

# Why Fast Fashion Is Experiencing Rapid Growth

## Article

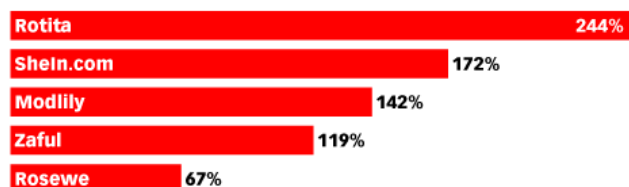
**F**ast fashion—design trends quickly and cheaply translated for the masses—has had a strong year so far. But unless you're a young woman who takes style cues from social media, many of the more successful online retailers in this space might be foreign to you.

According to a September 2018 [Hitwise](#) study that looks at fast fashion, mid-tier and premium categories, visits to fast fashion sites grew 20% or more monthly between March-

June 2018. Dress Barn, which has been **undergoing a stodgy to stylish makeover** over the past few years, was the fastest-growing brand by site visits in H1 2018 (241%). Fashion Nova, the influencer-driven brand **that's wildly popular on Instagram** was second (159%) followed by UK-based Boohoo (100%), teen retailer rue21 (85%) and Rainbow Apparel (58%).

#### Growth in Visits to Select Fast Fashion Retail Ecommerce Sites\* Worldwide, H1 2018

% change vs. same period of prior year



Note: \*includes pure-play digital retailers only

Source: Hitwise, "The US Fashion Report: Online Challenges & Tactics for Retailers and Brands," Sep 7, 2018

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With the exception of **Ascena Retail Group's** Dress Barn, these brands are all geared toward Gen Z and younger Millennials. One commonality among these brands is that they're size-inclusive. While luxury brands and **fashion startups** are increasingly called out for only catering to a minority of consumers, these on-trend discount brands are far more democratic.

Rotita, Shein and Roswe might not have the name recognition of ModCloth or Asos, but these pure play online fashion retailers—many in Asia—are some of the fastest-growing. Hitwise attributes their rapid rise to an increase in search spending on Google Shopping with bids on generic keywords like "fit and flare dresses" and "plus-size swimwear." Many of these Chinese brands that cloak where they are based also advertise heavily on Facebook and Instagram.

According to Andreas Reiffen, CEO of retail performance advertising company **Crealytics**, **fast fast fashion brands are using data from search for merchandising**, and not just looking at keywords in isolation, but classifying them on attributes like brand, product type and color to see if cropped jeans or yellow is trending. "If you do this across all your millions of keywords, you can then aggregate performance on attribute levels," she said.

Fast fashion's lead time is shrinking. Trends can now be translated to products in as little as five weeks and startups have been chipping away at that timeframe. "In the old world, if you saw a trend in your marketing data—sales were picking up, or search volumes were increasing—you had to predict if that trend would continue in the same direction over a long period of time," Reiffen said.

Of course, fast fashion doesn't come without criticism—from an **environmental perspective** for contributing to throwaway culture to copyright infringement issues with **designer knock-offs** and **indie rip-offs**.

The increasing popularity of **secondhand clothing**, apparel rentals and subscription services and **sustainable fashion** could be the answer to consumers' desire on-trend clothing with fewer ethical concerns, but it's hard to imagine that a young digital shopper on a budget browsing for a \$12 body-con dress would be swayed by a **minimalistic** natural fiber tank dress for \$120.