

## Rosalia Mera

From Paris to Spain

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Many women in business get their start and make a name for themselves through the field of fashion. There are a couple of articles about them in this series: Folorunsho Alajika, Tory Burch, Diane von Furstenberg, Sara Blakely. Rosalia Mera is one such woman, and Zara, the business she left behind after her death in 2013, continues to influence the world of fashion still. Thanks to the profits of her company, she was named Spain's richest woman and was the second richest person behind her ex-husband. Despite her divorce, Mera retained a 5.1% stake in Inditex, the parent company of Zara, and amassed \$6.1 billion in net worth from the company before her death at the age of 69.

The brand of Zara is one that many people know well. And it makes sense; the company has over 2,100 stores worldwide and boasts clients such as Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge. The company was co-founded by Mera and her ex-husband Amancio Ortega in 1964 in their small apartment in Spain. Both Mera and Ortega were working in clothing shops when they met each other and ended up falling in love with one another and marrying. The couple began making clothing for the clothing line based on Mera's dressing gown and lingerie designs in their living room and decided to try and shoot for a clothing business of their own. They intended to name the brand "Zorba" after the movie "Zorba the Great", but a local bar down the way already had taken the name. With "Zorba" already printed out for them to use on a sign, the couple decided to rename the brand "Zara". Since its humble beginnings, Zara is now a \$21 billion USD global franchise.

Mera and Ortega later split after the birth of their two children, but both remained involved with the company despite the divorce. But what made Zara great was not that they introduced a new fashion line to the world like Tory Burch, but instead revolutionized the fashion process for clothing stores. In major fashion hubs like Milan, Paris, Tokyo, and New York, designs could take 6 months or more to go from the catwalks to common-place store. Zara streamlined the process by getting the designs (albeit slightly modified) into their stores in 2 weeks. Stores all over the world modify the high-fashion designs to fit the wants and needs of the customers in their area, thereby bringing high-fashion to the common man and woman. The Atlantic best described it as Zara marketing itself as "affordable luxury".

Since her passing, Zara continues to market itself as a world-wide fashion and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Along with her work in fashion, Mera also invested in a company that developed fingerprinting kits for infants, and in a company known as Zeltia, which focused on researching cancer and providing pharmaceuticals. Zeltia has since been bought by Pharma Mar S.A.

*Word Count: 487 words*

*Sources:* <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/22/business/rosalia-mera-co-founder-of-zara-dies-at-69.html>

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