


ADVERTISING **STRATEGY**



GAP

I completed or
contributed to the
following pages of this
group project.



Situation Analysis

Product Analysis

Product attributes, pricing, and distribution:

Gap sells a wide variety of clothing in street-casual and business-casual style. Many of the products can be bought in several different colors and can be bought in XXS-XXL sizes. According to their website, Gap has a mid-range price for their products, ranging from about \$40 to \$80, generally. Gap offers clothing for a wide range of consumer segments, including men, women, and children through its various brands which consists of Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy and Athleta. The majority of GAP consumers are in the United States, but the number of consumers varies by region. Gap offers clothing for both colder and warmer climates, accounting for multiple climates and seasonal variations. Gap takes into account these regional preferences when determining product assortments and marketing strategies.

As for Gap's expenses and profit margins, Gap had \$15.8 billion in expenses (Statista, n.d.) and a net profit margin of .715% in 2022 (Hoovers, n.d.). Regarding distribution, their products are available both in store and online, and customers also have the option of ordering online and picking up the product in a store. Most of Gap's brick-and-mortar stores are located in mall centers in the US. Additionally, Gap Inc. sells its products internationally through its online stores and has physical store locations in Latin America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The Gap brand currently has no physical store locations in Europe.

Situation Analysis

Product Analysis

Brand Positioning and Marketing:

Gap's brand is positioned as a mid-priced retailer with quality, but still affordable, clothing. Gap also positions themselves as having casual style clothing for men, women, and children. Gap has brands positioned towards different wealth and economic conditions of regions. For example, Gap positions their Banana Republic store as higher-end and higher priced. Gap also has the Old Navy brand, which is positioned as a more budget-friendly option. Athleta is positioned towards consumers looking for athletic and athleisure clothes.

Gap had \$1 billion in advertising expenses in 2022 (Hoovers, n.d.). Gap advertises through a wide range of traditional, digital, and social media. For example, Gap has an Instagram account, @gap. Their Instagram account has 3 million followers. In their recent fall 2023 campaign, they are marketing their "icon" products, which are clothes redesigned from popular past clothing items. Their campaign is centered around recreating older campaigns from their past to match the "nostalgic" theme of the product line (Deyo, 2023). The campaign featured a mix of traditional and digital media with billboards, a promotional video on Gap's YouTube channel, and partnering with content creators on social media platforms such as TikTok. The campaign featured celebrities and influencers of many different ages.

Gap is currently aligning themselves with generation Z using social trends. Recent messaging with the "Generation Good" marketing campaign focuses on "acting on the shared values of inclusion, diversity, sustainability and community" ("Gap's messaging aligns with gen Z's purpose-driven identity", 2022). Gap has also involved themselves with the social justice movement by donating \$200,000 to the non profit organization Fifteen Percent Pledge. This organization encourages retailers to have 15% of their shelf space reserved for black owned businesses ("Gap's messaging aligns with Gen Z's purpose-driven identity", 2022). Additionally, Gap has partnered with ThredUp, an online consignment and thrift store in a Resale-as-a-Service program (Gap Inc., 2020). In exchange for reselling Gap clothing through the program, customers receive shopping credit for Gap.

Situation Analysis

Competitive Analysis

Direct Competitor: Product attributes, pricing, sales and distribution

Abercrombie & Fitch is a direct competitor of Gap. They are, similarly, a long-standing retail chain that can be found in malls across America. In 2022, they had 75% brand awareness among US consumers, however about 15% reported that they used the brand (Statista, 2022). Like Gap, they also sell casual clothing for men, women, and children. They are a multi-brand, omnichannel retailer as well and the company owns the Hollister brand, which accounted for about 57% of the company's sales as of 2022 (Statista, 2023). They have mid-range prices, with the average clothing item costing around \$40-\$80. According to Hoover's company profile of Abercrombie & Fitch, they had a net profit margin of 3.046% in 2022. They also had net sales of 3.7 billion in 2022 and had a 4% increase in sales in the US compared to 2021, however an 11% decrease in international sales. Abercrombie & Fitch had a market value of \$2.84 billion and had \$2.69 billion in assets as of January, 2023 (Hoovers, n.d.). Customers can purchase in store or online, and can also order online and pick up in store and do cross-channel returns. Customers also have the options of reserve-in-store, ship-from-store, and order-in-store. They have stores located in North America, Europe, and Asia. They had 233 stores worldwide as of 2022, down from 379 as of 2015 (Statista, 2023).

