

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black blazer, stands in a field of dry grass under a warm, golden sunset sky. She is posing with her hands near her face, looking upwards. The background shows rolling hills and a clear sky.

GAP

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GAP

Despite its popularity in the 90s and 00s as a go-to brand for basics, GAP's prominence started to dwindle from 2010 onwards in the UK. This is reflected by their operating loss of £67.62m, and the recent closure of all GAP UK stores. GAP failed to adapt to the rapidly-changing industry, being overtaken by fast-fashion retailers with a strong online presence such as Uniqlo and H&M. GAP started to lose their brand identity and therefore need to reconnect with their consumer. Their recent joint venture with Next Plc will allow GAP to focus on mitigating their pain points, whilst Next support their back-end logistics and boost their omni-channel presence.

New Mission Statement

“To connect with the GAP community through reinventing the classic aesthetic and providing captivating customer experiences; all whilst being mindful of environmental consequences, to create the new GAP legacy”.

Identified Brand Issues

- Failed to adapt to the fashion industry's evolution.
- Developed an indistinct brand image.
- Failed to respond to current customer needs.
- Became over-reliant on brand reputation, abandoning advertising.
- Constant discounting.
- Un-imaginative in-store experience.

Strategic Objectives

1. Modify product offering.
2. Focus on targeting 'The Nostalgic Millennials'.
3. Rebrand with a sustainability focus.
4. Revive marketing campaigns.
5. Enhance customer experience using technology.



SUSTAINABILITY



RE-CONNECT



STREAMLINE

1

‘GAP REGENERATE’ A CAPSULE COLLECTION

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The “GAP Regenerate” collection aims to breathe new life into the brand by offering contemporary, high quality women’s apparel that combines fit and function with responsible and ethical ideals. The collection will be skillfully designed to provide a multitude of head-to-toe dressing combinations to ensure versatility, with pieces that fit and layer together perfectly.



PROJECT AIMS

- 01.** Differentiate GAP from close competitors by streamlining and redefining their product offering.
- 02.** Bring back focus to one consumer group - the ‘Nostalgic millennials’ who have past positive affiliations with the brand and reconnect with them as their primary consumer demographic.
- 03.** Re-establish a positive brand equity through making sustainability a core focus throughout the collection.



FAST FASHION

The Fast fashion business model provides affordable on-trend clothing with short product lifespans by operating highly responsive supply chains. This drives a constant demand for 'newness', encouraging overconsumption, stimulating a throw away culture and thereby a higher negative environmental and social impact.

“Brands are now releasing as many as 20 collections per year and people are buying 60% more clothes than 15 years ago, but wearing them for half as long”

(Webb, 2021).



CONSUMER DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Consumers do not want to give up aesthetic qualities conveyed through fashion but for these to be achieved without causing environmental damage or harm to human rights.



The notion of living with less has become increasingly popular and the capsule closet is one of the most popular concepts. GAP seeks to prolong fashion product life cycles through the curation of a capsule collection. This will divert from following trends and instead design for longevity, thus increasing the frequency of wear and intelligent styling.

“There is an opportunity for brands to improve the quality of apparel so that it lasts longer, and for retailers to provide advice on different styling options so items can be reworn again and again, all while highlighting the environmental benefits”

(Intel, 2021).



INITIAL TREND ANALYSIS



SELECTION OF PIECES FROM COLLECTION





BRAND ISSUES

01. Overwhelmingly large product assortment
02. Constant discounting
03. Failed to respond to new consumers demand - Sustainability

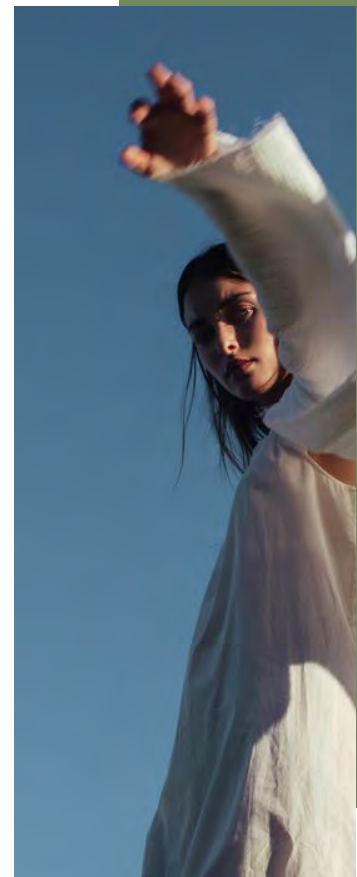
JUSTIFICATION

How will GAP Regenerate mitigate past brand issues?

The capsule collection concept aims to redefine and improve GAP's apparel offering through restructuring the brand's approach to design and production.

The collection, consisting of 10 high quality designs in a variety of colourways, provides a wide range of styling options and outfit combinations. Thus, preventing the overproduction of styles which previously resulted in constant discounting and instead encouraging customers to 'Consume Less, Wear More'. The range is focused around timeless silhouettes and neutral earthy tones to ensure longevity with pops of colour and detail twists to elevate classic styles.

Sustainability has underpinned every stage of product development from design, materials sourced, order quantities, location of manufacturing to production methods used. Therefore addressing Millennial's growing desire for environmentally responsible apparel that doesn't compromise on fashionability and rebuilding positive brand equity.



2

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The marketing communications campaign will promote the launch of the Regenerate Capsule Collection and revitalise GAP's undifferentiated brand image after years of ineffective advertising. The campaign will address issues relevant to 'The Nostalgic Millennial' consumer group by highlighting the brand's new focus on sustainability. This will allow GAP to reconnect with consumers and establish their place in the UK market once again.

