastic, dedicated, ambitious and hardworking graduate with the ultimate aim to make fashion a more compassionate and inspiring industry. I thrive under pressure and am extremely organised when it comes to deadlines, projects and exceeding expectations.

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MOTHER OF PEARL

# CV

## SKILLS & INTERESTS:

- Confident using all Microsoft office programs as well as InDesign, Photoshop, Sketch Up, Zedonk, One Note, WGSN, website design
- Basic Spanish, German and Latin (want to learn more though)
- Ride and Road Safety qualified
- Bronze Duke of Edenborough
- Intermediate horse rider (dressage, show jumping and cross country)
- Passionate about sustainability and the environment

## EDUCATION:

Predicted BA (Hons) Fashion Buying and International Management degree  
University of Huddersfield

English Language, Media Studies, Textiles & Business Studies  
(B, B, E, B)  
Little Heath Sixth Form

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## EXPERIENCE:

### MOTHER OF PEARL PRODUCTION & DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP AUGUST 2019 – MARCH 2020

- Identifying and taking stock of a range of sustainable fabrics (viscose, bamboo silk, organic cotton, lyocell, rayon) and trims, ensuring quantities are kept up to date
- Implemented a stock list in excel to keep track on the items in the stock room
- Created an in-depth fabric file with swatches and details
- Created tech packs to be sent to suppliers, including fabric swatches and fastenings
- Fabric cutting and faulty repairs
- Quality checking and ensuring all stock matches the specified measurements
- Learnt to navigate London Underground effectively whilst running errands
- Put in charge of the stock room and maintaining organisation
- Confident using Zedonk software, stock tracking with Excel and DHL deliveries

### HUGO BOSS SALES ASSISTANT DECEMBER 2019 – AUGUST 2020

- Sales driven and commission-based role in a competitive team
- Despite only working 20 hours a week, I was the third best salesperson out of a team of ten (including four full time workers) making over £30,000 during my time at Boss
- Learnt to tailor garments and spot when something fits properly and have knowledge on suiting and tailoring
- Learnt menswear sizing including slim/regular fit and shirt sizing
- In depth visual merchandising training
- In depth sales training and customer service training
- Acquired my own loyal clients

### MULBERRY SALES ASSISTANT JUNE 2019 – DECEMBER 2019

- Luxury accessories and leather goods
- Top salesperson in team of four, specialising in customer service and relations
- Trained in visual merchandising with accessories
- Organisation and high standards of cleanliness was a key

element of working here

- Had to memorise the names, prices and background story of every bag to provide that luxury level experience.
- Cashed up and completed deliveries as well as looking after the entire concession by myself

### TED BAKER SALES ASSISTANT OCTOBER 2018 – JUNE 2019

- Head of visual merchandising in store
- Top salesperson with loyal customers
- Intense customer service training
- Maintained high standards of tidying
- In charge of deliveries and stock room
- Worked in a large team within a department store

### HALL PLACE EQUESTRIAN CENTRE & CENTELL SADDLERY STABLE HAND & SHOP ASSISTANT ON GOING (whenever I need a job)

- Taught children to ride
- Looked after a yard of up to 40 horses, including turning out, catching, feeding, mucking out, maintenance and cleanliness, tacking up etc.
- Supervised a group of workers
- Dealt with clients and boarders
- Worked in the saddlery, booking in clients, sorting payments from liveries, organising shows, keeping stock, locking up and cashing up by myself, fitting hats and boots, offering advice
- Worked in hot sun, snow, mud, rain with a variety of well-behaved and challenging horses- very good character building!

### PHASE EIGHT SALES ASSISTANT NOVEMBER 2014 – SEPTEMBER 2016

- Taught to dress mannequins and received visual merchandising training
- Received customer service training
- Cleaned, tidied and organised store and stockroom
- Dealt with banking, posting and DHL deliveries
- Effective outfit building and loyal customer relations

## A BIT ABOUT ME:

Nature loving and spiritual, I am determined to leave the world a better place and I intend to implement that mindset throughout my life, including my career. I love spending my spare time with my horse and practising yoga, which has helped me become a patient, calm and quick-thinking person.! I am a natural leader and hard-working team member and relish when given responsibilities and opportunities to learn, improve and excel.