Situation Analysis

Competitive Analysis

Direct Competitor: Company History, mission, brand positioning and marketing

Abercrombie & Fitch was started in 1892 and began by selling outdoor equipment for the upper class. The company was bought by The Limited, who converted Abercrombie and Fitch into a clothes retailer. The company was initially positioned as a clothing store for young adults and college students, however several controversies surrounding the brand's products, marketing campaigns, and corporate culture resulted in them repositioning themselves as a more mature, casual brand. Their current headquarters are located in New Albany, Ohio, and Fran Horowitz is the current CEO.

The company has the mission of becoming the world's leading omnichannel and digitally-led clothing retailer (Hoovers, n.d.). On their website, their purpose is stated as: "every day should feel as exceptional as the start of a long weekend: comfortable, confident, stress-free – together." Abercrombie & Fitch advertises through both digital and social media, and their advertising expenses were \$189.3 million in 2022 (Hoovers, n.d.). They have an instagram, @abercrombie. Their recent 2022 campaign, called "Abercrombie Today," focused on the brand's commitment to diversity and inclusion and "reintroducing" the company to consumers (Wightman-Stone, 2022). The campaign was primarily promoted through social media and in their stores.

Situation Analysis

Competitive Analysis

Indirect Competitor: Product attributes, pricing, sales and distribution

Thrifting clothes as an alternative to buying new clothes has risen in popularity, especially among younger consumers. Because of this, resale apparel retailers have become indirect competitors to companies like Gap. Lower prices and an increasing emphasis on sustainability has contributed to the rising trend of thrifting. In fact, second-hand shopping is predicted to grow by 127% by 2026, which is three times faster than the overall clothing market (Quick, 2023).

One of these companies is ThredUp, an online consignment and thrift store. ThredUp sells womens and kids clothing and accessories. They have lower to mid-range prices, with many pieces ranging from about \$20-\$50. Customers can also buy second-hand designer clothing and accessories from their website, and they also have the option to shop by specific brands. In exchange for mailing in used clothing, customers receive cash or store credit.

ThredUp has developed their own recognition technology that scans clothing and determines if they are in sellable condition and their resale value (Segran, 2021). Additionally, ThredUp has custom machinery and processes that makes each item they receive easily identifiable and accessible when it is purchased. ThredUp also personalizes the shopping experience by offering customers a quiz prior to shopping (Segran, 2021). They currently have distribution centers in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, Phoenix, Arizona, Suwanee, Georgia, and Lancaster, Texas. They had \$288.4 million in sales, \$319.6 million in assets, and \$422.4 million in market value in 2022 (Hoovers, n.d.).

Situation Analysis

Competitive Analysis

Indirect Competitor: Company History, mission, brand positioning and marketing

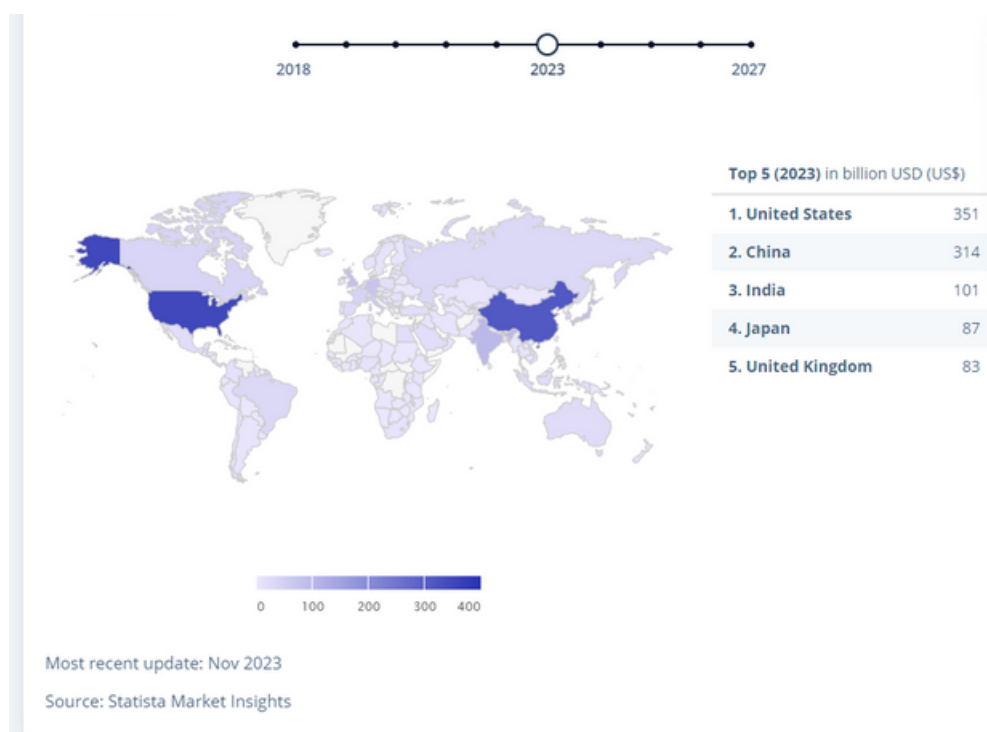
The website was started in 2009 by CEO James Reinhart. Reinhart started the company in order to make it easier for people to sell their used clothes, as well as address the problem of increasing textile waste (Segran, 2021). According to their website, they have the mission of increasing second-hand shopping and reducing clothing waste.

