Apparel Manufacturing Outsourcing: Product Innovation Opportunities

by Vipin Goyal

In my [previous blog](#), I talked about how outsourcing has negatively impacted US apparel manufacturers. But interestingly, this same trend can benefit the US clothing design industry, potentially improving new product innovation by allowing for increased investment in design and development, and a stronger focus on ideation. Increased globalization and use of social media add to the trend, enabling global inspirations that can help the US remain a world powerhouse in clothing design and development. To make the most of this trend, companies must carefully plan and manage their investments.

US clothing companies that enjoy substantial savings from outsourced manufacturing are now able to allocate more to creative design and technical development of new styles using leading industry processes and best-in-class product lifecycle management (PLM) technologies. Executed correctly, this increased investment can help companies reduce design cycle time, react faster to changing trends and better manage market demand, allowing them to stay ahead of the competition.

There is also an opportunity to use the savings from outsourced manufacturing to invest in innovation, helping US clothing design companies become trendsetters rather than followers. While clothing design is often only associated with the development of new silhouettes or styles, it also includes color, graphics, print, fabric and manufacturing process innovation. Many leading apparel companies are now making significant investments in these areas, which means innovation can help drive sales along with trend-driven styles. A new fabric invention can lead to an entirely new clothing range; a new wash and finish technique innovation can lead to new range of denim clothing line.

To make the most of an increased investment in design and development, and to maximize the benefit of a bigger focus on ideation and innovation, US clothing companies must:

- Invest in PLM systems to store and manage material, color and product development data
- Harmonize PLM processes to support multiple design and development pathways
- Use the best-in-class PLM technology to tightly integrate technical material, color and construction innovation with overall product design and development

The outsourcing trend in US apparel manufacturing creates an opportunity for apparel design companies to apply increased resources to design, development and innovation. To maximize the potential benefit, companies must be sure to enable their creative designers with processes and technology that enhance creativity while thoughtfully managing product data and collaboration.

More Reading

[Apparel Manufacturing Outsourcing: Trends and Opportunities in the US](#)

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