

# Expert Guide: How to source & manufacture

your range with  
sustainability tips

unzipped



# Looking to produce your first fashion collection? But don't know where to start?



Trust me, there are 4 easy steps you need to follow.

1. Firstly – what are your requirements?
2. Market validation
3. Sustainability validation.
4. Finally – how to engage them!

This guide will focus on giving you the confidence, skills and know how into sourcing.

Plus I will be giving you some direct recommendations.



## The Expert

**Carley Johnson.**  
**Managing Director Unzipped.**  
**Has worked in fashion wholesale for 10+ years.**

At the start of her career, she worked in fashion buying for both Miss Selfridge and New Look. Product development, and sourcing playing a huge part in this role. Her expertise is knowing what questions to ask and how to confidently ask these!

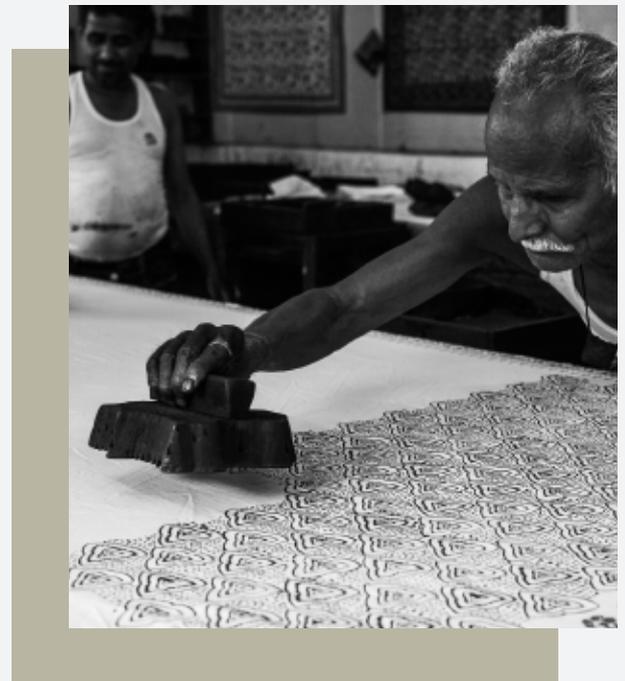
# What are your requirements?



## How can you successfully source, if you don't have your requirements written down?

You need to approach the factory or mill with your specific product requirements, leaving nothing to interpretation.

- Men's, women's or kids? Apparel, accessories or footwear? Then break it into the specific category; swim, t-shirts etc.
- Any you requiring a speciality technique? ie silk screen printing.
- What material are you wanting to use? List everything; trims, thread, lining & main fabric.
- What fabric composition are you wanting to use?
- What is the overall look and feel of the collection? Luxurious, sporty etc. Give a short precise description.
- Do you value quality or price?
- What is your required lead time? Production time.
- What is your expected quantity?
- What is your desired payment? Both method and time.



### A tip:

Go in there with conviction on your product. Never show them any doubt. You are selling you passion, vision to them, as the producers of this they need to be convinced.

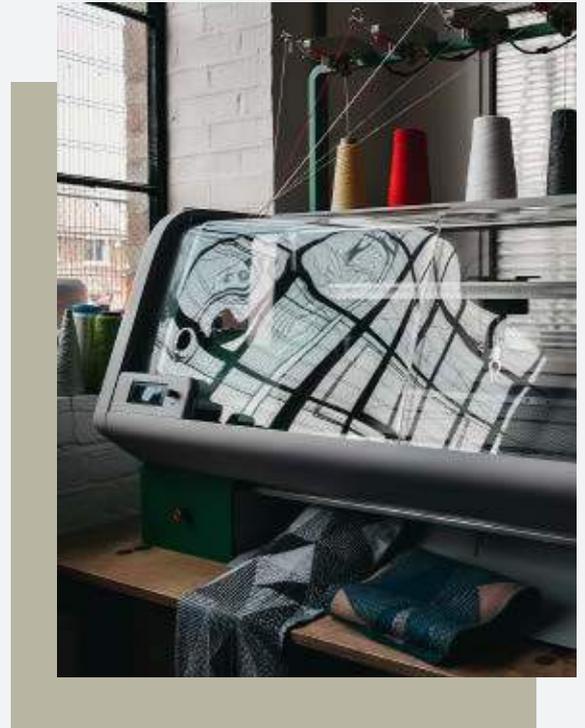
# Market validation.



