



Tracing garments through supply chains

The fashion industry has faced criticism over how its supply chains operate. Although they may want more transparency, brand owners and retailers have never had an effective way to achieve that. Change has arrived with a new supply chain transparency platform called tex.tracer. It gives brand owners the insights they need to act upon and with the click of a button report to all stakeholders. By scanning a QR code on a garment with their mobile, consumers can also trace the garment's history.

About the customer

tex.tracer is the brainchild of Bart Westerman and Jolanda Kooi who gleaned extensive industry experience working in China and Hong Kong, and both now run separate importing companies in Amsterdam. They had a mutual wish to make the industry more sustainable and since they both are parents to young children, the concern for environmental impact further increased.



Industry: **Fashion**



Location: **Netherlands**



People: **5**



Web: **tex-tracer.com**



Challenge

To bring transparency to the fashion supply chain and enable both brands and consumers to make educated decisions.

Solution

- Developed a transparency platform called tex.tracer
- Engaged Fujitsu for Blockchain development and future managed services

Outcomes

- Brand owners and retailers now have insight into their supply chains which makes them prepared for future legislation regarding compliance
- Consumers can scan QR codes in-store to check the garment's journey
- Ethical and environmental issues can be revealed and acted upon

Applying technology to supply chain reporting

tex.tracer Co-Founder and CEO, Bart Westerman and Co-Founder and CPO, Jolanda Kooi met 10 years ago and joined forces with a mutual wish to make their industry more sustainable.

"We became Fairtrade and Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified," says Westerman. "We were hoping that with these licenses we could contribute to the necessary changes in our industry, but it did not work out fast enough. Although the Fairtrade and GOTS certification process gave us a good insight into the supply chain, they are limited to organic cotton fibers, and it takes time to process the information through the systems in place. We thought with present-day technology it should be possible to track any kind of material and do it in real-time."

When they started drawing the outline for tex.tracer in 2018, they realized that it was something that should not be restricted to the supply chains of their own importing companies, but should be used industry-wide, and could apply to any other supply chains.

Comprehensive line-up of verification checks

The platform build started in 2019. In tex.tracer, information is obtained from brand owners when they register a garment and the system automatically emails companies down the supply chain. The data is verified using mobile geolocation, time stamps and digital handshakes, certification, and automated checks. If anomalies are detected, the system will not accept the data entry. An important part was that once verified, the data needed to be stored in a decentralized database that would ensure privacy, trustworthiness, and credibility.

Blockchain was the answer. It provides a public electronic ledger that can be openly shared among disparate users to create an unchangeable record of transactions with each entry time-stamped and linked to the next one. tex.tracer needed expert help and turned to Fujitsu.

Fujitsu has been globally active in Blockchain technology since 2015 when it was an early member of the Hyperledger project. This open-source community is focused on developing stable frameworks for enterprise-grade Blockchain deployments.

"Frederik de Breuck at Fujitsu gave us a good insight into the possibilities and how others were using Blockchain," says Westerman. "Blockchain is the basis of the whole tex.tracer structure. Once data is entered it cannot be changed. Even if a mistake is made you can add additional information, but the mistake will always be visible."



2,000

stakeholder interactions following soft launch

“There are many sustainability efforts from brands around the world, but the reality is that most consumers, especially in fast fashion, are not willing to pay the premium. Therefore, real change needs to come from within the industry, supported by legislation.”

Bart Westerman, Co-Founder and CEO, tex.tracer

Managed service for future development

The Fujitsu team in Brussels started with a five-day audit, then progressed to a 15-day paper-based road mapping exercise. tex.tracer was kept in daily contact as action moved to India where a development team built the core Blockchain platform with all the required cloud, internet, and security interactions. Fujitsu now has an ongoing managed service agreement for the platform and will support future developments.

Following a soft launch at the start of 2021, early users included 10 brands with 200 orders going through the system. With an average of 10 supply chain stakeholders per order, this amounted to around 2,000 interactions.

“We value our relationship with Fujitsu because they put our business needs first and then use technology as the enabler, not the driver,” says Kooi. “We see ourselves as the go-to transparency platform for the fashion industry and are keen to continue working with Fujitsu for the foreseeable future.”

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