

Repositioning strategy for The Gap
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Midterm project
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The Gap Inc., founded in 1969 by Donald Fisher and Doris F. Fisher, has emerged as the symbolic American fashion brand, synonymous with casual style and timeless appeal. The company began as a story to revolutionize the retail industry, appealing to the youth with affordable stylish clothing and lifestyle allure. The name "Gap" was chosen by Doris Fisher, representative of the generational gap between baby boomers and their parents, this “gap” was the core targeted audience for the brand, the youth of the time. Capitalizing on the rise of denims and its cultural craze, the fishers created an atmospheric environment with their storefront that the youth found cool and resonated with while providing the desired jeans availability. The brand quickly gained popularity for its quality supply of denims, its affordability along with the addition of casual aesthetic that followed, expanding its reach with additional stores across the United States throughout the 1980s and 1990s. By the end of the 1990s, The Gap had solidified itself as an American fashion staple, providing the American casual style globally while appealing to consumers of all ages with its assurance of quality, timeless appeal and affordability driving its enthusiasm. The brands transition into the casual American fashion style resonated strongly with consumers, successfully transitioning from just the denim specializing storefronts into a retailing giant and leading influencer in the apparel markets. As the company continued to grow, so did its diversification into new product categories that carried the same morals and integrity that the brand was building.

The Gap has implemented a range of marketing strategies to engage with consumers and drive sales. The Gap’s branding efforts have been instrumental in shaping its uniqueness, from its early days in trying to attract and relate with the young adults it targeted, to its adaptation with its aging changing consumer preferences. Presently, The Gap has owned its symbol of classic, casual apparel appeal as it navigates the ever changing, rapidly evolving fashion industry. While

maintaining loyalty from its first targeted demographics, to the drive to seek out new consumers, The Gap's branding and marketing strategies have been effective in shaping the perception from society and the fashion world in establishing the company as a fashion powerhouse. With the expansion of product line from beyond the denim it initially offered, the revitalized product line now offers a wide range of goods that cater to the variety of consumer taste and lifestyles, not attaching itself to just a young adult core anymore but targeting a broad market inclusive of all genders, ages and tastes. The brand has advanced and created new approaches to attract and resonate with consumers as technology and media have advanced as well.

The Gap has adapted to the shifting preferences of consumers and their values, particularly regarding sustainability and ethical goodness. The company strives to be conscious of its materials and products, its workforce and the impact it has on Earth and humans, determined to create a better world and impact change through various methods. It has embraced the digital revolution and inventions of the internet and social media platforms to reach a global demographic while adapting to consumer preferences and behaviors to resonate strongly with their marketing. The timeless appeal of their essentials and wardrobe staples will continue to be prioritized to align its wide-ranging consumer preferences, reflecting its commitment to provide quality, style, reliability and comfort for men, women and children at reasonable prices. The company is constantly looking to innovate and not stay stagnant, continuously exploring new products, materials, technologies, and manufacturing processes that can enhance the quality, performance, and sustainability of its products while providing the best customer shopping experience possible. The Gap has encouraged repeat business from its loyal consumers through its many years while also encouraging old and new customers to explore its diverse product offerings.

The Gap has evolved into a global retail powerhouse, with a presence worldwide and a diverse product catalog spanning apparel, accessories, and personal care for all ages and preferences. However, recently the brand has faced challenges in maintaining its relevance amidst shifting consumer preferences and intensifying competition within the fashion industry. Gap still stands as a symbol of American casual wear, capitalizing on its classic designs and commitment to quality diversified with its good, better and best narrative through Old Navy, The Gap and Banana Republic in addition to its athleisure brand Athleta but the growing competition within the industry has challenged its status and outlook. Despite its legacy, the changing landscape of the fashion industry has presented challenges and setbacks demanding a reassessment of its business model and marketing strategies to regain its prominence. With the rise of e-commerce, the evolution of fast fashion and competitive nature of the industry with growing competitors such as H&M, Zara, Uniqlo and even SHEIN, The Gap has to reassess its strategies to continue to appeal and win over consumers with numerous options.

In creating a reposition strategy, The Gap must address the ever-changing consumer preferences and the increase competition that has entered the market that has led to a decline in sales and weakening brand importance. The Gap's branding and story has become outdated, struggling to connect with the youth of modern fashion, viewed as a brand lacking innovation and relying on nostalgia from its first core targeted audience. With social media outlets, The Gap has lacked the innovation and implementation of modern marketing approaches that have helped other competitors in capturing consumers attention and relatability. While the integrity and morals behind The Gap appeals to modern consumers, other brands have implemented their strategy to also promote authenticity and appeal to consumer preferences with their marketing.

The importance of digital marketing, sustainability and inclusivity is crucial to retaining a competitive edge in this challenging market.