Currently, ThredUp partners with Gap in a Resale-as-a-Service program, where customers can exchange Gap clothes for store credit. ThredUp has a similar program with many other brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch, J. Crew, Reformation, Pacsun and Madewell (“Thredup Resale-as-a-service”, n.d). About 5 million items have been processed through these programs (“Thredup Resale-as-a-service”, n.d). Much of their advertising and marketing is through social media and partnering with influencers and content creators. A recent campaign encouraged influencers and social media users to share outfits with thrifted clothing using “#secondhandfirst”.

Situation Analysis

Market Analysis

Regarding the global apparel market, the US generates the highest revenue, which was \$351.4 billion in 2023, according to a report by Statista. China has generated \$314 billion worth of revenue in 2023, which is the second highest globally. India is the third highest, generating \$101 billion, followed by Japan, who generated \$87 billion, and the United Kingdom, who generated \$83 billion (Apparel, n.d.).



Apparel - United States. (n.d.). Retrieved December 04, 2023, from <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/apparel/united-states>

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Gap has high brand awareness and brand equity, which can help to attract customers to their store and also encourage repeat purchases. This also helps to drive sales and generate revenue.
- Gap has multiple brands that have different target audiences and meet different consumer needs, granting them a wider potential consumer base.
- Gap is an omnichannel and global retailer with international locations and options to shop online, in-store, or order online and pick up in-store. These many options attract a broader range of consumers depending on shopping preferences and geographical location.
- Gap has robust advertising and marketing, with \$1 billion being spent on advertising in 2022. They also have a strong social media presence and often collaborate with many celebrities and influencers, which increases brand awareness and contributes to brand equity.
- In regards to their products, Gap offers quality products at reasonable prices. They also carry a wide variety of clothing for men, women, and children, and offer a wide range of sizes for most of their clothing. This can attract customers and encourage repeat purchases.

Weaknesses:

- Gap sales have been declining. There was a percent decrease in sales between the year 2021 and 2022. This decline has led to store closures and restructuring efforts. Weak sales can be attributed to changing consumer preferences, increased competition, and the impact of e-commerce.
- Gap has a significant number of physical stores, which posed challenges as consumer shopping habits shifted more towards online shopping. Having to pay rent for stores and to employ workers is an expense the company has to consider when noticing how consumers are now leaning more towards online shopping.
- Gap, Inc. faces competition from various retail segments, including fast fashion brands, luxury retailers, and e-commerce giants. The competitive landscape requires the company to differentiate itself effectively, which it has done a poor job of doing.
- The company had to address challenges in customer retention and brand loyalty, especially after consumers realized the unethical sourcing of their labor. The lack of transparency has led to consumers losing trust in the brand.

SWOT Analysis

Opportunities:

- Gap could increase efforts towards sustainability and incorporate their efforts into marketing campaigns, which would broaden their potential consumer base and attract new consumers.
- Gap could also incorporate more plus-sized models in their campaigns and expand their range of clothing sizes, which would broaden their potential consumer base and go along with current social trends.
- New technological trends, such as AR and AI, and marketing technology could be utilized to personalize the shopping experience, attract new consumers, and increase sales while keeping up with current industry trends.
- A majority of Gap's sales occur in the US, so focusing on global markets could increase sales and revenue, and increase brand awareness internationally.
- Social commerce and livestream shopping through social media platforms such as Instagram could be utilized to increase sales while keeping up with industry trends.
- Since many consumers are choosing to shop online instead of in-store, Gap could focus marketing efforts towards their online store and purchasing their products online to increase sales.