The proposed campaign will:

01. Elicit positive associations towards GAP's brand image
02. Stimulate excitement and attention towards the brand
03. Establish a stronger consumer-brand connection
04. Raise awareness of GAP's new inhouse magazine, *THE GAP ISSUE*
05. Support the *Regenerate Capsule Collection* in portraying GAP's new streamline approach to product design



MARKET

The 'Nostalgic Millennials' (Age: 26-41).



Technology is heavily ingrained into millennial's daily life, **29%** report finding out about new brands and products through ads seen on social media (GWI, 2021).



35% of 25-34s prioritize sustainable brands when shopping for clothes (Mintel, 2021).



As a result of squeezed incomes, **32%** of millennials have reported reducing their spending on clothing (GWI, 2021).

MESSAGE

The seasonless approach to design which has always defined GAP as a brand is aligned very closely to the current movement towards slower fashion models. The campaign message will address the issue of overconsumption with the slogan **"Consume less, Wear more"**.



CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT

MISSION

The campaign objective is to change consumer perceptions of GAP and re-build consumer confidence in the brand.

MEDIA

Traditional Vs New Media:



46% advertising expenditure on women's fashion channelled through digital media (Mintel, 2021).



Digital fatigue: **75%** of consumers pay less attention to online ads following the pandemic (Vogue, 2021). The pandemic has also resulted in a resurgence of Out-Of-Home (OOH) advertising (BoF, 2021).

The advertising campaign will utilize a combination of traditional and new media: OOH advertising (bus stops, tube stations, billboards), print (magazine) and social media (Facebook and Instagram).

MONEY

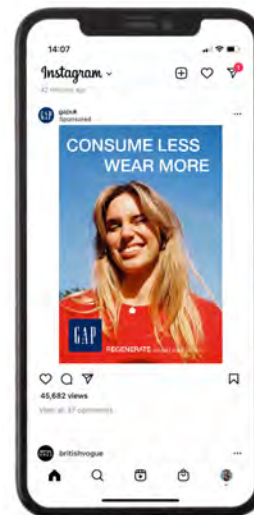
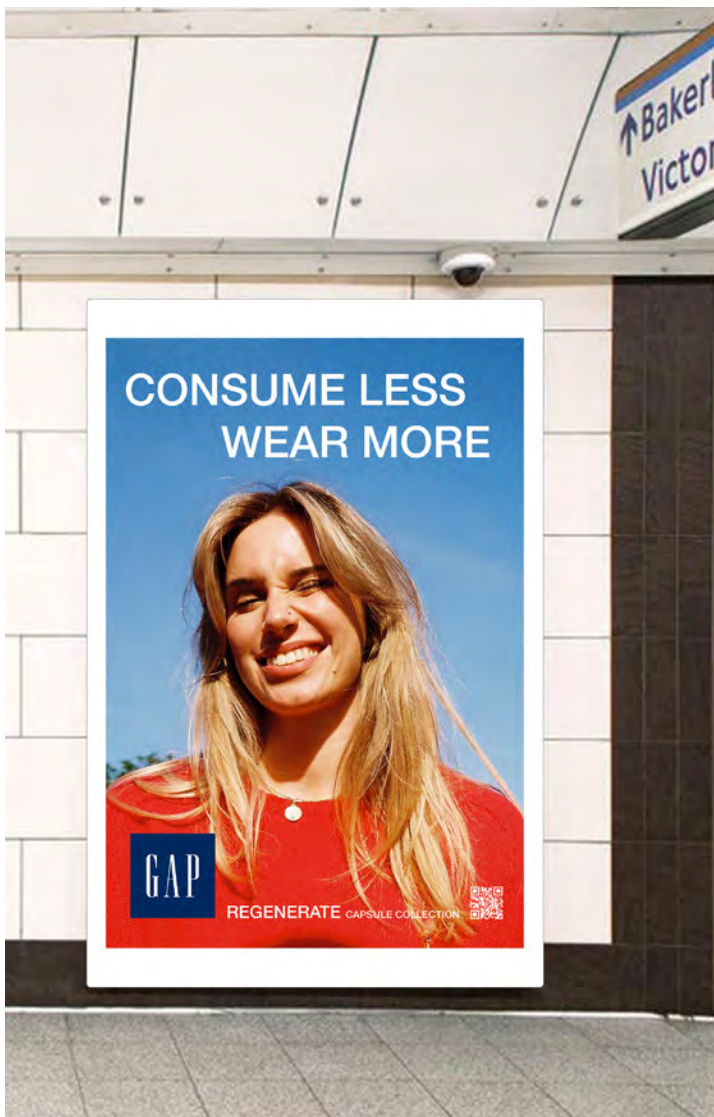
In 2020, Gap, Inc spent \$816 million on global advertising (Statista, 2020). The Campaign budget will therefore be substantial.

MEASUREMENT

The campaign's effectiveness will be measured through survey responses and tracking mentions of GAP across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

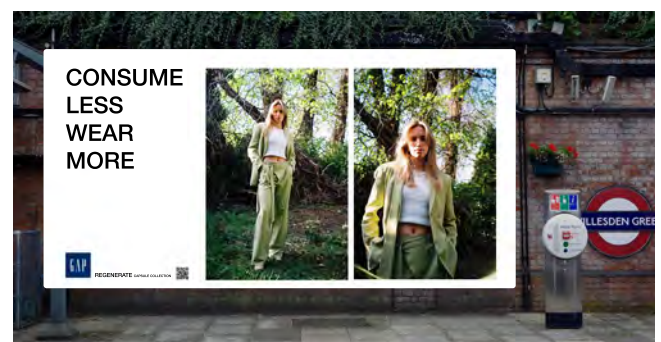
GAP

PROJECT OUTCOME



The OOH ads will initially be placed in London, Manchester and Birmingham.

The ads will feature a QR code taking the consumer directly to the web page where they can subscribe to 'THE GAP ISSUE'.



PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

GAP's current marketing communications fail to effectively communicate with consumers and differentiate the brand from competitors. More than ever, consumers are demanding authenticity, boldness, and purpose from brands. Effective in launching or repositioning brands, advertising will be essential in rebuilding GAP's reputation and image in the UK market.

The advertising campaign will capitalise on the current movement away from trend-led clothing through promoting seasonless products which can be worn in a multitude of ways. This will allow GAP to remain authentic to their brand identity while linking the brand to sustainable values in order to elevate brand perceptions.

01. SUSTAINABILITY

By tackling environmental concerns regarding overconsumption, the campaign repositions GAP with a pro-environmental stance, differentiating them from fast fashion competitors.

02. STREAMLINE

The clear and consistent campaign message signals a move away from GAP's previous issues associated with overproduction.

03. RECONNECT

By reaching consumers across different channels with relevant and meaningful messages, the campaign enables GAP to form deeper relationships with 'The Nostalgic Millennials'. This will be crucial in winning their loyalty.



GAP

3

‘THE GAP ISSUE’ IN-HOUSE MAGAZINE

PROJECT PROPOSAL

To support GAP’s revival, it has been determined that a print magazine, THE GAP ISSUE, will be developed, re-establishing their once iconic advertising status. The introduction of THE GAP ISSUE, will be a tool to re-connect with ‘The Nostalgic Millennials’. Refreshing their perceptions of GAP, meaningful relationships will be re-built by initiating reciprocal conversations on matters of mutual interest including sustainability, culture and fashion.



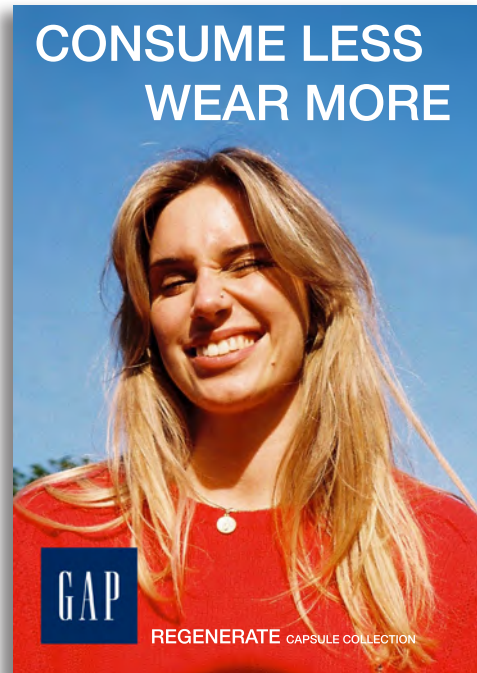
Promotional Aims

1. Re-build a relationship with ‘The Nostalgic Millennials’ through a well-curated lifestyle magazine.
2. Take a pro-environmental stance, informing readers about sustainability and ecological practice.
3. Provide a sustained exciting customer connection, allowing for escapism into an idyllic universe, encapsulated by GAP.
4. Revive GAP’s once iconic marketing reputation through enticing and varied articles and imagery.
5. Promote GAP’s new REGENERATE capsule collection, without pushing the products onto customers.
6. Initiate the GAP ISSUE as a separate entity to GAP, being considered as a leisure magazine.

MAGAZINE OUTPUT

Customers will be able to subscribe to THE GAP ISSUE for free via the GAP UK website.

The publication will be released bi-annually in line with the traditional seasons.



CONTENT:

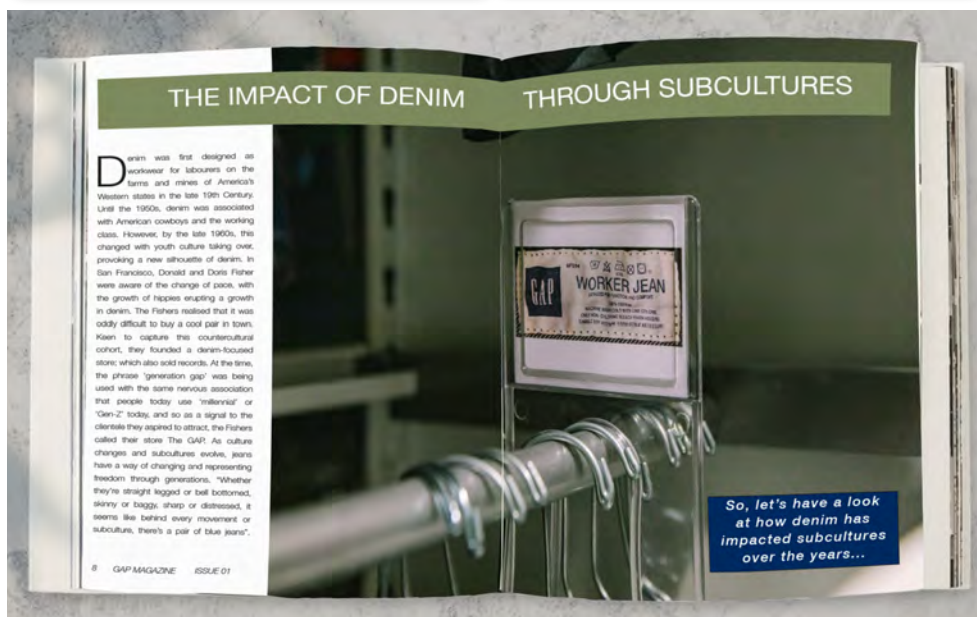
Denim through subcultures

Upcoming trend and Key Details

Styling of the Capsule Collection

Sustainability & How to re-work old jeans

Activities this Winter



A/W22/23 UPCOMING TREND: SUPERCHARGED SIMPLICITY



RE-WORK YOUR OLD GAP JEANS INTO A PLANTER (or any jeans!)



Step 1: Measure widest part of the pot and draw on a circle on a paper with the length measured, adding 20cm for seam allowance.