## How can you find a reliable and reputable manufacturer?

Simple. By asking the below questions through the discovery phase, to each and every factory.

- Geographic location. Where are they located? Consider shipping factors like ports, airports.
- Volume - MOQ.
- Scalability. Can they support your growth?
- Cost of sampling. How many samples will you get?
- What are their fees broken down?
- Compliancy of the factory? Are they REACH compliant and what are their staff working standards like?
- Is there a language barrier?
- What is the lead time of your product type with them?
- Logistically, how able are they?
- Have you seen their work? If not request 2-3 examples.
- Ask them - can they make your product? Does it match their skills. Ensure this is an honest answer.
- Do they value quality or price?
- Who is best? Word of mouth in the industry. Check google reviews and forums.
- Run financial checks on the factory.



## When considering reputation vs price, consider this:

Your product is everything, without it you wouldn't have a brand to sell. I would recommend reputation.

# Read the Market.



## A part of market validation is being aware of trends within the industry.

Which countries are the biggest and most successful within sourcing? But mainly, who is doing well right now? Is a country declining in this trend?

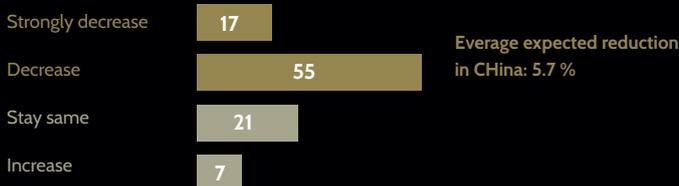
### I can recommend:

<https://www.quora.com/>  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/>  
<https://sewport.com/countries-with-best-clothing-manufacturers>

### For example; China is declining due to rising costs.

Chief purchasing officers plan to move some of their sourcing out of China over the next 5 years.

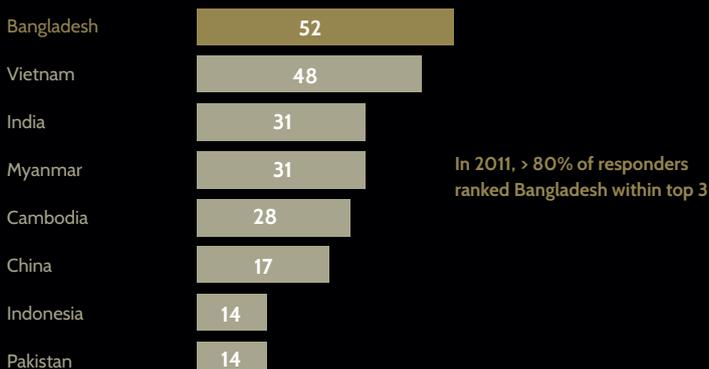
Expected change in sourcing share (value) from China in the next 5 years, % of responders, n = 29



### Bangladesh is growing, along with low-cost Myanmar.

Bangladesh remains at the top of the list of sourcing markets expected to grow in importance in the next 5 years.

Expected top sourcing markets over the next 5 years, % of responders ranking countries among top 3, n = 29



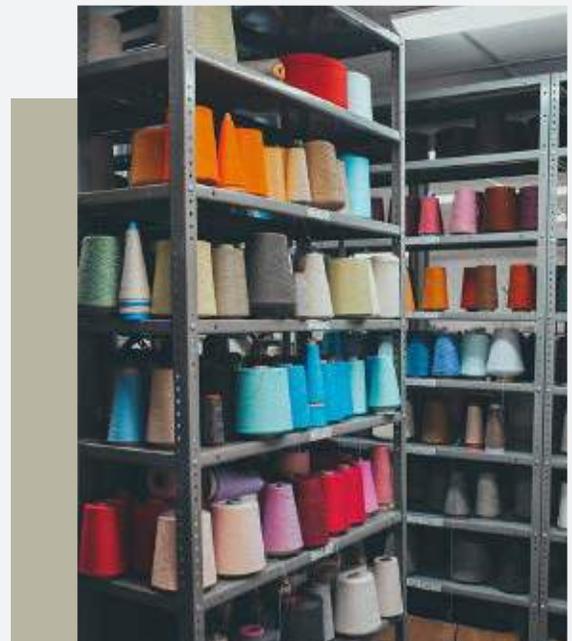
# Market validation.



