



PLM vs ERP vs Planning // Fashion & Apparel

In fashion and apparel, different enterprise systems play complementary roles. Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) focuses on design-to-production, ERP manages financials and supply chain, while Planning systems handle pre-sales, sales forecasting, and assortment planning. Below is a detailed explanation and comparison chart.

What PLM Covers in Fashion & Apparel

PLM systems are focused on the design-to-production lifecycle. For fashion and apparel, that typically means:

- Creative design: sketches, mood boards, CAD integrations
- Product development: fabric and trim libraries, tech packs, measurements
- Variants: colorways, sizes, styles (style/color/size hierarchy)
- Sampling & approvals: fit sessions, revisions, supplier collaboration
- Costing & sourcing: bill of materials (BOM), vendor quotes, landed costs
- Calendars & workflows: collection milestones, time-to-market tracking

The core goal is to centralize all product data, reduce errors, and speed up bringing styles from concept to production.

What PLM Does Not Typically Include

Most PLMs do not extend into:

- Pre-sales planning (showroom/line planning, wholesale forecasts)
- Sales forecasting (demand planning, predictive analytics, channel performance)
- Retail allocation or replenishment
- Financial forecasting or revenue projections

These functions are instead handled in ERP, Merchandise Planning, Demand Planning/Forecasting tools, or CRM/Wholesale platforms.

Where the Overlap Can Happen

Some modern PLMs (e.g., Centric, PTC FlexPLM, WFX) include line planning or merchandising modules, allowing designers and merchandisers to visualize the assortment and align with financial targets. However, actual forecasting, sales planning, and financial roll-ups are still better managed in ERP, BI, or specialized planning software.



Comparison Chart: PLM vs ERP vs Planning Systems

Functionality Area	PLM (Product Lifecycle Management)	ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning)	Planning Systems (Merchandise/Demand)
Creative Design	Sketches, CAD, mood boards	N/A	N/A
Product Development	Fabric/trim libraries, tech packs, BOMs	Limited (for costing)	N/A
Variants (Style/Color/Size)	Managed in PLM	SKU creation, inventory, supply chain	Assortment planning by variant
Sampling & Approvals	Fit sessions, supplier collab	N/A	N/A
Costing & Sourcing	BOM cost estimates, vendor quotes	Landed cost, purchasing	N/A
Workflow Calendars	Collection milestones, approvals	Production, supply chain timelines	Seasonal sales/assortment calendars
Pre-Sales Planning	Not typical (except line plans in some PLMs)	Not core	Yes – line/assortment planning, showroom support
Sales Forecasting	Not included	Financial sales data, but not predictive	Yes – demand forecasting, predictive analytics
Inventory & Allocation	Not included	Yes – allocation, replenishment, warehousing	Yes – channel-level allocation planning
Financial Management	Not included	Yes – accounting, finance, payroll	Yes – open-to-buy, financial targets