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Introduction to the Fashion Industry – FASH 101-02

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### The Retail Environment; The Bushwick Birkin

The retailer I chose to look into is Telfar Global. Telfar Global is brand established by Telfar Clemens in 2005. Clemens is a gay Liberian-American designer from Queens, NY. Clemens never had a formal fashion design education, instead he studied business management at Pace University in Manhattan. The purpose of his brand is that it is for everybody, because at the time of establishing Telfar, Clemens did not yet see people like him in fashion. He was able to create a community of creatives who see themselves in him. Today his brand is sold solely online, but can be found on his website, Telfar.net, and other retails such as: SSENSE, Opening Ceremony, and more.

Since they are only available online, most of their sales are through their e-commerce site. The site is very minimalistic, with a white background and black lettering. Meanwhile the aesthetic of the brand is much livelier. The target market will prove the life of the brand. The brand's motto is *NOT FOR YOU - FOR EVERYONE*, and the reason for this motto is because Clemens never saw himself in the industry. His brand is best known to be worn by creatives, creative people of color especially. The brand is labeled as unisex, so he wants it to be for whoever wants to wear it. After having scrolled through the brand's tagged photos on Instagram I know their target audience skews to the creative industry. Majority of his audience is also black people. This is likely due to the fact that this brand was made to empower people similar to Telfar Clemens and also because of some of the products sold on his site.

Telfar sells a wide variety of goods on their site. Products vary from clothing to jewelry, and other accessories. His products fit in well with his target market. Like previously stated a

good portion of Clemens' customers are black people because Clemens has said he creates for himself; he makes what he needs. Recently, at the beginning of 2020, Telfar released a durag and it would be problematic for someone who does not have the correct hair type to use a durag because it is a garment with meaning behind it. Another product that Telfar Global recently announced is a collaboration with Ugg. The pre-order was November 30<sup>th</sup> for one day only, but luckily for us, Ugg announced it as an ongoing collaboration, so we should expect more designs in the future. This initial drop included the iconic Telfar shopping bag in the material that Ugg boots are made of .

As mentioned, one of his most popular products is the shopping bag. This bag is a fairly structured bag made out of vegan leather and comes in a plethora of color options. It comes in 3 size options, small, medium, and large. It is inspired by the Bloomingdale's brown shopping bag. Although the shopping bag was first introduced in 2014 it has quickly become the brand's most iconic piece. 2020 has been the first year where the shopping bag is consistently selling out. Vogue described it as this year's ideal bag in an article titled, "[Scoop Up the It Bag of the Year Before It Sells Out Again](#)" by Rachel Besser due to the fact it is a carryall and perfect to wear to the grocery store or on a walk and hang a little hand sanitizer onto.

The reason the Telfar bag has been selling out quick is due to the fact that at each drop Telfar sells a limited amount to avoid any waste. Since Telfar bags have become more sought-after, the brand implemented a pre-order system that they are calling the Telfar Security Program. This program allows anyone who would like a bag to purchase one. This pre-order took place on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, allowing for unlimited pre-order for 24 hours, Telfar will then work on the bags with expected delivery being December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Telfar has yet to announce their next drop but continuously do small drops, I would suggest subscribing to their emails and following them on Instagram to keep up to date. These bags are constructed in Brooklyn, NY in a neighborhood called Bushwick. This neighborhood being the reason for the nickname Bushwick Birkin.

The bag is constructed out of faux leather and a twill lining that matches the color of the leather according their site. Unfortunately, I could not find too much detail on their production process or the materials utilized to make the faux leather. I tried just googling with no luck, and I also used the website Good On You that we had previously been introduced to for our last project. There is not a profile/ rating up for them on Good On You, I suspect it could be due to size of brand or due to lack of information available. I would like for the brand to release more information in the future. As for the production process, the bags are created in Brooklyn, NY and made to order. I suspect that since it is labeled as luxury then the bags are partially handmade and that is the reason why it also takes long for their drops. As for the working conditions in the United States there are many more laws and regulations protecting workers than in other countries. Due to this production costs are higher because there is a minimum wage in the U.S.

The bag has been widely successful this year, and according to [WGSN](#) in S/S 20 the trends for accessories would have a focus on sustainability and create leather goods with a long time appeal. Telfar Global's shopping bags hit both marks. The bags are not overstocked to avoid waste and the bags are simple and timeless. I think this bag will continue to have lots of success.

The bag prices range from \$150 to \$257. Many people label the garment as completely worth it especially compared to other luxury bags which are often thousands of dollars. This is an affordable and more accessible price point, while still providing the feeling of luxury. [Vogue](#) defined it as an "egalitarian answer to luxury." I have two shopping bags and I thoroughly enjoy them. I have had my black medium shopping bag since last winter and I use it as a school bag. The bag is incredible quality especially for the price point.

On the Telfar website, the bags are listed under the tab Shop > Shopping Bags. Under the tab is a long grid of the bag options the show small, medium, and large in the wide variety of

colors they offer. The site is very minimal with a white background and black type. The photos of the bags are very simple and match the minimalist look of the website.

