

FROM VISION TO FUSION: LULUSAR'S EVOLUTION AS A SUSTAINABLE FASHION ICON

Saeeda Mehmood, Superior University
Muhammad Rafiq, Superior University

In the bustling heart of a city where fashion juggernauts reigned, there was an inconspicuous alleyway. Tucked away within this urban maze was a tiny studio where Azfar Hasan, an audacious dreamer, embarked on a journey that would change the narrative of fashion. His story didn't begin with elaborate plans or investor meetings; it began with a chance encounter at Lulusar Lake. Lulusar was captivated by the sheer beauty of the crystal-clear waters reflecting the snow-capped peaks. His belief in sustainability Lulusar Lake laid the foundation for an extraordinary venture. Fuelled by his vision, Azfar Hasan set out to create a brand that would echo the pristine beauty of Lulusar Lake. He envisioned a brand that harmonized nature-inspired designs with a commitment to ethical fashion. With minimal resources but boundless determination, he scoured local markets for sustainable fabrics and sought out artisans whose craftsmanship resonated with his ethos. The studio became a hub of creativity and purpose, each stitch woven with the essence dreams. The path to success was not without obstacles. Challenges arose as he sought to merge sustainability with affordability. The uphill battle to educate consumers about the true cost of fast fashion tested his resolve. He leveraged social media not just as a platform for sales but as a canvas to paint the story behind each creation.

BACKGROUND

Lulusar was founded by Azfar Hasan, who has been a pioneer in the fashion and textiles business and successfully runs one of the oldest buying offices in the region, Matrix Sourcing, which has served some of the largest brands and retailers in the world since 1992. Lulusar is a contemporary clothing brand that emerged in 2017 with a vision to redefine fashion by blending traditional craftsmanship with modern designs. By 2020, Lulusar gained recognition as a leading sustainable fashion brand. Their commitment to ethical practices and innovative designs resonated with a growing segment of conscious consumers. The brand's success also led to collaborations with mainstream retailers, further expanding their reach. The brand primarily focuses on casual and semi-formal wear for men and women, targeting the millennial and Gen Z demographic. Named after the picturesque Lulusar Lake in Pakistan, the brand draws inspiration from the vibrant cultural heritage and natural beauty of the region. Founded by a group of fashion enthusiasts with a passion for sustainability and ethical production, Lulusar was established on the principles of offering high-quality, affordable fashion while prioritizing social responsibility and environmental consciousness. Currently serving customers online across Pakistan, US, Canada, UK and Dubai, Lulusar also holds two concept stores in prime locations in Lahore and Karachi. Using state-of-the-art resources such as advanced pattern design technology and virtual 3D fit, and forecasting analytics, Lulusar has evolved as a data-driven company that pivots on customer feedback to provide a buying experience like no other. Lulusar have been pioneers of on-demand and sustainable fashion by creating a brand that strives to serve women of all body types, tastes, and preferences. By integrating every step of the modern fashion value chain, Lulusar manage an agile supply chain to prevent issues of overproduction and waste. This allows the brand to focus on quality over quantity. Currently, the brand is headed by Fawad Shah, who has strong design and retail experience in the industry.

The Challenges

Upon inception, Lulusar faced stiff competition in a crowded fashion landscape. The challenge was to carve a niche and differentiate itself from established competitors while maintaining the delicate balance between tradition and innovation. Lulusar faced multiple challenges at its start and some of them are brand launching, brand awareness, fierce competition, hiring suitable candidates, financial management and winning trust of customers. One significant challenge faced by Lulusar, like many sustainable fashion brands, was the higher production costs associated with their commitment to ethical and eco-friendly practices. This challenge directly impacted their pricing strategy, potentially alienating a segment of their target market looking for more affordable options. Lulusar struggled with balancing their commitment to sustainability and ethical practices while keeping their products competitively priced in an industry dominated by fast fashion. The higher costs of sourcing organic fabrics, supporting fair wages for artisans, and maintaining environmentally responsible production processes posed a considerable hurdle. To address this challenge, Lulusar made some decisions implemented a multifaceted approach:

Efficiency and Process Optimization

- a) They conducted thorough assessments of their supply chain and production processes, identifying areas where efficiency could be improved without compromising on their core values.
- b) Streamlining operations, reducing waste, and optimizing resource usage helped cut down on unnecessary costs without compromising quality or sustainability.

Education and Communication

- a) Lulusar recognized the importance of educating their consumer base about the true cost of fast fashion and the value of investing in ethically produced clothing.
- b) Through their marketing efforts, they transparently communicated the reasons behind their pricing structure, highlighting the craftsmanship, quality, and eco-friendly aspects of their products.

Diversification and Innovation

- a) The brand explored innovative ways to introduce more affordable lines without compromising their values. They experimented with new materials that were both sustainable and cost-effective.
- b) Lulusar also diversified their product range, offering a variety of items at different price points to cater to a wider audience while ensuring that even their more affordable options aligned with their sustainability goals.

Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations

- a) Collaborating with suppliers, artisans, and other brands allowed Lulusar to negotiate better pricing and access more sustainable yet affordable materials.
- b) Leveraging partnerships with like-minded organizations and influencers helped amplify their message and reach a broader audience, offsetting the challenge of higher costs through increased sales volume.

By implementing these strategies, Lulusar effectively tackled the challenge of balancing affordability with their commitment to sustainability. They maintained their core values while finding innovative ways to make ethical fashion more accessible, ultimately strengthening their brand and resonating with a wider range of consumers.

Strategic Level Decisions

Lulusar differentiates itself in the market through different aspects. The brand sources materials from verified ethical suppliers, ensuring fair labor practices and sustainability. Combining traditional textile artistry with contemporary designs, Lulusar offers unique and culturally rich clothing. It is offering high quality clothing at competitive prices, making fashion accessible to a wider audience. It's a dismal error right now and digital technology is helping Lulusar staying more close to the consumer and at the same time it gets a lot of feedback from the consumer and they incorporate into their product and into trend.

Target Market

Lulusar strategically targets urban, fashion-conscious individuals aged 18 to 35 seeking trendy yet culturally rooted clothing. Their clientele appreciates sustainable practices and values brands that prioritize ethical manufacturing.

Distribution Channels

Initially operating as an online-only retailer, Lulusar expanded its reach by opening brick-and-mortar stores in major urban centers. Additionally, partnerships with select boutiques and a strong social media presence have further expanded its customer base.

Technology

Lulusar always aspires to be an innovative and technology driven company. Their digitalized product development cycle helps them stay agile and adaptive to consumer trends with one of the shortest turnaround times for idea-to-shelf. They adapt smart technologies that help them create deep integrations across the value chain, develop accurate fashion forecasting, and produce quality products with short lead times.

Culture

Lulusar's team is young, dynamic and passionate to solve complex problems. At Lulusar, they are committed to a fun and progressive work environment to bring the best out of people. Ensuring equality and inclusion are ideals brand care about deeply. Lulusar believe in ethical treatment of all workers and employees, and take pride in everyone who contributes to their success. Quality promise, quality is never an accident it is always the result of intelligent effort. Lulusar spend most of their time and energy for good design and to achieve high quality. Every single detail from material to technique is thought through with obsessive attention.

Fabrics

With the continuous effort of Lulusar, endless research and a series of tests and trials, they were able to render a fabric that is unparalleled in quality. Lulusar curate products that are comfortable to wear and designs that are modern and fashionable. Brand ensures color fastness, keeping consumer's favorite designs as good as new even after several washes. Brand try and use materials which are innovative, easy to wear and easier to take care of it (Figure 1).

- a) Moisture wick
- b) Performance finish

- c) Sustainable
- d) Wrinkle resistant

Approach, when it comes to product quality, fit and comfort are paramount to Lulusar. Brand aim to provide comfortable fashion to all women thus keeping in mind a wide spectrum of body shapes and sizes. Lulusar is an exclusive and inclusive brand for women.

Women empowerment had a great impact on brand performance that embodies a culture of inclusivity. Lulusar lend a voice to women from all walks of life and create fashion for all body types, regardless of weight, height, or skin color.

Diversification: Lulusar is a team of individuals who are diverse yet unique and on the same wavelength. Making the consumer look and feel great is a privilege for Lulusar and they take it seriously. Creativity is at the heart of the brand, whether if it's with their trendy designs or their campaigns. Brand believes in a process of co-creation with their customers and creates product and experiences that are made for the consumers.

Distinctive Design Philosophy: Lulusar's success stemmed from its ability to infuse traditional Pakistani aesthetics with a modern touch. By collaborating with local artisans and designers, the brand curated collections that appealed to both local and international audiences.

Market Penetration via E-commerce: Recognizing the potential of online platforms, Lulusar strategically invested in its e-commerce infrastructure. This move expanded its reach beyond physical stores, tapping into a global customer base and ensuring accessibility to its diverse clientele.

Sustainability Initiatives: With increasing awareness about environmental impact, Lulusar took proactive steps toward sustainability. Using eco-friendly materials, implementing ethical production practices, and advocating for fair wages, the brand established itself as an ethical choice in the market.

Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty: Lulusar cultivated a strong bond with its customers through social media engagement, personalized shopping experiences, and loyalty programs. By actively listening to customer feedback, the brand consistently tailored its offerings to meet evolving demands.

While initially lauded for their unique approach, Lulusar faced challenges in scaling sustainably due to the higher costs associated with eco-friendly production. They navigated this by optimizing processes, increasing efficiency, and educating consumers on the value of sustainable fashion.



FIGURE 1
FABRICS & STYLE

Operational Level

Marketing Approach

Lulusar leverages social media platforms extensively to connect with its audience. Engaging content, influencer collaborations, and user-generated campaigns have significantly boosted brand visibility and engagement (Figure 2).