Step 2: Calculate the width. The circumference of the circle drawn in step 1 x pi (3.14) = total width.



Step 3: Measure the total height of the plant pot up to the rim. Add 20cm for seam allowance and if preferred, add 6cm for the denim to fold over.

Step 4: Draw the rectangle on some paper. Rectangle dimensions are from the length and width of the plant pot measured.

Step 5: Cut out the circle from jeans (this will be the underneath). Cut the rectangle measured out from jeans (if you want the pocket to be seen, ensure the pocket is being cut out from this rectangle).

TIP: If you there is a pocket lining included in your fabric piece, cut small slits 3cm apart in the pocket to allow the fabric to bend without being stiff.

JUSTIFICATION

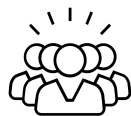
The REGENERATED GAP is an effort in giving GAP a rebrand, focusing on sustainability which should not only be visible in their product offerings but through their marketing techniques as well.

THE GAP ISSUE is an effort to promote GAP UK's new brand identity and will be a part of GAP's future, continually understanding and building a relationship with customers, reminding them of their existence, in turn enhancing brand loyalty. Magazines are a powerful tool of conversation, especially when displayed in a home, generating influential Word Of Mouth marketing, one of the most trusted forms of marketing.

Ultimately, the main objective of THE GAP ISSUE is to build a strong-long lasting relationship with clients and to bring back their once-powerful brand visibility and loyalty, showing readers the REGENERATED GAP's personality.

Fulfills Strategic Objectives:

Focus on targeting a specific demographic.



Rebrand with a sustainability focus.



Revive marketing campaigns.



Tackles Brand Issues:

1.

Developed an indistinct brand image.

2.

Failed to respond to current customer needs.

3.

Became over-reliant on brand reputation, abandoning advertising.

4.

Failed to adapt to the fashion industry's evolution.



GAP

RESEARCH AND CONTEXT

Marketing Communications

Marketing Communications represents the voice of a brand, enabling them to establish a positive relationship with consumers who feel represented.

IMC and the link to Brand Personality

Brand personality is viewed as a central driver in the establishment of preference towards a brand, a powerful determinant of brand equity, and an effective means to create and build meaningful consumer-brand relationships.

Context

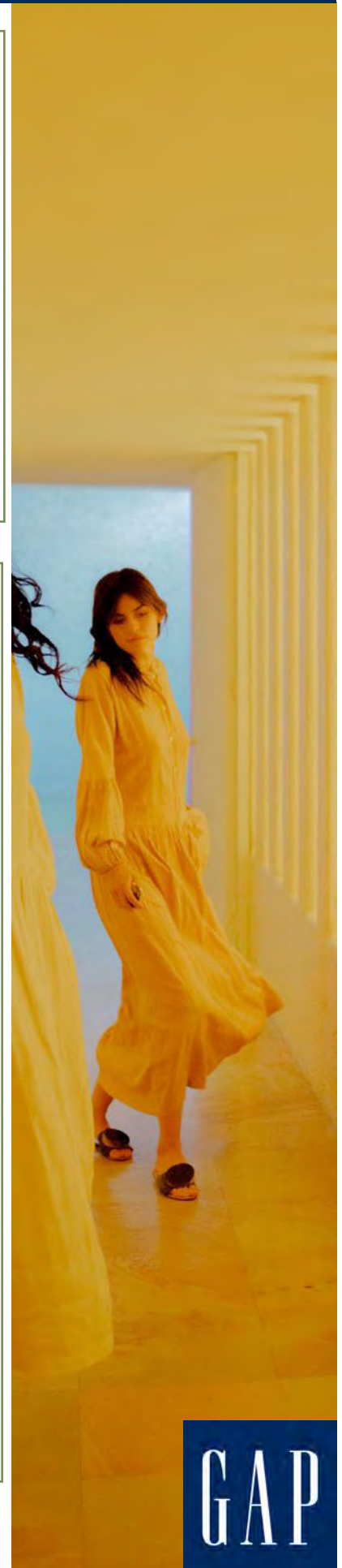
GAP's communication efforts are basic and undifferentiable, lacking in personality and storytelling, thus restricting them from forming emotional connections with customers to gain brand equity. However, with their recent joint-venture with Next plc, they now have the required financial backing and time to bring back their once-great advertising for which they obtain advertising-equity.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

Through effective IMC, firms obtain synergy amongst their marketing communications, leading to enhanced performance and the retention of customer's interest, increasing market shares and brand-equity, thus making IMC a worthwhile investment.

Magazines

Magazines are a fundamental form of communication, being perceived as a trusted source of information, similar to how one may turn to a close friend for advice. In a smartphone-worshipping 21st century, magazines offer an alternative to the constant ephemeral, speedy social media content. Instead, they offer a more relaxing and deeply engaging, immersive connection, consequently building a meaningful relationship, integrating consumers into the brand's universe without directly selling them an item.



GAP

4

GENDER NEUTRAL COLLECTION

PROJECT AIMS

1. **Introduce a Gender Neutral capsule collection by GAP for the purpose of brand development.**
2. **Infiltrate Millennial and Gen Z customers through inclusivity.**
3. **Increase brand equity through exposure and sales.**



PROJECT PROPOSAL

This body of work proposes the social attributes, economic benefits and potential product examples (CAD designs below) of a Gender Neutral collection for GAP in the UK market. This new collection known as “The Gender Gap” will feature a limited assortment of six apparel products that aim to follow the simple GAP aesthetic, whilst ensuring a modern fluid edge is applied. The overarching vision for the products included is for them to merge seamlessly into the wardrobes of any individual. Considering the previous relevance of GAP in the UK having their logo and likeness attached to a Gender Neutral collection will prove that the brand can acknowledge the change in consumer tastes, something that was previously ignored. By entering the UK’s Gender Neutral fashion market through the lens of a capsule collection GAP can observe profit potential, whilst not being required to designate large budgets and risk their already tainted reputation. GAP is predominately an online retailer in the UK since the closure “all its 81 stores” (Hancock, 2021) therefore this limited Gender Neutral capsule collection will be sold in a purely ecommerce setting. “The Gender GAP” collection will seek to target younger consumers that fall into the demographic of Millennials and Gen Z.



