

One of a Kind



A curated collection for Gymboree girls,
featuring digital experiential shopping and product customization.

2018 Fashion Scholarship Fund Case Study

Design and Product Development

With the increasing adaptation of ecommerce and online shopping platforms, today's traditional brick and mortar retailers are facing many challenges, including the drastic decrease of sales. In transition, the key is in how traditional retailers evolve the way they interact with their customers and redefine the offline shopping experience. This case study aims to improve the performance of the children's fashion retailer, Gymboree, through incorporating digital technology and product customization in its offline retail environment.

LEADING FASHION RETAIL STRATEGIES

In recent years, high-tech fitting rooms applying the virtual dressing mirror or smart mirror has been an interest for many retailers. Neiman Marcus was one of the first retail outlets to introduce such technology. It essentially provides a digital interface that displays the customer's image and stores previous tried-on outfits for consumer selection. The digital images developed from the mirror can also be saved and shared with friends. Experts point out that "It's designed to transform and update the personal shopping experience" (Dove, 2015). Other well-known retailers like Ralph Lauren, Van Heusen, Rebecca Minkoff, and Lululemon have also started to implement their own versions of digital mirrors in brick and mortar stores. These retailers have also recognized the digital mirror's advantage that enables offline store and target market customization. For Ralph Lauren, the digital mirror focuses on displaying different product colorways, color appearance at difference times of the day, and preference based outfits for the customer. The digital mirror at Lululemon, on the other hand, emphasizes displaying community events, places to exercise, and information about healthy living ("The Future of Retail," 2017). While the saturation of digital mirror implementation takes time, these leading fashion retailers have recognized the potential impact of retail digital technologies.

Many children's wear retailers are strategizing competitive advantage through integrating curated product collections and digital retail technologies. They are taking experiential shopping to the next level through taking advantage of children's love for play and bringing it into their offline stores. One of the most successful retailers among this group is The American Girl company. Well known for the traditional doll

products, the company now offers a wide variety of products including books, accessories, and clothing for both dolls and young girls. Its successes in experiential shopping strategies have been recognized in numerous awards, such as the premier models for experiential retail ("Fast facts," 2017). Focusing on fostering connection between the consumer (child) and its product (doll), The American Girl stores value consumer experience and strategize social media sharable areas, interactive photography, and a full-service salon for the doll. With such promotion and retail strategies, its social channels have reached over 1.9 million followers ("Fast Facts," 2017).

FASHION RETAILER CHOICE

In recent years, Gymboree has been struggling to compete against online retailers, such as Amazon. In fact, their net loss for the second quarter of fiscal 2017 was \$324.9 million (The Gymboree Corporation, 2017). While planning to remain in business, Gymboree is closing 375-450 of its 1,281 stores in filing for a chapter 11 bankruptcy organization. Despite this, the company's new CEO affirms they are in the process of developing plans for long-term sustainability (Bomey, 2017). Thus, now is an appropriate time for Gymboree to reconsider how its retail space can be used more efficiently and products can be designed more effectively to improve and increase consumer incentives for in-store shopping.

Target Customer

The curated collection proposed for Gymboree involves the collaboration with the Build a-Bear company, known for its experiential shopping retail model. It is intended to develop theme-based customizable apparel and stuffed animal products for girl ages 4 to 8. The collection encourages girls to customize their product in store using digital tablet and mirror technology. This approach aims to enhance brand loyalty through providing a fun shopping experience for young girls and their parents using fashion, identity, and companionship.

Strengths

The integration of a digital technology, customization, and collaboration with Build-a-Bear provides Gymboree the first step to reentering the market as a strong competitor. This retail strategy offers

many strengths for Gymboree. Gymboree has always been known for its quality clothing for an affordable price. It's pricing may be more than the currently popular budget retailers; however, the clothing holds up with washes and play over time. This new retail strategy however, first introduces an experiential shopping experience that provides the company an edge over online retailers. Second, through collaborating with Build-a-Bear and customization features, it gives Gymboree a product that tells a story and strengthens the connection with the customer. Not to mention that the bear on the digital mirror reduces the need for sales associate assistance as it can tell the customer where to find the garments. Third, the product line also has a strong focus on encouraging imagination, identity, and play for children, which promotes a healthy, fit lifestyle. This enables the parents to get behind and join in with their children both in and out of the retail shopping environment.

