



7.7 billion dollars (2021)

7.7 billion dollars (2021)

20 million students enter college each fall, and year over year the market for college merchandise grows (4.6 billion in 2015 → 7.7 billion dollars in 2021).

All possible articles of clothing have been branded with college logos and mascots.

Rising Popularity

Wearing college merchandise became more popular beginning in the 1980s and 90s. Before then, merch came in only a few clothing items (basic t-shirts and sweatshirt), and was often worn practically rather than style.

A shift began in the 1980s and 90s with college merchandise becoming far more popular as a way to express school pride and the rising viewership of college athletics.

With the rise of social media, digital consumption, and marketing, these products have become increasingly popular. As with the Forever 21 example, many clothing companies (non-institution affiliated) have begun branding items with different university logos. Lululemon - athletic apparel, hype and vice - stylist/party clothing.





- Paying homage to her father's formative experience at HBCUs
- Uplift and celebrate them
- Wore for a large portion of the filming of her documentary/movie "Homecoming"
- "Casual, minimalist sweatshirt"
- Reminder of the "importance of Black-centered education"



“Diana’s casual clothing hint at the psychological complexity and her attempts to be seen and heard”

Dodging the paparazzi on the streets of London in 1997.

“Entitled but relaxed, respectable but famous”

“The sweatshirt’s mock neck is a bit too blobby and the sleeves too puffy”

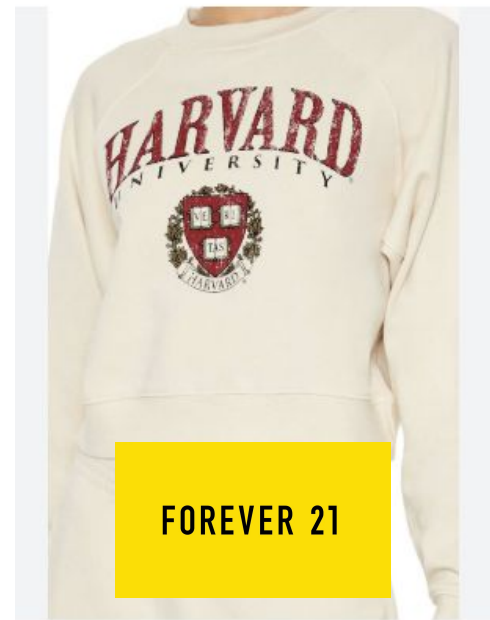
Options



\$70

THE
HARVARD
SHOP

VS.



FOREVER 21

\$12





\$70

THE
HARVARD
SHOP

VS.



\$12



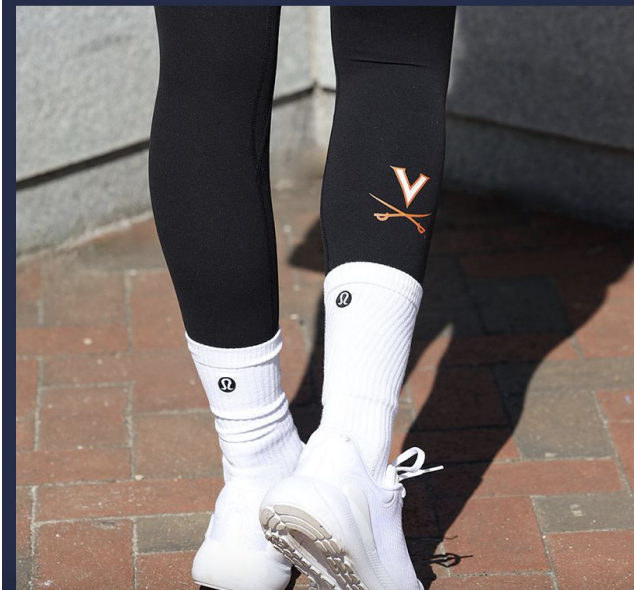
TRADEOFF

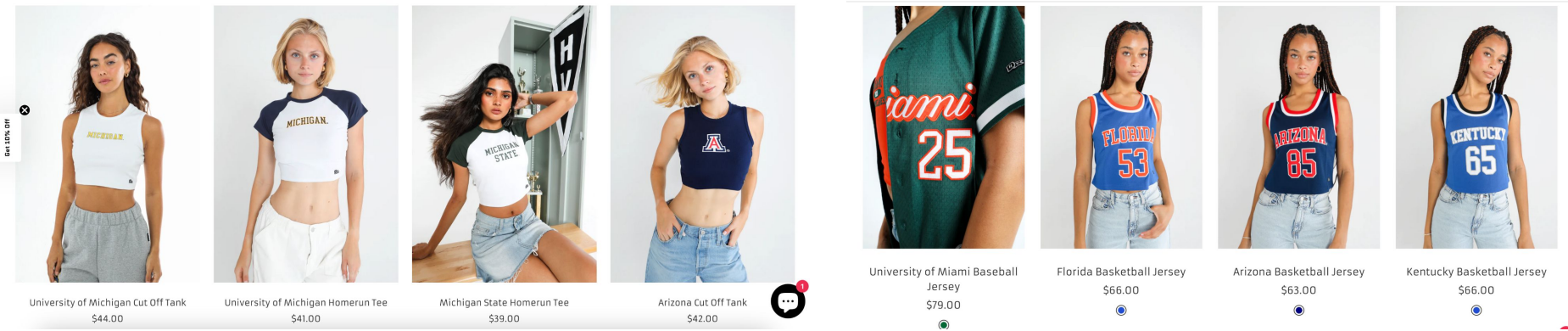
Extremely expensive merchandise sold by schools (sweatshirt sells for \$60-\$80) who know people will pay to wear clothing with their brand name OR

You can buy from chain stores (such as Forever 21), which sell these same items often between \$15-\$30, but many do not want to support the “fast fashion” and often unethical modes of production.