THE GENDER GAP

PROJECT CONTEXT: BRAND DEVELOPMENT

The concept of brand development is incredibly complex and for decades companies have created and developed brands to help form the backbone of their communication with customers. With the advancement in new media and information tools to compare brands and their products, organisations in a range of industries are responding by improving advocacy-based strategies (Knox, 2006). A core example of these “strategies” are the advancements made by fashion brands to unveil Gender Neutral clothing lines that challenge traditional gender stereotypes (Sultana, 2017). The introduction of Gender Neutral collections demonstrate to increasingly tolerant consumers, that the brand in question is willing to respond accordingly to the societal shift in fluid apparel. Not only does adopting a Gender Neutral approach to design enable greater relevance and respect but additionally increases the certainty of financial



‘Gender Neutral clothing lines challenge traditional gender stereotypes’ (Sultana, 2017).

COMMERCIAL PRACTICE

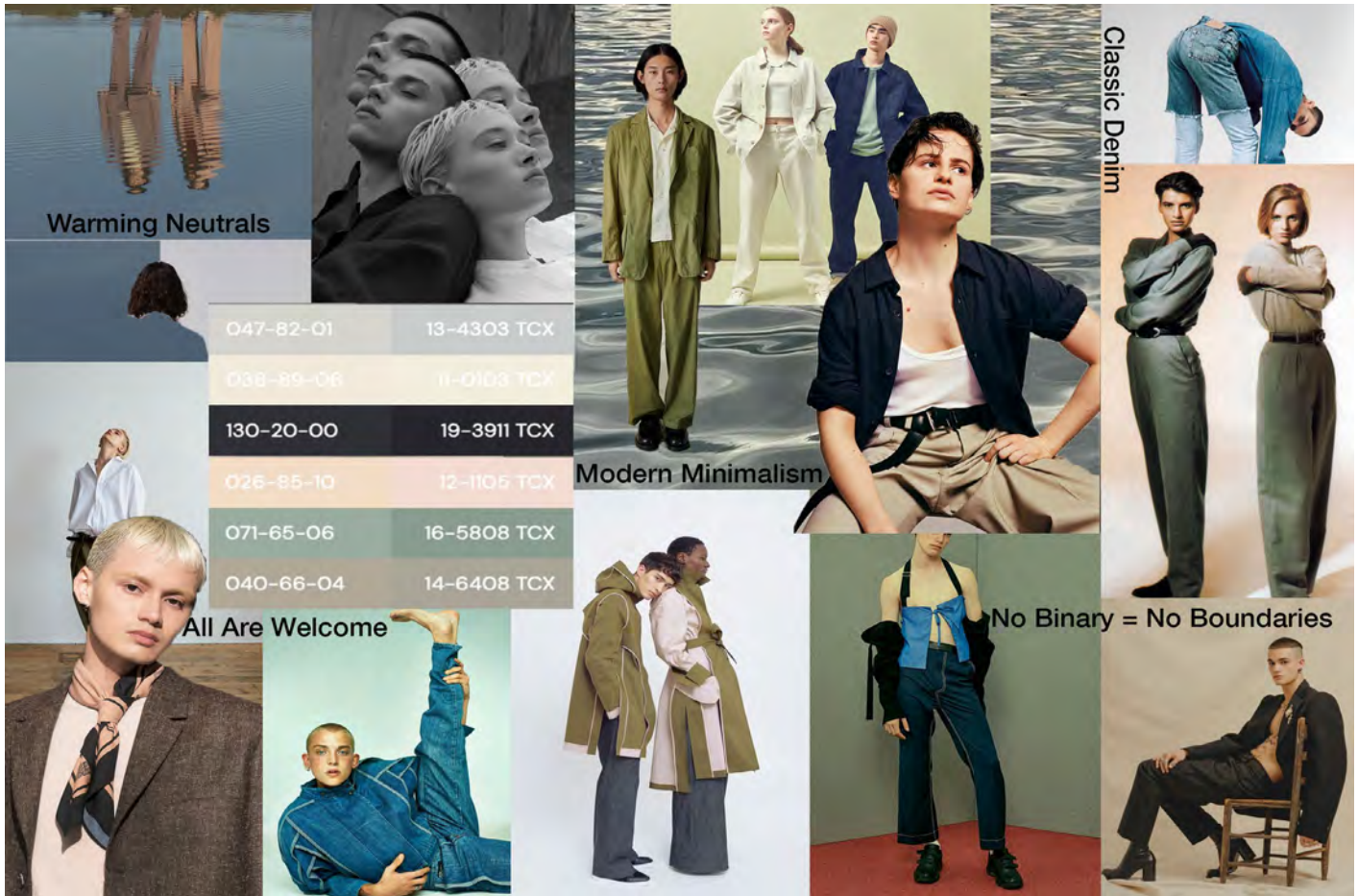


Many brands are beginning to implement their own impression on merging what constitutes as traditional menswear and womenswear. Despite gender-bending being prevalent throughout history ‘something about today’s fixation with fluidity feels more substantial and politically engaged’ (Sanders, 2019). On account of a push from Millennials and Gen Z, society is slowly but surely coming to realize that fashion is not subjective to gender-identify with an increasing number of shoppers more than willing to experiment (Tanna, 2021). Due to their open attitude towards artistic experimentation, luxury fashion houses have been some of the speediest adopters of the Gender Neutral movement. However, high-street giants are too making headway in this emerging market.