# Final Major Project

## INTRODUCTION:

This project allowed me to use all the tools that I have been taught throughout my degree and the freedom to explore one of the aspects of fashion that interests me the most, sustainability!

I wanted to explore the more scientific and technology side of sustainable fashion by focussing on the inventions and creations currently being created to offer planet friendly alternatives for virgin materials. The most effective way for me to do that was to put together an exhibition, showcasing the incredible array of mind-blowing creations and their inventors, who work tirelessly to find the answers for the future of the fashion industry. This exhibition provides a glimpse into a possible future for fashion, by putting the planet first and looking to nature for solutions.

When it comes to helping the planet through means of education and funding, a key organisation immediately springs to mind- The Eden Project. As a loyal member, I wanted to incorporate this Cornish (and national) landmark in to my project and decided to base the exhibition here and named it The Fashion Biome Exhibition.

I also had a look at the merchandise available in the gift shop and realised that if I were to put on an exhibition about sustainable fashion that the clothing sold in the gift shop should be as sustainable as possible. The current collection also had no branding and consisted of basic t-shirts, hoodies and socks. Inspired by the capsule collection at the Victoria & Albert museum in collaboration with Mulberry, I decided that the range sold at The Eden Project gift shop will be in collaboration with Cornish clothing brand, SEASALT. In order to provide a unique, desirable element to the range I selected some Cornish artists whose paintings are of the county's landscape and coast to be digitally printed on to the collection.

After researching and selecting the creations that I wanted to exhibit, I also wanted to include displays that inform visitors to the exhibition about the impact the fashion industry has on the environment, I had to figure out how to display them. I first experimented with Sketch Up and then Artsteps, but neither provided the effect I wanted. So, I turned to a game on my laptop, Sims 4! The results were amazing, and I managed to create the exhibition that I had visualised. To add extra detail, I Photo-Shopped the exhibits into the images, creating the visuals for my guidebook. The guidebook is a way to provide visitors additional information for each exhibit and also has a catalogue at the back, displaying the Fashion Biome Collection, the range of merchandise.



Inspired by Cornish artists and in collaboration with SEASALT, I created the Fashion Biome Collection to provide visitors to The Eden Project a stylish and unique range of clothing made using Soil Associated organic cotton, Tide Cycle® ocean plastic polyester and bamboo viscose. The branding will provide promotion for The Eden Project as well as The Fashion Biome Exhibition. The CADs were downloaded from WGSN and then I used Photoshop to include the paintings in to the garments. The lining has a hexagon print, that I have called the Eden Print due to the hexagon shapes in the domes that cover the rainforest and Mediterranean biomes.