## How can you find a reliable and reputable material source?

Simple. By asking the below questions through the discovery phase, when sourcing your fabric and trims:

- How mainstream is the fabric, trim? I.e. is it readily available like polyester.
- Has any other brand already bought that design or fabric?
- MOQ?
- Cost?
- Will there be any production difficulties?
- Is it bought from the market or made upon request?
- Lead time of the fabric, trim?
- Is it sustainable? Can they prove it.
- What is the fabric composition?
- Testing. What testing do they follow? Reference REACH.



## How to find the best quality fabric?

- Ask your manufacturer to show you different grade qualities of the same fabric?
  - Try and visit them to see the quality first hand.
  - A mill may not show you all qualities available if they have to post them to you.
- Give your source a fabric reference that you want them to meet. For example a bought sample.

## A concluding tip for Market Validation vs price, consider this:

You don't have to necessarily source separately. Your manufacturer may do this as part of their service.

# Sustainability validation. How to source sustainably.



Sustainability in fashion starts from designing of the product itself.

In addition, important factors are material sourcing, manufacturing process, who are involved in these processes and what economic and working conditions they are facing, whether it is transported across the world adding to carbon footprint, the end consumer usage pattern and how soon it is discarded, how well we maintain them, what happens when we dispose of them and so much more.

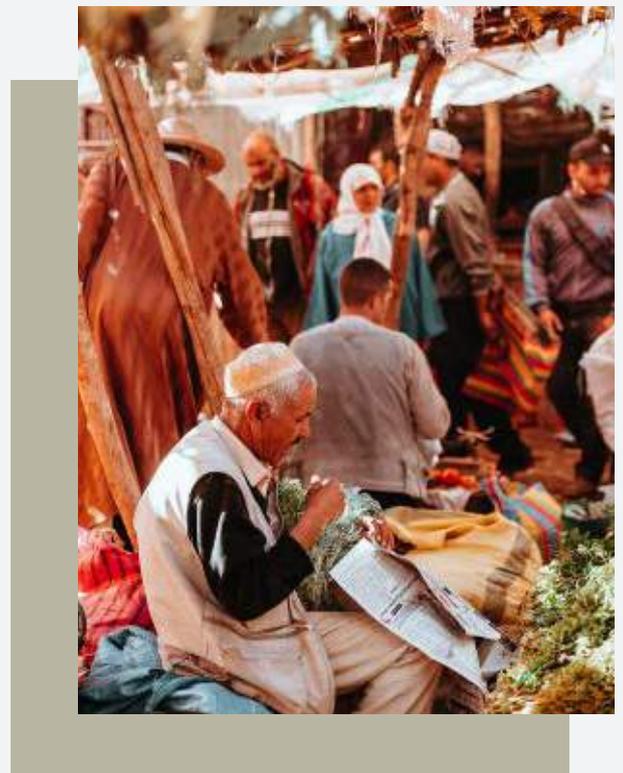
## Ask yourself:

- Do you want to source locally and give back to the community?
- Do you want to source globally?

Tip: global i.e. china; fabrics and trims will cost a fraction of the price of local, however the quality is not guaranteed.

## If you want to offer a sustainable range. Questions you will then need to ask manufacturers and material sources are:

- What fabric composition (%) is the fabric, trim?
- Do they have a certificate to prove it? (OEKO - TEX is world renowned)
- Are they REACH compliant?
- [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/cheicals/reach/reach\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/cheicals/reach/reach_en.htm)
- Are they Prop 65 compliant (California only)
- <https://oehha.ca.gov/proposition-65/proposition-65-list>



To be a sustainable brand challenge yourself to only order 1 sample, then go to into production. Sampling lots is not sustainable.

# An example how choosing to be a sustainable brand will inform your requirements.



## SLOW DOWN

By Aishwarya Iyengar.