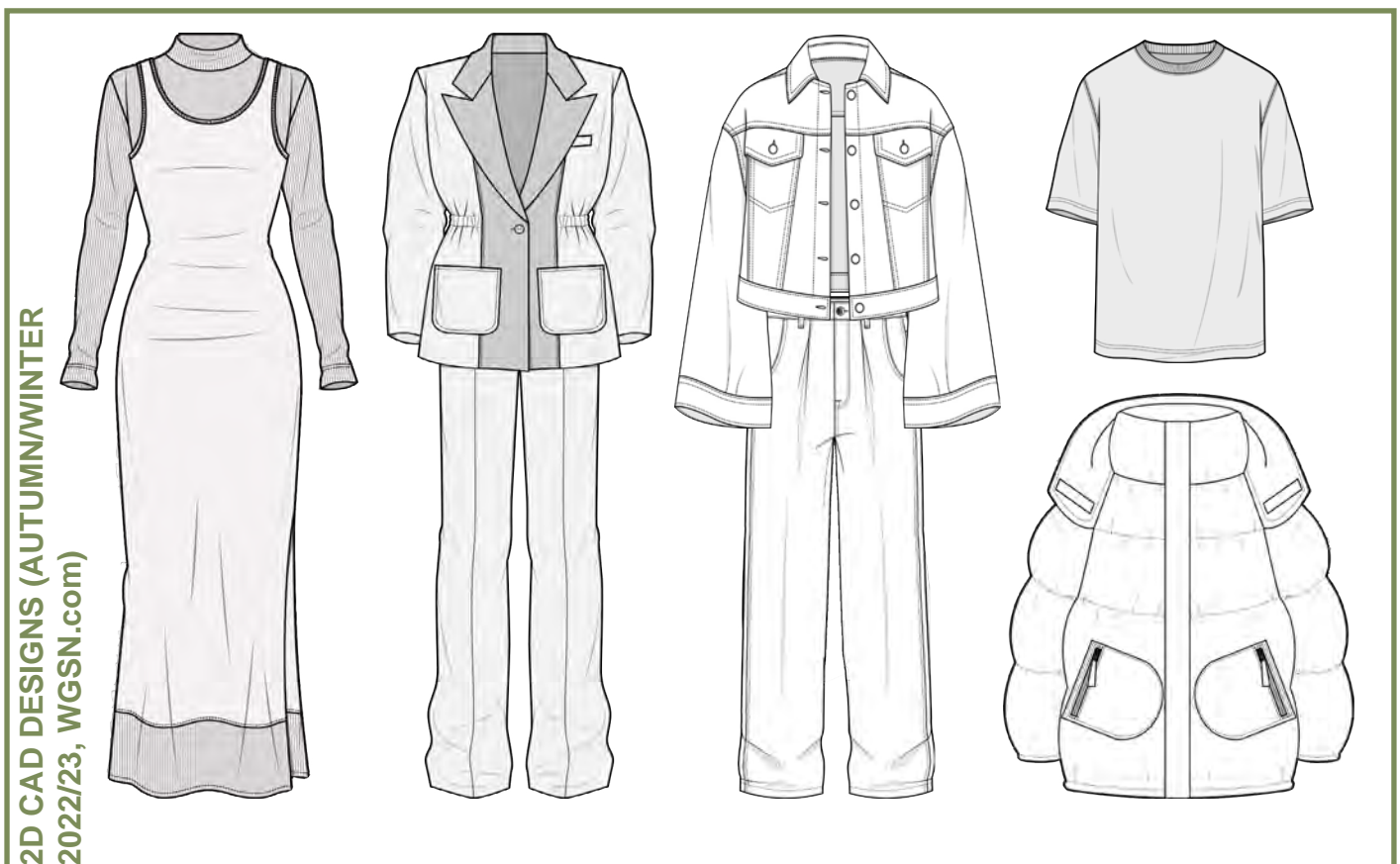
A plethora of fashion brands are reacting to an ‘unprecedented period of gender upheaval’ (Sanders, 2019).

GAP

PROPOSED COLLECTION INSPIRATION



RECCOMENDED GENDER NEUTRAL PRODUCTS OPTIONS



BRAND ISSUES

1. Product offering consisting of heteronormative and homogenous items.
2. Failure to adapt and innovate in order to meet changing consumer tastes.
3. No options for Gender Neutral apparel.



JUSTIFICATION

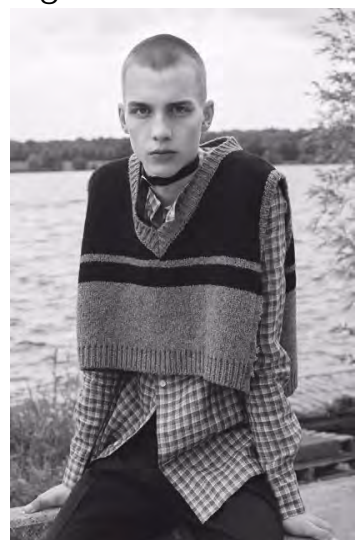


RETAINING CORPORATE MISSION:

GAP's original strategy of affordable and accessible "all-American fashion" previously worked, however, more recently GAP has faced decline with an operating loss of £67.62 million in 2020 (Timmins, 2021). This decline was a result of failing to create products that reflect changing consumer tastes. Part of these changing tastes can be attributed to the increasing need for Gender Neutral apparel options. It is proposed that GAP will implement a Gender Neutral collection titled "The Gender Gap". This strategy alteration away from homogenous products demonstrates GAP's ability to interpret the Gender Neutral movement as a means to regain relevance and financial capital.