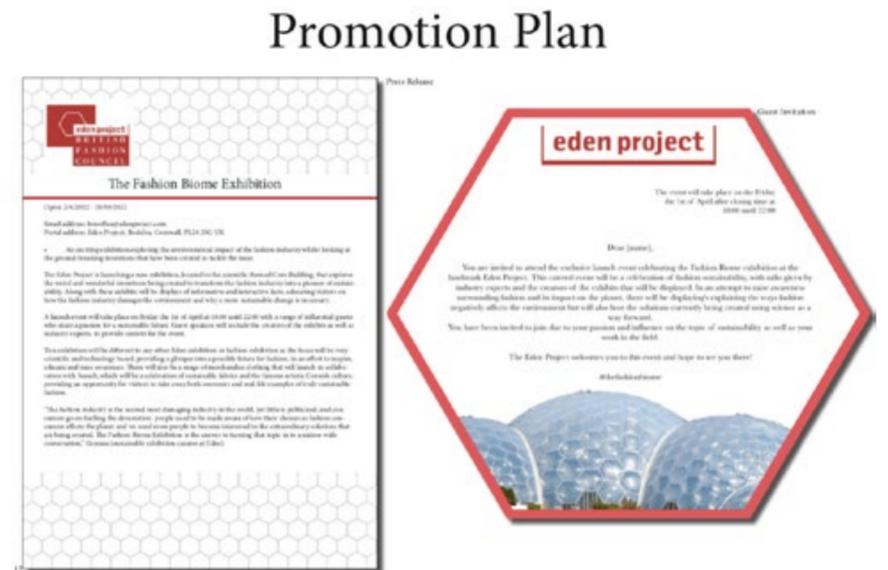


In addition to the exhibition and the range, I created a simple promotion plan including a launch event to plan out how advertising, PR and launching the exhibition will happen. I also created a layout of how I want the range to be merchandised in the gift shop, inspired by an artist's cottage to create a concept for the range and to provide an experience for the customers. I want the whole project to celebrate the beauty of Cornwall and to promote sustainable fashion as well as provide branding for The Eden Project. I thoroughly enjoyed creating this project and learning more about science's answers to fashions problems.



**Appendix: Range Plan**

Product/Style Number	Product Description	CAD	Colorways	Fabric/Composition	Size	Cost Price	Selling Price	Margin (%)	Total Stock	Total Spend	Total Value
004	Menswear Turtle-neck Top	[Image]	Moss, Dazzling Glens, Hold on to Hope, Seaweedays, Be Free	50% organic cotton, 50% Tide Cycle® polyester	S-XXL	140.49	188	33	12	12,360.00	14,437.50
005	Menswear Long Sleeve Top	[Image]	Moss, Dazzling Glens, Hold on to Hope, Seaweedays, Be Free	100% organic cotton	S-XXL	141.56	174	20	12	12,187.20	13,848
006	Menswear Blouse	[Image]	Moss, Dazzling Glens, Hold on to Hope, Seaweedays, Be Free	50% organic cotton, 50% bamboo viscose	S-XXL	131.74	160	20	12	12,407.00	14,885



# Dissertation



**M**y dissertation allowed me to explore the commercial side of sustainable fashion, for example how business structures can adapt to decrease carbon emissions and impact on the environment. By focusing on fast fashion, I have learnt more about greenwashing and how the most polluting companies plan to tackle this issue. I have provided a copy of the conclusion of my dissertation due to it being more in-depth about the topics I have researched as well as my overall understanding of fast fashion and sustainability.

**I**n conclusion, this dissertation has exposed the true intentions of the fast fashion companies that claim to be aiming for sustainability and have displayed the difference between reporting and executing sustainable practices.

The annual reports of Arcadia, Boohoo, Inditex and the sustainable report of H&M, offer visions that the companies want to portray to stakeholders using the goals, commitments and dedication to sustainability to satisfy the growing global consumer demand for environmentally friendly practices and clothing. Small print text keeps the companies above water in case of misconduct and allows them to portray their green ethos whether or not they actually commit to it in reality.

A company's 'eco collection' is where those goals and efforts documented in the reports are executed. There is a considerable difference between reporting and setting goals and actually putting those goals and promises in to practise, a factor that some fast fashion companies evidentially struggle with. The consequence of this impacts the whole planet, an extremely serious and ever-growing issue that faces all species and is the result of human activity, with the fashion industry being responsible as one of the most polluting industries in the world.

Green washing is a serious issue, one that should come with a penalty considering the consequences of misleading environmentally conscious consumers to making unsustainable purchases and should be held to the same level as selling a vegetarian meat in a restaurant, an embarrassing disgrace. As shown in Chapter Two, the evidence of greenwashing is clearly displayed on the company's websites with little or no effort to conceal it due to the lack of policies and penalties regarding this issue. There are currently petitions in place urging the government to implement penalties against greenwashing. For example, when evidence showed the negative impact of smoking on individuals the government implemented an honesty policy where the consequences of smoking had to be displayed on the packaging of the cigarettes sold. Some organisations, like ClientEarth, are trying to convince the UK government to apply that form of transparency for fashion products.