The brand actively promotes sustainability initiatives through campaigns advocating for eco-friendly practices, ethical sourcing, and responsible consumption. This resonates strongly with their environmentally conscious customer base.

Lulusar's strategic initiatives yielded substantial results:

Financial Growth: The brand witnessed exponential growth, with a steady increase in revenue year over year. Its online presence significantly contributed to this success, accounting for a substantial portion of sales.

Brand Recognition: Lulusar gained recognition not only within Pakistan but also internationally, earning accolades for its innovative designs and commitment to sustainability.

Sustainable Practices: By championing sustainable fashion, Lulusar not only attracted eco-conscious consumers but also set an industry benchmark, inspiring other fashion brands to adopt similar practices.

Customer Loyalty: The brand cultivated a loyal customer base, evidenced by high customer retention rates and positive word-of-mouth referrals.

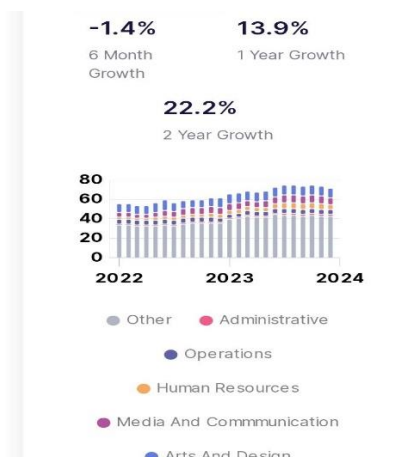


FIGURE 2
INFLUENCER COLLABORATIONS

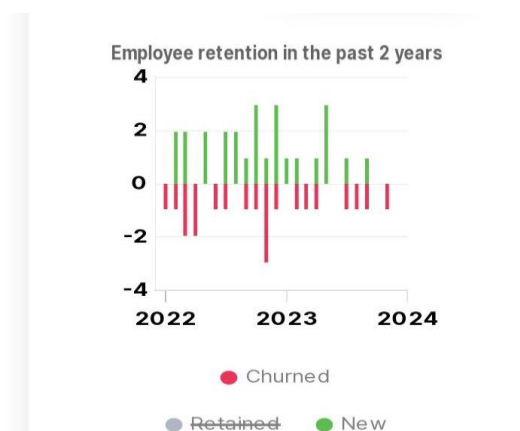
Reflexive Level

Employee Metrics

In total employee count, the six-month growth of Lulusar's employee is -1.8%, one-year growth is 13.9% and two-year growth is 22.2% (Figure 3 & Figure 4). Lulusar has experienced consistent growth, with annual revenues increasing steadily. The brand's ability to offer quality fashion at affordable prices has contributed significantly to its financial success. Beyond financial success, Lulusar has made substantial contributions to social causes, supporting local artisans, promoting fair trade practices, and contributing to community development initiatives in the regions it operates. When the brand started its business back in 2017, they were a total of 7 to 8 people, now the employee rate has increased to 130. The financial growth, employee rate and brand image of Lulusar has increased all over these years. This is all because of the strategic and operational decisions mentioned above.



**FIGURE 3
EMPLOYEE GROWTH**



**FIGURE 4
EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

Future Outlook

Moving forward, Lulusar aims to continue innovating sustainable fashion practices, exploring new eco-friendly materials, and expanding their global presence. They plan to invest in technology for sustainable manufacturing and further strengthen their brand identity as pioneers in ethical fashion (Figure 5).



**FIGURE 5
FUTURE OUTLOOK**

CONCLUSION

Lulusar's success isn't just measured in revenue but in the transformative impact it has made in promoting sustainable and ethical fashion. The brand's journey serves as an inspiration for businesses aiming to merge profitability with purpose-driven initiatives. Lulusar stands as a testament to how a fashion brand can successfully blend tradition with

modernity, resonate with socially conscious consumers, and thrive in a competitive market. By staying true to its core values of sustainability, ethical practices, and cultural appreciation, Lulusar continues to pave the way for a more responsible and inclusive fashion industry. Through its unwavering commitment to quality, design excellence, and ethical practices, Lulusar not only attained market success but also became a beacon of inspiration for the global fashion community. Lulusar's journey from a small startup to a renowned sustainable clothing brand illustrates the power of a vision centered on ethics and sustainability. By staying true to their values and adapting to market demands, Lulusar carved a niche in the fashion industry, inspiring others to embrace conscious consumerism. While initially lauded for their unique approach, Lulusar faced challenges in scaling sustainably due to the higher costs associated with eco-friendly production. They can navigate this by optimizing processes, increasing efficiency, and educating consumers on the value of sustainable fashion.

Received: 21-Feb-2024, Manuscript No. JIACS-24-14538; **Editor assigned:** 23-Feb-2024, Pre QC No. JIACS-24-14538 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 08-Mar-2024, QC No. JIACS-24-14538; **Revised:** 15-Mar-2024, Manuscript No. JIACS-24-14538 (R); **Published:** 01-July-2024