Threats:

- Gap is and has been susceptible to economic fluctuations such as Covid-19 causing a sharp decline in sales. Inflation is also not good in the retail industry as this means less disposable income for customers to spend at Gap.
- Gap has very strong competitors such as Abrecrombie & Fitch, but also faces the problem of cannibalization from their parent company brands like Old Navy and Banana Republic. It's not just big retailers they have to worry about as the digital age of retail has allowed almost anyone to sell clothing.
- Gap faces the progressively evolving technology industry that has increased digital retailers. Their traditional brick-and-mortar locations will not be as effective.
- Consumer preferences are constantly changing and staying up to date with the latest fashion trends is much more difficult for large retailers because it is much harder to deal with clothing produced in bulk that fails to sell.
- Gap faces increased pressure being involved with the younger generation that is pushing for social justice change. Collaborations, such as Kanye, can turn south quickly. Gap becoming an ally involved with social change can be good, but one wrong move and there could be a heap of trouble.

OPPORTUNITIES RECOMMENDATIONS:

After revision of the SWOT analysis, we recommend that Gap pursue opportunities within current industry, technological and social trends. Although Gap is a longstanding brand with high brand awareness and recognition, we believe that some opportunities within these trends could help Gap compete against newer brands and differentiate them against other older, longstanding brands. Gap has an opportunity to invest more fully into the technological trends of utilizing AI, AR, and martech into the online shopping experience. Additionally, Gap has opportunities to further invest into the current significant social and industry trends of size inclusivity.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES:

- Increase sales by 10% over the next 12 months.
- Increase market share within the women's sector of the retail clothing store industry by 5% over the next 12 months.
- Increase market share within the plus-sized clothing industry by 5% over the next 12 months.
- Increase website traffic by 35% over the next 12 months.

Marketing Strategy

Product:

Gap currently sells a variety of different clothing for men, women, and children, mostly focused on basics and essentials. We do not recommend making any changes to the quality of their clothing, but we do suggest focusing more on promoting the clothing that fits current “trends”. Much of their clothing is different variations of basics, which often get overlooked. Especially with being priced as high as they are. We believe that if they made more clothing that was considered “popular” for the times, being of higher quality, they would see an increase in consumer interest and sales. We would also suggest expanding their size range. Currently, the largest size Gap sells for some products is XXL (US women’s size 20). Considering that around 68% of female consumers are considered plus-size, Gap is missing a huge market by not including larger sizes of their clothing. Especially for males, since they are more excluded in terms of plus-size clothing. Plus-size shoppers most likely do not currently shop at Gap, especially since their promotions also center around average-sized models. This would be a large untapped market for Gap. Combining these two suggestions would definitely cause Gap to see an increase in sales, revenue, and brand awareness.

Place:

Gap currently has around 3,352 stores worldwide and 41% of their total net sales occur online. As of September 6th, 2023, there are 409 Gap stores inside the US. The high amount of remaining in-person stores is good to keep brand recognition for Gap high. Because of this, Gap has an intensive distribution strategy. We would recommend Gap to maintain brick-and-mortar storefronts to keep it that way. We also recommend focusing on increasing their online presence. This could include signature stories, knowledge branding pieces, or any other content marketing strategies. All in all, online sales are crucial to the future of the brand, but maintaining the storefront will keep the Gap name out in the open in order to do so.

Marketing Strategy

Price:

Gap currently uses constant promotional efforts and discounts that directly impact the price of their clothing. These discounts, coupons, loyalty programs, and much more that Gap offers to customers allows them to keep their product at a low price, that does not substitute the high quality their products are made out of. This pricing strategy allows Gap to compete with other clothing retailers that offer lower pricing through customers being able to use one of the many coupons and discounts Gap offers (Pratap, 2019). These discounts and coupons allow Gap to be at the same price range of these competitive retailers without having to offer low-quality products, and therefore Gap has a competitive pricing strategy. We recommend that Gap continues to use this pricing strategy to be able to continue to build a customer base that enjoys this way of buying quality fashion, without having to spend too much.

