

flexport.

 eGuide

# Runway to Runway: Flexibility & Speed for Fashion Through Airfreight

# Few industries operate at the intersection of speed and cultural cache quite like fashion.

What people wear isn't just a matter of function, but integral to identity and self-expression. Buyer tastes shift every season, and even multiple times within a season, which requires companies to anticipate consumer needs and maintain complex supply chains. Add in unanticipated events like tariffs and acts of nature, and the

urgency around timing becomes even more fraught. Airfreight provides several key advantages and allows brands to deliver goods quickly and efficiently to precise locations to take advantage of trends and create the best opportunities for success.

Let's dive in. ▶

# Speed That Doesn't Sacrifice Security

**Because seasonality is so key to the business of fashion, there are two critical needs that airfreight helps ensure: speed of delivery and product integrity. These elements go hand in hand, as there's not much value in delivering goods quickly if it means sacrificing the overall quality of products once they reach their destination.**

▶ A garment or item that debuts on a runway and becomes a new must-have for the season — or a striking costume for a character on a television show that goes viral unexpectedly — will need to be in stores as quickly as possible after that debut, with enough inventory to keep up with demand. The speed of airfreight provides the best possible solution to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Speed aside, airfreight offers unique shipping options for fashion clients, helps ensure product integrity, and reduces packing labor and materials. Garment on hanger, one of these shipping techniques, provides intact units with racking. For example, dresses could be pressed, put on hangers, and transported from the point of manufacturing to a final destination without additional preparation before reaching the consumer.

This combination helps companies keep things fresh, adjusting with seasonality to always be on the cutting edge of trends, giving customers what they want when they want it. And, product launches can be carefully calculated and executed in such a way that accelerated delivery helps avoid lost sales. Catching a demand cycle for the longest possible amount of time requires a method of distribution like airfreight, which can deliver impact on schedule.

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# Visibility at Every Level

## With every season, there's a change in manufacturing.

➤ Sometimes there can be up to 20 inventory turns a year—and the speed and attention to detail of airfreight is critical to that kind of execution.

The fashion industry faces a unique set of challenges: sizes, colors, patterns are all different, with an incredibly varied number of SKUs littered across a large number of shipments moving in a concentrated time period to fit with trends of the season.

Gaining visibility at the SKU level can unlock several key business opportunities, including:

### Identify best sellers.

While overall inventory visibility is key, SKU tracking in air freight can help fashion businesses identify popular items, re-order, and get units on shelves quickly. Without deep insight into SKUs and item sales, opportunities to take advantage of trend shifts could be lost

### Leverage inventory tracking.

SKU-level data ensures asset tracking at every level from manufacturing to point of sale. Based on this data, businesses can time new orders specifically based on need, resulting in more efficient supply chains.

That level of precision requires a freight forwarder that can not only provide the airfreight capacity to move those goods, but also provide detailed visibility down to the SKU level. With the right data, shippers can see demands increase in real-time, and make decisions to re-route and better deploy products to take advantage of quickly changing scenarios.

Being nimble in adjusting to changes like manufacturing location or regional destination also allows for adjustments in the final leg of a supply chain. As brick-and-mortar locations continue to contend with other methods of reaching customers, the product integrity and limited handling of airfreight lends itself well to feeding into direct-to-consumer or omnichannel distribution.

# Finding Flexibility

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➤ Another factor: Tariffs.

Because of growing consternation over tariffs and trade restrictions, more industries have looked to airfreight as a means of shifting production to other territories or transporting goods quickly before restrictions take effect. But when companies that don't typically use air begin to see it as a viable alternative, capacity tightens. As a result, industries like fashion that use airfreight more often and for strategic business needs, have begun exploring ways to diversify manufacturing locations.

As early as 2016, Eclat, a supplier for fashion companies like Nike and Lululemon, was already shifting production out of China<sup>1</sup>. Although not in direct response to tariff uncertainty,

this move positioned Eclat to continue reliable production as the trade war developed. Initially shifting production to Vietnam, Eclat has continued to expand into other regions. By relying on air, the company is able to operate with far more flexibility and agility.

In this current climate, it's even more vital to partner with a freight forwarder that can successfully deliver capacity across multiple regions. What's needed are key relationships with air carriers to ensure partners have priority even when other industries seek out airfreight as a temporary solution. During especially tight timelines, some forwarders can also offer the option of private service, with total control over capacity if necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> [Nike and Lululemon Supplier Pivots Away From Vietnam After Exiting China](#)



# Conclusion

**When speed and integrity of product is critical, airfreight is a natural choice. And, in a climate that is rife with uncertainty, airfreight offers more predictability and surprisingly competitive pricing.**

For a vertical market like fashion, the right freight forwarding partner can deliver key benefits through airfreight — speed, handling, and delivery range — to enhance and optimize a supply chain that shifts as quickly as consumer trends.

# About Flexport

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Through its Operating System for Global Trade, Flexport delivers a strategic model for global businesses that combines advanced technology and analytics, logistics infrastructure, and hands-on supply chain expertise. Delivered to customers and suppliers via a highly available and secure cloud software platform, Flexport's Operating System for Global Trade enables fast and reliable transit times, greater visibility and control, and low and predictable supply chain costs.

With its cloud software and data analytics platform, Flexport today serves almost 10,000 clients and suppliers across 109 countries. Its offerings span ocean, air, truck and rail freight, drayage and cartage, warehousing, customs advisory, financing, and insurance.

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