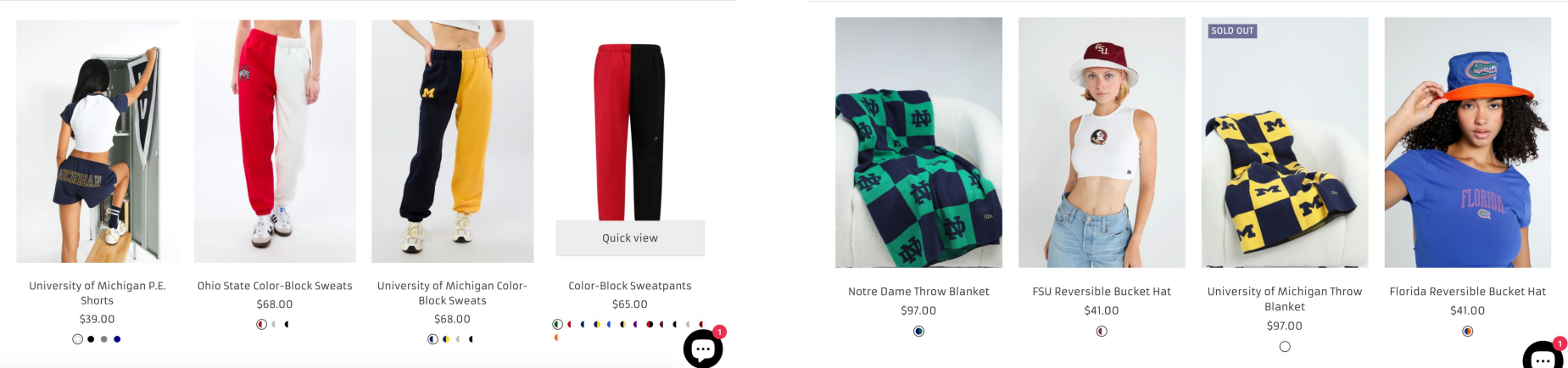
Malleable

L
U
L
U
L
E
M
O
N





Hype and Vice





Texas A&M Football

@AggieFootball · Follow



The #12thMan has spoken...it's finally here! 🙌

Get yours now: [👇](#)

[aggi.es/scriphoodie](#)

#GigEm



10:36 AM · Apr 1, 2021



672 Reply Copy link

[Read 124 replies](#)

Vintage

Old has become new again. Shop now [Show more](#)



Last edited 9:13 AM · Feb 4, 2024



37 Reply Copy link

[Read 2 replies](#)

Vintage Collections

MANY colleges have begun releasing “vintage” collections.

“Don the logos of an era most students can’t remember (or weren’t alive for?)”

Different options for logos and vintage options increases revenue (different words, mascots, abbreviations)... consumerism makes it a “new” item and many of these collections become “limited edition.”

And personally, I prefer many of these vintage styles: bolder cuts, stitched letters... etc.

College merchandise is able to follow current trends: vintage apparel taps into nostalgia, minimalist, and heavyweight material.

Means to “integrate” into
your college environment

School pride

Convenience

Belonging

For seniors to share where
they are attending

Tourist Purchase

Stylish

Unity

People can “see” your
college

Aspirational

Personal Connection,
Family Attended

Sports Fandom

Why people (may) wear college merch

“Private, selective, small colleges”

Class identity

Social connotations

Prestige

Which colleges are “worth it” to buy merch from/for?

It’s not that deep.

“American thing”

Attaching yourself to institutional history or priorities?

What can wearing this fashion communicate?

Considerations...

Attend/going to attend
the university



“Prestige” and legacy of
the college

State school vs. private
institutions

Geography (proximity
to where you live): SF
State or UC Berkeley, or
even Stanford and
UCLA?



What are your opinions on wearing college merch?
(No wrong answers)

Citations

<https://www.economicsreview.org/post/alma-mater-pride-inside-the-pricy-world-of-collegiate-merchandise>

<https://thebatt.com/sports/inside-the-rise-of-vintage-collegiate-apparel/>

<https://blog.richmond.edu/studentvoice/2008/03/21/college-merchandising-is-an-american-thing/>

<https://scrappyapparel.com/blog/university-spirit-wear/>

https://www.breezejmu.org/opinion/opinion-college-merchandise-is-becoming-too-expensive/article_ce8ce522-8a1a-11ec-8ca6-239722aef7f4.html

<https://machronicle.com/college-merch-style-statement-or-school-spirit/>

<https://fashionista.com/2018/08/college-merch-apparel-fashion-trend-2018>

<https://fashionista.com/2019/04/howard-university-sweatshirt-beyonce-homecoming#:~:text=Beyonc%C3%A9's%20ode%20and%20reverence%20to,formative%20years%20at%20an%20HBCU.>

Link to Notes document and sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tLZxSFjhZeMdWQC4uvxSrt7SCiJ9dEHHNBQx3JOKbW4/edit?usp=sharing>