Promotion:

Gap is a longstanding brand with many past marketing campaigns, and has high brand awareness among consumers. Because Gap is in the maturity phase of the product life cycle, Gap is focused on keeping their brand in the minds of consumers and reinforcing brand loyalty. We recommend Gap keep its general brand image and position the same because consumers are already so familiar with the Gap brand. Gap's most recent "icons" campaign is centered around Gap's old products and advertising campaigns, which highlights Gap's history and notoriety as a family clothing brand. Another recent campaign of Gap is their "Generation Good" campaign, which focuses on inclusion, diversity, and sustainability. Through their campaigns, Gap targets a wide range of consumers of many ages.

Gap uses many channels for promotion, including both traditional and digital channels. In regards to social media, Gap currently uses social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Youtube to promote their campaigns. We recommend that Gap further promote their efforts of sustainability, diversity, and inclusivity, such as including more plus-sized models into their campaigns. In addition to their marketing campaigns, Gap frequently utilizes sales promotions and discounts their products to encourage sales. Although Gap has a mid-range price point, Gap's many sales promotions position their brand as a place where consumers can get good value for what they are paying.

PROPOSITION STATEMENT

ALTERNATIVE 1

To mothers (18-45) with young children who need a convenient and versatile place to buy clothes for themselves and their family, Gap is the brand of family clothing stores that gives you a central place to buy clothes for people of all ages while fitting everyone's needs. The reason is because Gap offers men's, women's, and children's clothing both in-store and online with inclusive sizing, as well as a personalized online shopping experience through AI and AR. The brand character is family-friendly and reliable, and the value based payoffs are friendliness and dependability.

ALTERNATIVE 2

To women between 18 and 45 who need a place to buy inexpensive clothes for their family, GAP is the brand of family retail clothing that offers stylish clothes, widely accessible prices, and a great shopping experience. This is because Gap utilizes AI and AR to enhance the online shopping experience, has a large size range, and markups less than most competitors. The brand character is trustworthy and inclusive, and the value based payoffs are trustworthiness and support.

POSITIONING STATEMENT RECOMMENDATION

We would recommend that Gap continue with the first alternative as the proposition statement. Both alternatives focus on the target market and the core consumer base of Gap, however because 82% of Gap customers are female, 45% are below the age of 45, and 71% have children (Bowman, 2022), we believe the first alternative most accurately fits the primary target market and the benefits they are seeking from a clothing brand. This alternative focuses on younger mothers and the benefits they value when shopping for clothes, such as a one-stop-shop for adults and kids, a personalized online shopping experience, and inclusive sizing. The reasons being that Gap has something for the whole family, including children, they make online shopping personal, friendly, and efficient, and they have an expanded size range for plus-size clothing that other competitors may not have. The first proposition statement also mentions the variety of clothing for all ages that Gap offers and the fact they sell products in-store and online, which are also key benefits the target audience is looking for.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY:

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES:

- Increase interest in GAP by 25% over the next 12 months.
- Increase purchase intent of GAP by 30% over the next 12 months.
- Increase consumer recall of the Gap brand by 15% over the next 12 months.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

Convince: Mothers (18-45) with young children who need a convenient and versatile place to buy clothes for themselves and their family.

That: Gap is the brand of family clothing stores that gives you a central place to buy clothes for people of all ages while fitting everyone's needs.

Because: Gap offers men's, women's, and children's clothing both in-store and online with inclusive sizing, as well as a personalized online shopping experience through AI and AR.

The brand character is family-friendly and reliable, and the value based payoffs are friendliness and dependability.

CONCLUSION

Founded in 1969, Gap is a longstanding American brand that provides casual, quality clothing for the entire family at reasonable prices. We had the goal of reversing Gap's retail sales decline in store and online. After conducting a situation analysis and forming a SWOT analysis, we formed opportunity recommendations in order to achieve Gap's core business problem, and recommended they pursue opportunities in social, technological, and industry trends. Additionally, we recommended a marketing strategy of implementing technology such as AI and AR to personalize the online shopping experience, and expand their plus-size range and include more plus-sized models in campaigns.

The target audience is 18–45-year-old women who have families or will likely have a family in the future, and are entering into either higher education or the workforce, and we determined that the benefit they are seeking is a central place to buy clothes for people of all ages while fitting everyone's needs. Gap will provide those benefits because Gap offers men's, women's, and children's clothing both in-store and online with inclusive sizing, as well as a personalized online shopping experience through AI and AR.

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