Opportunities

The digital technology in store offers limitless opportunities for future change or expansion of the retail space in Gymboree. The concept or interaction with the digital technology can potentially change with the season, with the trends, or with the customer. The platform in which the digital technology is used is flexible and open to change and incorporate more of the stores customers. The technology has the capability to be so fluid it could cater to both girls and boys and their parents. The current interface allows a picture to be shared via email or social media, however, further opportunities present themselves in the social media driven development of an online community for Gymboree. Second, the proposal with Build-a-Bear also offers many licensing opportunities to include companies like Disney, Pokemon, and My Little Pony for seasonal needs and consumer demands. Third, this retail strategy can expand into the boy's and toddler products at Gymboree in the future.

STORY BEHIND THE COLLECTION

Each young girl is unique, so is her imagination, play, and lifestyle. One of a Kind showcases a line of customizable sportswear for both girl ages 4 to 8 and bear toy product. The moderate price range line features tops, bottoms, and accessories focusing on mix and match pieces. The garments are designed to be

played in and the bear is there to help with the play! Based on her unique personalities and style (Princess, Sporty, Animal Lover, and Trend Setter), she is able to not only create her own outfit through the mix and match line. She is also able to further create her own unique look with garment patches to further customize and also create her very own matching bear. Through customized fashion and toy companionship, she is able to find and celebrate her uniqueness and discover who she is.

Why It Will Work

This proposal is feasible for Gymboree because it brings new life into the store while keeping with their current style and image. The digital technology incorporates a curated and experiential shopping experience not found elsewhere. The ability to connect with social media and bring the experience home with you and to share it with others is also a big part of the collection. Gymboree has been known to bring their brand into lifestyles with their play and music Gymboree gyms. Gymboree's play and music classes are created to develop confidence, creativity, curiosity, and learning skills through play (The Gymboree Corporation, 2017). This line fits well with that type of lifestyle mentality as it is promoting imagination and play through its in-store experience. From the production standpoint, the collection does require the collaboration between Gymboree and Build-a-Bear. However, the production and sourcing investment for the bear products can be supported through Build-a-Bear, and Gymboree already has establishment for children's wear design and product development channels. The investment for Gymboree would be focused on the retail technologies, graphic development for digital mirror contents, and retail space designing. In the near future, new collaboration or licensing opportunities may be explored to cater to the changing consumer demands but to also balance Gymboree's initial technology investment.

MERCHANDISING PLAN

The curated collection is to be merchandised in Gymboree's brick and mortar store in an area approximately 400 ft², integrating two types of digital technology interfaces (Appendix B). First, the store will feature an iPad station in the main product merchandising area. This space is along the wall next to the merchandising area, allowing traffic width. It serves as product customization station and is synced with the

digital mirror (5 ft.x3.5 ft.) next to the iPad station. Second, the child customer is able to approach the digital mirror to “try-on” their creation virtually after product customization. On this digital interface, a One of a Kind bear character walks the customer through visualizing their look, including developing a virtual avatar representation, picking the outfit and related accessories, matching bear outfits, and locating the outfit on the merchandised racks and/or shelves. Additionally, the bear guides the child customer to choose a background, this essentially put the child’s avatar and the matching bear in an imagination based environment in which the child and bear are actively playing. Finally, the outcome displayed on the digital mirror can be saved as photos and shared via social media (Appendix C).

Aside from the digital interfaces, the customizable products are displayed on low clothing racks and shelves for children’s wear. Generally, tops, shirts, and skirts are hung off of racks or off the wall. Shorts, and pants are folded and placed on shelves nearest their other personality type pieces.

The garment patches that can be added to any outfit are organized in a magnetic spinning display with bowl-like holes in which the patches can be placed. Garments in the collection are merchandised based on each personality type. The bear sized clothes are placed nearby the girl sized garments in the smaller racks for accessories. The bears are also found displayed on shelves in the center and on the walls throughout the area, with some always in reach for a child to grab.