In retail merchandising, you need the right product, for the right people, at the right time, the right way, and at the right price. Telfar has had a lot of success from their shopping bag and I think it is the right product for them because it encapsulates the reason brand well. The right people have definitely seen the bag and they have loved it. Clemens and his brand have built a following from the success of this brand which have allowed for his brand to really bloom in the past few years. The bag was initially released in 2014, and I would say that Clemens was ahead of his time by creating a unisex bag that anyone can wear and enjoy. He achieved this by doing it the right way and advertising his bags as everyday use. On their e-commerce site, the small bag is listed as perfect for the club and the after party, the medium size you wear to work, and lastly the large is your weekend bag. The brand painted a great photo for their audience and who they want as their audience, Telfar Global's target market is someone likely 20s to 30s who works in a creative field or has creative hobbies and enjoys clubbing and going out, but they have a job they are professionals who are constantly hustling. Due to the hustle, they may take weekend trips to help unwind and Telfar Global has the perfect bag for whatever situation. The bags are actually advertised as such. The small is called the perfect bag for the club and the after party, the medium is your work bag, and the large bag is your getaway bag. These bags are very well priced because Telfar Clemens was looking to make his brand accessible, so the prices are much cheaper than most luxury handbags. The shopping bag ranges from \$150 to \$257 for the large bag. Telfar Global knows their market well and have created a product is really suited for them.

Similar to merchandising, marketing also has 5 R's they follow; the 5 R's of marketing are real, relevant, reach, receptivity, and results. The reason Telfar has the success they do is because of their realness. They have always kept the brand true to them because this was the goal from the start. The content they put out as a brand is authentic. Clemens is always the

spokesperson for the brand; he is in campaign photoshoots and does interviews. The Telfar brand is relevant and puts out relevant content that reaches a wide array of people. Telfar Global is always re-posting their customers on their page and highlighting them. The fact that Telfar Global will go through and like the photos they are posting with their products. The audience is very receptive of this and are then more likely to want to share their photos of their bag because they may get reposted by the Telfar Global Instagram. Due to this, the brand is seeing obvious results. The media marketing side of this brand is reaching their target audience. Telfar Global currently has 390K followers on Instagram. On their Instagram they share photos and videos of Clemens, upcoming collaborations, and reposts of customers photos. They do a good job at connecting with their audience via Instagram. By Telfar Clemens sharing a bit more about himself on the brand's Instagram it really helps their audience and consumers to better build a connection to the brand and want to purchase more product. Their Twitter has less followers with 38.3K, but it makes sense since their audience tends to be more creatives and people interested in fashion, so Instagram being their bigger platform makes sense since that is where people tend to share their creative endeavors more. On their twitter they share more updates on bag drops and other new releases of brand news which allows their fans to stay up to date on everything Telfar.

If I were to develop a marketing campaign for Telfar I would highlight their saying, "Not for you – For everyone" I would love the idea of setting a scene similar to the last supper where we have Telfar Clemens sat in the middle and maybe some of the people in his circle also fill the table. Meanwhile littering the top of the table are the shopping bags in varying colors and sizes. This image could be used on their website, their Instagram, possibly a billboard in neighborhoods similar to Brooklyn. This image could be controversial and difficult to bring to life during this pandemic, but I love the idea. It would be taken in a big empty room, likely some sort of warehouse to fit into the Brooklyn aesthetic. I think a renaissance style of photoshoot would be amazing because a theme often portrayed in renaissance art is the rebirth of humanism.

Humanist beliefs always stress the potential, goodness, and needs of humans. Which I think this brand encompasses. The campaign would also have a focus on Telfar Clemens because he and his ideas have made the brand. A lot of people identify with Telfar Clemens also and he is the reason people are so attracted to the brand.

Telfar has been affected much differently than most retailers. Telfar Global sales are all online, so the shopping experience has not changed for their customers. As for the brand's life during the pandemic, according to the Business of Fashion,

In some ways, Telfar may be better positioned to survive than other still-fledgeling labels of its generation. The brand is used to running a lean operation. With an office in a set of stacked shipping containers next to an empty warehouse in the Bushwick neighbourhood of Brooklyn and only a handful of people on its payroll, all of whom have side gigs, Telfar has very low overhead costs. The business is also much less reliant on wholesale revenue than many of its peers, selling the majority of its bags directly to consumers via its own website. What's more, Telfar has a strong community of loyal consumers and collaborators, who are attached to the brand and its message.

I genuinely think this brand will do more than stay afloat during these difficult times because regardless of the recession Telfar's bags are still selling out. I personally have two shopping bags from Telfar. I have the medium black shopping bag and the small white shopping bag. I completely understand the hype behind these bags. I understand why people are so ready to support them and will continue to support. I cannot wait to see what more the brand does in the future.

Telfar is not for you, it is for everyone. Plenty of people feel underrepresented in fashion but see a piece of themselves in Telfar Clemens and his brand Telfar. The bag design overall is simple yet extremely effective especially during the pandemic. The bag is ideal because it can be worn everyday unlike statement purses that can have starting prices of \$10,000k. This bag has an affordable price range, starting at \$150, when compared to other luxury goods. There is

not much detail about their production or materials used online, but they do make their bags in small batches and made to order in order to avoid creating waste. The brand will continue to release bags because Clemens has stated that he wants to ensure anyone who wants a bag will get a bag.