Fortunately, there is a solution that has been repeatedly discussed throughout the literature and research within the dissertation, a circular business structure, otherwise known as, 'closing the loop'. This industry changing concept has the potential to reduce the demand for raw, virgin materials, reduce the number of emissions, chemicals and grey water released into the environment and stops clothing and textiles from taking up the limited space in landfills. It has the power to completely revolutionise the fashion industry, changing it from the traditional, linear, 'take-make-

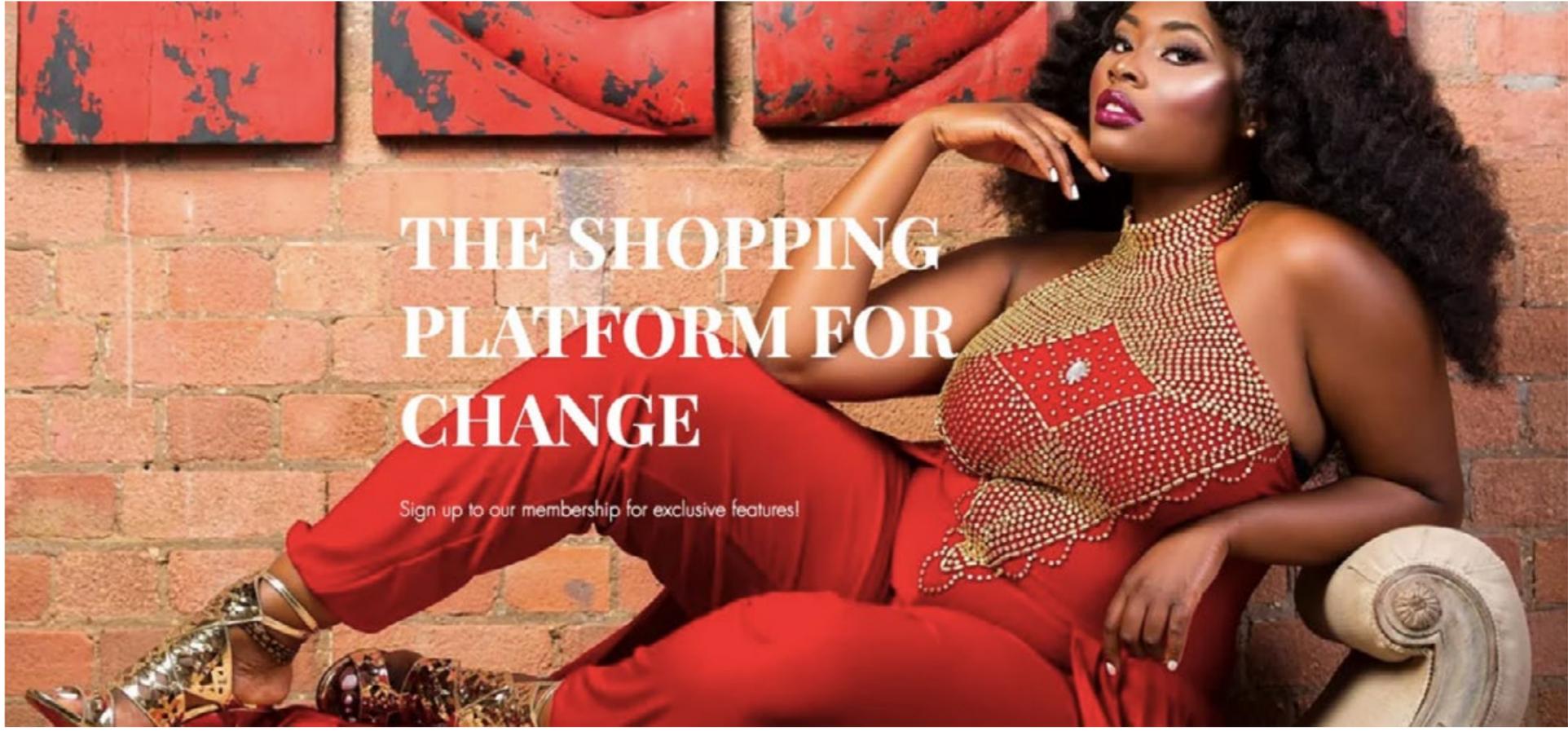
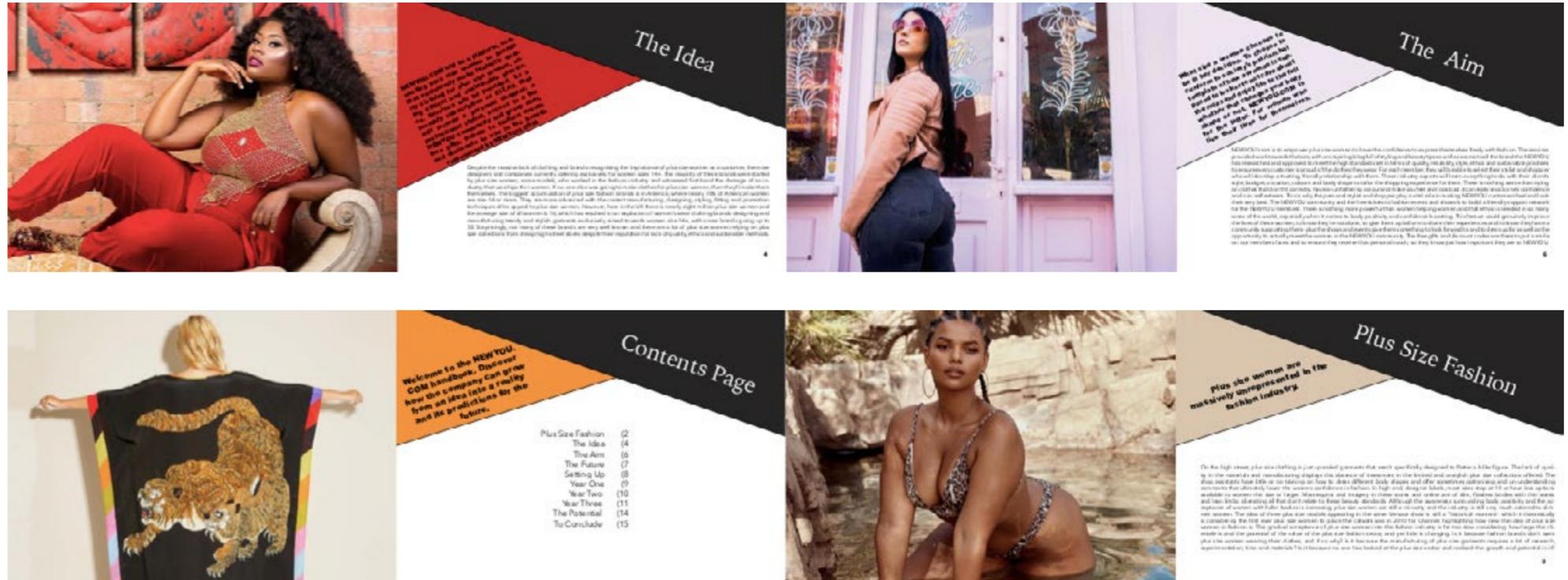
waste' strategy to using textile waste as a valuable resource that can be re-used repeatedly, ensuring it never ends up in landfills. This prevents the creation of millions of brand-new garments, decreasing the destructive strain on resources and rapidly decreases the quantity of carbon emissions released by the fashion industry.