IMAGE AND VALUE FIT:

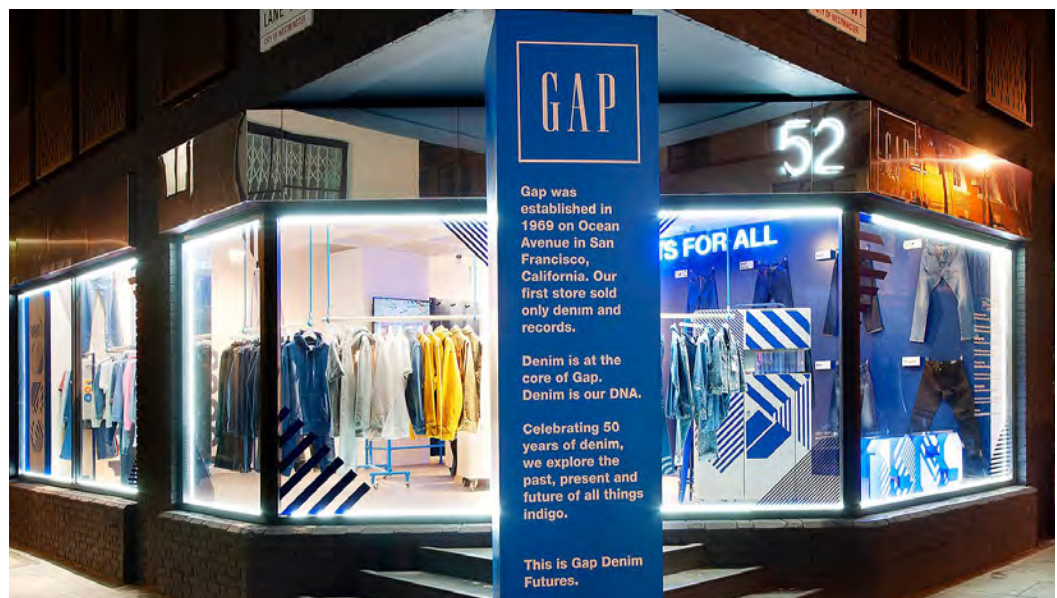
A Gender Neutral capsule collection by GAP (UK) enables the brand to tap into an emerging market, whilst demonstrating their improved efforts to recognise inclusivity. GAP's history of compelling activism for the LGBTQ+ community (Gap Inc, 2022), implies a Gender Neutral collection would improve value and be commercially appropriate for the brand's image. By acknowledging the meteoric rise in demand for gender inclusive fashion (Socha, 2020), GAP will display to previous and potential GAP customers that their reluctance to change no longer remains. Furthermore, GAP's iconic name and likeness is still prevalent throughout the world of retail, so by introducing Gender Neutral options the brand can predict a popularity revival.



GAP

Digital Innovative Pop-up Shop Development

Pop-up store: The pop-up shop can be referred as a fashionable and hypermodern platform paying attention to the consumers who searching for new experience and making ad hoc decision. It has become a go-to marketing strategy for retailers looking to extend the brand and introduce new products (Gentile et al., 2007).



PROJECT PROPOSAL

Reconnect with UK GAP consumers through the Digital Innovative Pop-up Shop Development, which reflects the brand's new focus on sustainability and streamline approach to product design, supporting the Launch of the Womenswear A/W 2022 GAP Capsule Collection Range. For instance, the suggested digital innovative pop-up shop can be a feasible way to clarify that, the Gap has tended to source 100% more sustainable cotton by 2025 and has taken steps towards a more sustainable future (Wadham, 2021). Besides, the pop-up shop could be a means to show new products in advance, which can enhance the communication between the Gap and its consumers. Additionally, the un-imaginative in-store customer experience, that has been identified as a brand issue through strategic group report, can be possibly souolved by the digital technology offered in pop-up store as well.

Brand Issue

1. Investment on advertisement has been given up by Gap recent years (Faull, 2021).
2. Gap App still cannot be utilised in the UK (Samuely, 2022).
3. Un-imaginative in-store experience in the UK has lost the consumers expectation and loyalty.
4. Consumers buying behaviour has changed from in-store to online shopping (Djordjevic, 2022).

Brand Decision

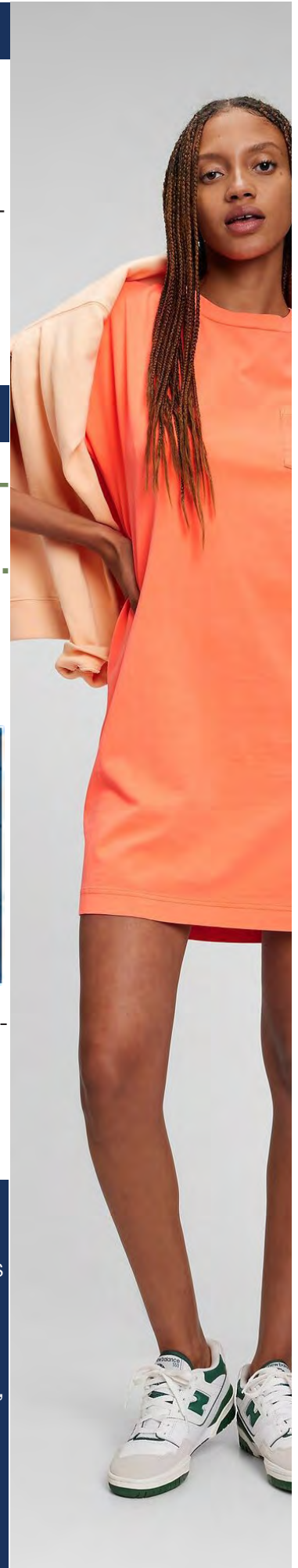
The Gap closed all the UK and European brick-and-mortar stores, and shifting to online sales, which has been cited as 'market dynamic'(Samuely, 2022). From 2022, the Next Plc has become the joint venture with gap. As a result, the Gap stores will be re-opened in the Next shop (Fish, 2021).