COMMUNICATING THE STORY BEHIND THE COLLECTION

Gymboree’s One of a Kind collection is mainly promoted through social media channels. As more and more customers start to use the digital mirror and sharing the images created the line will start promoting itself through the customers. Research reveals that at least 75% of kids under the age of 8 use tablets and mobile devices (Kamenetz, 2013). Due to this heightening trend, a YouTube channel and a multi-game app for tablets and phones is created to feature the bear characters from the store (Kamenetz, 2013). The app and videos are kid and parent friendly. These digital components promote the store’s products and image and start the creation of an online community of customers which can communicate with each other and further promote the line and Gymboree brand.

Girls Ages 4-8
Moderate
Spring 2018



Encouraging play, imagination, and identity, Gymboree's One of a Kind is a line of clothing that can be customized to fit a child's own unique personality. Four main interests or personalities can be mixed and matched to make a child's own unique and personal look. Integration of digital technology in the retail space creates an experiential shopping experience which is shareable thorough social media platforms. The combination of digital technology and customization makes One of a Kind true to its name!

Pantone 5275 c

Pantone 7604 c

Pantone 515 c

90% Polyester/ 10% Spandex Jersey



100% Cotton Jersey Knit



100% Cotton Chambray

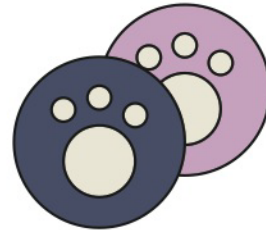
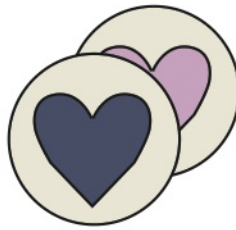
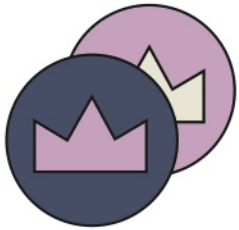


100% Polyester Moisture Wicking



Sporty Gal

"I am strong, I am confident,
and up for any challenge!"

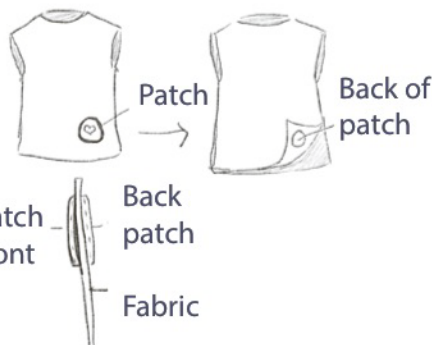


Magnet sewn in
between layers



Detail
stitched on

One functional patch
is made of 2 individual
patches each with a
magnet inside



Add on removable
patches allow children
to add a personal and
custom touch to their
complete look! The
magnetic patches
are flexible and soft
and can be put
anywhere on the
garment!

Animal Lover

"I am loving, I am loyal, and I am a friend who is always there!"



Trend Setter

"I am bold, I am brave, and I love to try new things!"





Princess

"I am kind, I am courageous and love to lend a helping hand to those in need!"

How it Works:

An interactive digital experience awaits in Gymboree's store. The touch screen allows the child to choose an avatar and build an outfit as unique as they are! Also found in the store is a spinning display full of bowls of patches. Encouraging the child to touch and search through to find a patch that fits them and their one of a kind look!

Animal Lover



Sporty Gal



Princess



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Additional Research and Resources

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Appendix B: Full Merchandising Rendering and Explanation



Here is a visual representation of what Gymboree's retail space may look like with the One of a Kind line and digital mirror platform implemented into one of their stores. There is a wall and walkway dedicated to the digital mirror. A child will approach the mirror and use the iPad to affect the larger

display and create their own look with an avatar. The avatar can be a preprogramed one or they can add a picture of their face to a body and make their own. They will then go through the process of creating their own one of a kind look which can be shared via social media.

Also, the rotating station with the customizable patches can be seen in the front of the display. The bowls can hold the patches but the sides of the rotating display are magnetic so the patches can be stuck on the side as well. This set up encourages a hands-on approach and is at a child's height so they can reach all the levels of the display.

Appendix C: Digital Mirror Home Screen



Appendix D: Design Process Images