Throughout history, fashion has been a tool for self-expression, for revolutions, for changes, for protests and celebrations. However, now is the time for fashion itself to make a historical change. With the new wave of technological and scientific professionals inventing a range of sustainable textiles and manufacturing techniques, fashion could become a tool that helps the planet to recover, rather than damaging it. Experimenting with mushrooms, seaweed, algae (that photosynthesises when worn), bamboo, hemp, pineapple waste, E-Textile (uses body heat to produce electricity), apple leather, and garments made from plastic waste found in the oceans are some of the many breakthrough textile creations that can transform the industry into a sustainable pioneer (Pijak, 2020). It may be possible for the fashion industry to work for nature, rather than exploiting it. The most impressive and needed change will be that of the fast fashion sector. By working together, sharing ideas, inventions and by reconstructing the mindset of the industry, then sustainability may be achieved within fast fashion, and consequently, the rest of the fashion industry. The responsibility for this change is that of both the consumers and the organisations associated with fast fashion, with sustainability being the main goal, rather than trends or profit.

BECOMING SUSTAINABLE:  
THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF  
FAST FASHION

# Advanced Fashion Practise

This project was given a brief to help me explore diversity in fashion, and so I decided to focus on plus size fashion. I created a company that helps connect plus size women to high quality and ethically made brands that specialise in sizes 14+. I created a website designed to cater completely to plus size women, in addition to connecting them to brands, it is a platform to inspire, motivate and create a community of support with the ultimate aim to increase confidence!



# Second-Year Project



**HEBTROCO**  
**BRITISH MADE**  
*to LAST*

Gemma Hicks  
U1659623

For this project from second year, I explored a British based company, Hebtroco, to learn more about the benefits and struggles of having a local supply chain, rather than offshoring. It was a lovely experience learning about this West Yorkshire based brand that champions using textile factories that have survived since the industrial revolution and how this business structure contributes to local communities and benefits the planet in terms of reducing carbon emissions. In order to gain as much information about the brand, I interviewed one of the founders and allowed him to open up about the company in staggering detail and allowed me to build an accurate and informative report of the company.

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## Chapter Six: The Effects of Brexit

It is difficult to predict the implications that Brexit will have on HebTroCo and other businesses in the UK, as the agreements and plans for the future have yet to be decided by the UK government. However, this is where HebTroCo can be more relaxed, "with most of our suppliers being British, we're in a good place, so we can be positive. But, the first time we ordered from our German supplier of moleskin, we put an order in on the day that Brexit was announced, and so our first order went up 10% in price so we instantly lost money." However, the true British spirit will prevail, as Grant later acknowledges: "You, know, we're doing alright despite Brexit confusion and chaos. What inspires me is a hat company in London, Lock & Co. Hatters, established in 1676. This brand who are responsible for making legendary headwear, including Admiral Nelson's tricorn hat and Winston Churchill's bowler hat - have survived civil war, the industrial revolution, two World Wars, rationing and the dawn of the digital era. Compared to that, Brexit is hardly an obstacle. Brexit is just going to come and go, people will always need clothes and so the British fashion industry will go on, as it has done for centuries before us. You've got to take that long-term view, some businesses will fail and some will succeed, so we're not going to give up."

By having suppliers and manufacturers in the UK, the HebTroCo business will probably not be as affected as other companies who have suppliers and manufacturers in Europe. Richard Lim, chief executive of analyst Retail Economics identifies the challenges ahead: "Hard Brexit — where existing trade deals disappear, and designers, retailers and manufacturers would have to pay to trade with the EU — would mean clothing and footwear tariffs of about 11 per cent, or just over £1 billion more each year. A second option is a free trade agreement, but we don't know what kind of strings will be attached — it's hard for businesses to plan. Third, the UK could remain part of the customs union, but that seems unlikely given that Theresa May has already rejected this path." With the UK importing almost £10 billion worth of clothes and shoes from Europe every year, the British fashion brands that rely on those imports will have to adapt (I. Tobin, 2019). The rest of the British fashion industry - including fashion colleges and universities as well as clothing brands - are dealing with the issues that may arise from Brexit to make the most of the change, resulting in a push for the remaining off-shoring brands to start looking for UK suppliers and manufacturers, which can only benefit the UK economy. However, deals are being made with suppliers from even further afield than Europe, like Asia, Africa and America which would be the more negative alternative for the UK.

One of the main factors that seems to be certain; the cost of clothing will increase for customers which may change the attitude customers have towards clothes and may lead to the era of fast fashion coming to an end. Whatever happens, the British fashion industry will have to adapt to continue meeting their customers demands. "The problem is that a lot of people in Britain have been brought up in a globalised market where everything's cheap, they want to buy British but not spend a lot of money, and then there's a lot of waste as the clothes aren't valuable enough or of good enough quality to maintain and care for. So, the customers are going to have to adapt too, not just to suit Brexit but also the attitudes towards sustainability too." (Grant, 2019)

British fashion. Made in Britain. A stamp of quality and generations of craftsmanship. The industrial revolution that occurred in Britain, in the Victorian era, was driven by the growing demand for clothing and the need for mills and cloth factories. The landscape of Britain changed as factories and warehouses were built, with whole communities of houses, schools and shops to accommodate the population, all centred around the manufacture of clothes. Since the 1940's, there has been a decline in demand for expensive British made fabrics and clothing as new, cheaper alternatives were found off-shore, resulting in the closures of factories and warehouses nationwide. The British textile industry dwindled in to a few small factories dotted around the British Isles (C. Hopch, 2012).