<https://aishwaryaiyengar.com/slow-down-a-sustainable-fashion-collection/>

“In my collection, I could have used printing and other techniques to enhance the looks of the garments being a textile designer.

But I refrained from all of them and tried to be aesthetic and minimal without causing harm to the environment. I have used waste buttons, sequins, fabric swatches that go to companies for initial selection, from small boutiques and even from manufacturers. I have used thread tubes that have 5-10% of thread left in them and are thrown out as waste. A lot of macramé yarns and other jewellery trinkets used are not purchased and are accumulated from seniors in my 4 years of fashion college. I have also used sarees that have been pre-enjoyed by 2-3 generations.’

<https://aishwaryaiyengar.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/4.jpg>



# How to engage them.



## Firstly you must have your requirements ready!

### There are 5 methods you can try in finding the right source for your product.

1. Network and network more! Ask your network for recommendations.

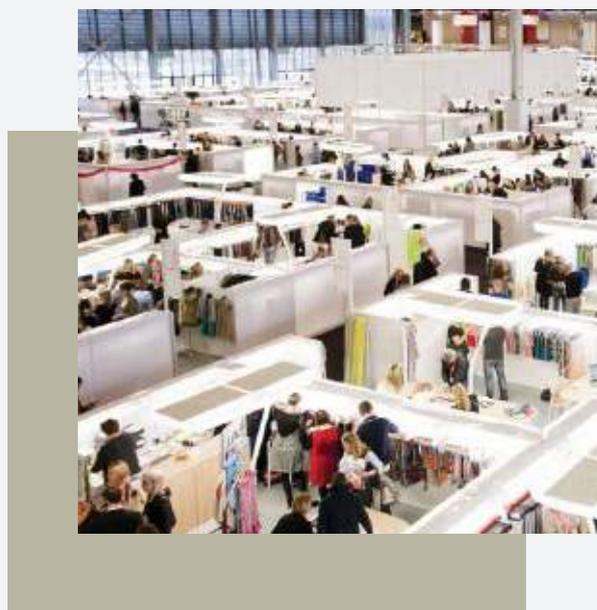
- Google. Hard sell – direct contact.
- LinkedIn. Who do you know? Ask for help.
- Email a brand whom you love their quality, ask them who their manufacturer is.

2. Recommendations.

- Speak to colleagues in the industry, and them to share their favourite manufacturers and mills.

3. Trade shows:

Here are some of the global sourcing trade fairs that you could attend: Premier Vision, Textfusion, Fashion SVP, Pulse.



4. Manufacturing agent.

Take the stress away and use an agent. Wallet size dependant.

- <https://www.elizabethstiles.co.uk/services>
- <https://www.bespocut.com/>

5. Online Directories.

B2B – connect your product with the right business through using one of the recommended platforms.

- Alibaba,
- IndiaMart.
- Kompass
- Lets make it here
- Sqetch
- Make it British.
- eWorldTrade,

Go in there with conviction on your product requirements. Sell them your vision.

# Summary of an expert guide on how to source & how to source sustainably.



**This is one of the biggest decisions you will make for your brand.** Your product is your DNA. Your product conveys the look and feel of your brand. Your product is your success. You can't afford for it to be wrong, bad quality or late.

You need to be confident with the choice you make. Therefore my final tip is; take your time and get it right. Don't overlook any of these steps:

- ✔ Validating my idea – does the market want it?
- ✔ Understanding the power of social media and how to use it to grow your brand globally.
- ✔ Most importantly, how to be a profitable brand and manage your cash flow.

## Unzipped Fashion Courses How to launch a fashion brand online

It's a full 6 module course!

### What you'll learn from this 6-module course:

- ✔ How to develop a strong fashion brand – even if you don't have an idea set in stone right now.
- ✔ How to eliminate financial uncertainties and ensure your brand will always stay profitable.
- ✔ What you should never do when marketing your brand before an online launch. I'll give you a foolproof checklist to help you plan for success.
- ✔ Where to find your ideal customers. I will also show you how your products can fill the gaps in the market.
- ✔ Say goodbye to guessing your pricing strategy. Learn how to effectively set your brand's pricing from scratch.
- ✔ How to generate quality business leads while positioning your line as a global brand in no time.

Show Me More Information