Analyzing its competitors can show avenues for improvements and insights into strategies that have worked for rivals. Zara, known for its fast fashion model that emphasize speed and conveying latest fashion trends within its retail stores promptly has revolutionized the industry. With their frequent product turnovers, continuous changing of products and styles, Zara appeals to consumers who seek the latest fashion trends with competitive affordable pricing. SHEIN has evolved the e-commerce shopping experience by offering products that are similar to notable fashion brands but with lower pricing sacrificing quality. H&M offers a range product catalog for consumers of all ages. They have gained consumer appeal by highlighting sustainable efforts with their products while also capitalizing off fast fashion models. Uniqlo has appealed to consumers with its focus on simple functional clothing valuing quality and innovations such as Heat tech and AIRism technological apparel. Their products provide durable, versatile clothing with modest aesthetic appeals that thrives off simple, functionality and affordability.

The Gap should redefine its targeted demographic to highlight the youth core that initially made the company thrive. While the family approach and focusing on the aging core audience as well as their kids has created a bigger market, investing into the young adults' group who value diversity with their fashion choices can be a great approach. Refocusing on Gen Z and millennials and their consumer preferences can instill a new sense of energy into the brand has become outdated with its transition to accommodate to its aging once targeted audience. As this new generation continues to use social media and the evolution of digital media, The Gap must also invest into adapting its marketing to target the youth on the social media apps they use enthusiastically, creating advertisements and marketing that uses social celebrities that they can

relate to and revitalizes the brand. Collaborating with trendy designers or using partnerships with young celebrities like musicians, athletes and even social media influences the likes of Taylor Swift, Mr. Beast or Kai Cenat could possibly draw interests from the young fans who follow these individuals.

The brand's core values of inclusivity and affordability has resonated with a broad audience worldwide. Showcasing diversity through models of different ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and body types can emphasize its values of inclusivity and reflect the diversity of its consumers to easier resonate. Like previous marketing strategies using celebrities like Madonna and Missy Elliot in one message, the brand should recreate a similar version with modern celebrities to reflect its cultural importance. The brand narrative should emphasize its values of inclusivity, sustainability, affordability and the American lifestyle it has advanced on. The brand and its marketing strategies should emphasize the value of individuality, uniqueness and creativity through its products and marketing, relating with the evolving consumers of today. As the American casual lifestyle staple it has become, the branding should also evolve with the different lifestyles that now exists within society, valuing each and every one to reverberate with consumers of today. Digital platforms and social media outlets must be innovatively used to engage with consumers directly, expanding on the ecommerce shopping experience while showcasing promotions or ads.

With the expansion of the company into various outlet, The Gap has possibly overextended its reach in the market and needs to consolidate its business. The strategy would merge Banana Republic with The Gap, to only provide the best and better options for consumers with Old Navy and The Gap to promote even better quality and give less options that may have overwhelmed consumers. It can implement easier shopping measures for customers, while

continuously monitoring consumers preferences and insights to realize new trends and apparel that appeals to fashion forward consumers while also showcasing their classic attires.

Additionally, appealing to environmentally conscious consumers of today and aligning with their contemporary values can be implemented through the use and promotion of eco-friendly materials and ethical and sustainable working practices. The Gap can gain knowledge from its competitors to appeal better with consumers. Learning from what's working for its competitors can highlight opportunities to innovate, differentiate and regain its front-runner market positioning. The brand can focus on its strengths, such as the bringing back the famous Gap wall of casual wear and sweats that can accommodate the casual American lifestyle of today's consumers. It can preview upcoming product creations virtually, allowing for consumers to have inputs should as color pallets used or even collaborators to partner with to better reflect current consumer taste. It can promote new marketing avenues through pop up shops with new collaborators to showcase new products, new initiatives that create a sense of community awareness.

Implementing the repositioning strategy must start with leadership of the company and the employees that work for it. Providing new training courses that teaches the core values of the company and also the importance of customer servicing and value of the customer experience that's experienced in the stores and even online. The company should highlight significant changes that promote inclusivity, sustainability approaches and innovative technological implementations. Trendy and new collaborations with socially important figures should be inclusive of all sizing options to accommodate the growing consumer base. Marketing campaigns that communicate the refocused narrative should use a mix of traditional advertising, digital and social media outlets with the use of wide-ranging celebrities, musicians, athletes and

influencers that reflect the wide range of customers it can resonate with. The Gap can reposition itself as a modern exemplar of the American culture, embracing trends and consumer preferences that can stand out in the competitive fashion industry. Embracing the digital transformation of marketing, The Gap can better engage with consumers in meaningful ways through its product and brand messaging that can build a stronger brand community representative of diversity and values of its audience.

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