However, around 2010 an increase in demand for British Made clothes along with a push for more ethical and sustainable sourcing has created a shift in British retailers' choices for suppliers. Many choosing British manufacturing and materials over those originally used in the Far East and other abroad locations. With changes in government and the unknown effects of Brexit, entrepreneurs are looking within the United Kingdom for materials, suppliers and other necessary elements to successfully progress their businesses. According to the British Fashion Council (2018) Between 2016 and 2017, the British fashion industry has increased by 5.4%, now worth £32.3 billion. The rise in British fashion businesses is nationwide, and this book looks at one of those companies, HebTroCo, and their journey from start up to success, as well as the impact their business has on their local area.

According to the HebTroCo website, in 2016 in a small pub in Hebden Bridge, or Troutsertown, as it was also known in West Yorkshire, was the birthplace of a business idea. The Troutsertown nickname came from the 20,000 pairs of trousers that were made every week in Hebden Bridge during the peak of the industrial revolution. It now has a single factory left. Was it possible to support small, British manufacturers with production sized orders, and get people wearing and using British made products again? This was the question asked that fuelled the decision to sell British manufactured clothes by two ordinary men, Grant Richards and Ed Oxley. With no fashion business experience between them, they created a Kickstarter page for funding, explaining their aim and their objective to sell 176 pairs of moleskin trousers from the single factory left in Hebden Bridge. These trousers were sold out within 5 hours of the fundraiser going live and clearly demonstrated the demand for high quality, British made clothes. This funded the beginning of HebTroCo.

The biggest problem our planet faces (including all the people who live and depend on it) is sustainability, especially as the consequences of human ignorance becomes more critical and the impact more severe. Public outcry for humans to have a less destructive presence has impacted all industries to make changes, including the fashion industry. The fashion industry is the second biggest polluting industry in the world, just after the oil industry. Fashion is responsible for polluting water systems by washing toxic chemicals and dye in to rivers and other water ways. It is responsible for large amounts of water consumption, mostly used for growing cotton with up to 20,000 litres of water needed to produce just 1kg of cotton. One infamous catastrophe is the Aral Sea in the Middle East where nearly the whole inland sea was dried up to water the cotton plantations. The use of synthetic fabrics results in the non-biodegradable micro fibres being washed in to the water ways and becoming consumed by wildlife and humans. On average, a family in the western world may throw away 30kg of clothing a year which ends up in landfill, with the synthetic clothing taking up to 200 years to decompose. Fashion's large network of global suppliers and manufacturers results in the fashion industry being responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions (Sustain Your Style, 2019). There are a lot more problems that are caused by the fashion industry, which have been acknowledged by HebTroCo.

HebTroCo's carbon footprint is extremely small due to their use of local manufacturers, suppliers and their use of the post office as a delivery system. "obviously you're not going to get cotton or the majority of the raw materials in the UK, so they come in from abroad but the manufacturing and shipping is local and we use the local post office, that's quite a good aspect." (Grant, 2019)

With the majority of clothing companies, stock and deliveries come with each garment wrapped in plastic to protect the item from damage during transportation. Even though HebTroCo do still use the plastic packaging from the first shipment they ordered four years ago, there is a massive effort to find more environmentally friendly alternatives. "We're looking at paper post bags, as well as biodegradable plastic but it takes time to find, I haven't found anything that's good enough yet, but we're still looking as it is a priority." (Grant, 2019)

Not only are the HebTroCo's choice of fabrics high on quality but they are mostly natural fabrics, "everything we're selling is either 100% cotton or 100% wool or 100% leather, so there's very little synthetics going in to the products" and to address the waste issue, "we're making stuff out of good materials so that it lasts a long time, if it goes wrong then we try to fix it for people." This results in less products being thrown away and encourages customers to prefer quality, higher priced clothes to cheaper, unreliable replicas found in fast fashion.

## Introduction

## Chapter Seven: Sustainability



# Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read my portfolio. If you wish to receive more information or references, feel free to contact me:

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