

## 'A swipe at fashion capitalism': Telfar's experiment lets customers set prices

### Level 1: Elementary

#### 1 Warmer

- a. Is it a good idea to buy expensive clothes and shoes? Why or why not? Discuss with a partner.

#### 2 Key words

- a. Write the correct words from the wordpool next to the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

clothes

customer

decide

go shopping

price

- going to a store to buy things \_\_\_\_\_
- things you wear such as shirts, pants, socks, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
- how much money you have to pay for something \_\_\_\_\_
- make a choice about something \_\_\_\_\_
- a person who buys something \_\_\_\_\_

believe

discount

popular

reason

uniform

- a lower price for something \_\_\_\_\_
- something or someone liked by many people \_\_\_\_\_
- something that explains why something else happened \_\_\_\_\_
- clothes you must wear to work or school \_\_\_\_\_
- think that something is true \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

- Is the \_\_\_\_\_ always right? Some people are really rude to store clerks.
- My cousin's party is next weekend. I need to \_\_\_\_\_ for a new dress.
- Did you \_\_\_\_\_ which shoes you want to buy?
- At this school, all the children wear \_\_\_\_\_.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of many products went up during the COVID pandemic.

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- 1 Demi Elder, from Brooklyn, New York, owns 16 Telfar bags, a brand popular with celebrities such as Beyoncé, Lil Nas X, or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The brand's bags are very popular and new colours sell out in seconds.
- 2 On a Monday afternoon, Elder added to her collection. Instead of bags, she now found black T-shirts, shirts, and some other clothes. The majority of items sold out in an hour. Elder bought grey tracksuit bottoms for the price of 80 dollars, about 240 dollars less than usual, because of Telfar's "live pricing" idea, which is that the company lets customers decide the price.
- 3 They tried this with 29 new items at noon on 27 March. As customers shopped, the price increased in small amounts until the items were gone. When more people put the same thing in their cart, the shoppers get a discount. For example, those tracksuit bottoms normally cost 320 dollars. A few hours later, most of the clothing was gone.
- 4 Babak Radboy, an important manager at Telfar, said that this shows how much the price of clothes can change. Radboy and Telfar Clemens, who started the company, had the idea while they were working on a hoodie. They knew it could cost 100 dollars or 600 dollars for the customer.
- 5 Radboy and Clemens also understood that, at 600 dollars, fewer people can buy it. They wanted to make their clothes cheaper, so more people could buy them. This shows how much the fashion world puts high prices on clothes. It also questions why popular things must cost lots of money.
- 6 Rachel Tashjian, a fashion news director, said this kind of pricing is "just cool" and that it makes way for the most popular things to be the cheapest ones.
- 7 There are other reasons for Telfar to let customers choose their prices. It will help them understand what their customers want the most. "This will give us information about how much we should order," Radboy said. "And the larger the order, the cheaper it is to make."
- 8 Since 2005, Clemens has been fighting against the idea that fashion needs to be expensive. Clemens was born in Queens, New York. His parents are Liberian. He made uniforms for workers at White Castle, a fast-food restaurant, and had fashion week events at Rainbow Shops, a clothes shop. He believes what he says about his company: "It's not for you; it's for everyone."

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What does Telfar make?
2. What was the price of Demi Elder's tracksuit bottoms?
3. What is Telfar's "live pricing" idea?
4. How many different items were up for sale on 27 March?
5. Who is Telfar Clemens?
6. Who is Babak Radboy?
7. Why did Telfar try this experiment?
8. What's another reason Telfar lets customers choose the price?
9. Which fast-food restaurant did Telfar make uniforms for?

#### 4 Key language

a. Complete the chart with the correct form of the adjectives used in the article.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
popular	1.	2.
3.	4.	the largest
cheap	5.	6.
7.	fewer	8.

b. Use some of the adjectives above to complete the sentences.

1. Telfar's black T-shirt is \_\_\_\_\_ than their tracksuit bottoms.
2. Telfar's shopping bag is \_\_\_\_\_ item.
3. This is very expensive, so only a \_\_\_\_\_ people can buy it.
4. This shirt is too small. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ size.

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#### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss the following statements.

- "Expensive clothes are better than cheap clothes."
- "Fashion is for everyone."

#### 6 In your own words

- a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about fashion prices. Choose a piece of clothing you want, such as boots. Look for two items with two different prices. Compare the items. What's the same? What's different? Which do you want to buy?
- b. Report your findings to the class.