Benefits	Threats
The e-commerce sales has fitted with the changing consumers buying behaviour.	The Gap mobile app in the UK still cannot be utilised.
The Next shops would be the additional omni-channels for Gap to merchandise.	The lack of investment on advertisements still hasn't been solved yet, this would weaken the reputation of Gap.
Save money from in-store decoration.	Lack of the in-store customer experience, the connection between the consumers and brand might be weak.

However, since the lockdown in the UK has been paused, 76% of consumers in the UK still feel comfortable with returning to physical stores following the vaccination campaign(Djordjevic, 2022). Hence, the digital innovative pop-up store would be an additional feasible option for the Gap to do.

Reasons:

1. The digital pop-up store is an event for opening short-term sales spaces that lasts for days to weeks before closing (Picot-Coupey, 2014). This short-term activity could be defined as a temporary advertisement.
2. Although the E-commerce has become a trend in nowadays digital age, some consumers still want opportunities to try on clothes in-store. Thus, the pop-up events can provides in-store experience to customers.
3. The pop-up event also can be another promotional means replacing the advertisement to improve the reputation of the Gap.
4. The offered digital technology in pop-up store can enrich the customer experience meanwhile.



Gap Pop-up store History



In 2019, the Gap celebrated 50 years of denim with an exclusive pop-up store throughout the month of September in London. On this pop-up store, the Gap utilised the customisation service, like denim tattooing, hemming and distressing (LDNFASHION, 2019). This strategy was expected to identify the Gap denim as a leader, and will be cemented as a brand for all generation in the future.



In 2021, the Gap opened 'The Little Boutique' of pop-up GapKids shop between April and May. (Clark, 2021) The pop-up store had announced that it offered the clothing and gifts for babies and toddlers(0-5 years), and many exclusive products not available in other Gap shops. It also provided the while-you-wait customisation station — putting an embroidered name or fun monogram on the purchased item. This activity assisted the consumers to make a unique and meaningful gifts.

Evaluation

Adv.	Disadv.
The customisation service could maintain the loyalty consumers, and attract the new ones.	The waiting time caused by customisation would put a negative effect on customer experience.
Strengthening the reputation of Gap.	The type of provided products were basically narrow.
The exclusive products could arousing the consumers interest.	The popular sizes might be in short supply.
The customer experience would be improved.	The after-sale service would be inconvenient for consumers to exchange or refund. For instance, the customised products would be hard to resell.

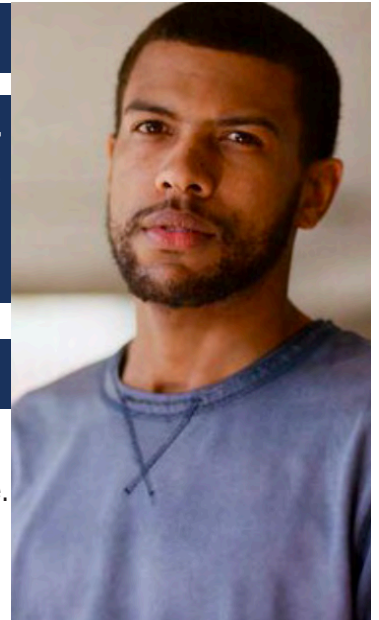
Pop-up shoppers Requirements(Retail Touchpoint, 2022)

- Unique services/products (39%);
- Localized assortments (36%);
- Optimal pricing (34%);
- Convenience (33%);
- A fun experience (30%).

Through the strategic group report, the new target consumers would be the nostalgic millennial (26-41).

Nostalgic Millennial

- This group of people has more disposable income, and mostly are the representation of the 'Late majority' of the Giger(1962) Innovation curve.
- They prefer high-quality workwear and modern casual clothing.
- They have needs for children and maternity wear.



Requirements pop-up store can meet

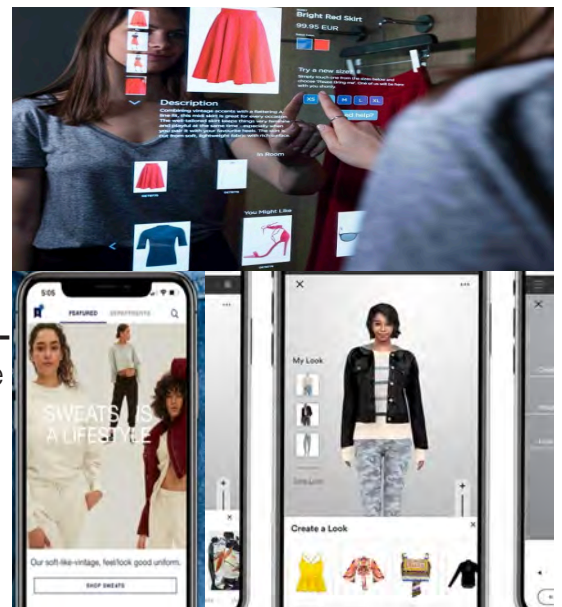
1. The customised services and products — meets the requirement of new target consumers about the high quality durable classics with modern design edge.
2. The type of products provided would be narrow and deep, which can attract the specific consumers with clear goals.
3. If a pop-up shop will be decided to open in a place with none Gap stores, like Manchester, which will be convenient for consumers who prefer to 'try before you buy'.

Some questions:

1. How consumers can get the notification about the pop-up shop in the first place?
2. How to solve the problem about waiting time caused by the customised in-store?
3. How to solve the issue about the popular size in short supply?
4. What else activities can be hold in pop-up store to enrich the consumer experiences?

Digital Innovative Development

1. The **mobile Gap app** should be supplied in the UK market as soon as possible, which can be an effective way to notice consumers the latest information about the pop-up shop.
2. If the Gap app has been provided, the consumers can **pre-order** the attractive products before the open of pop-up store, which can ensure the inventory would be ample and save time for consumers to purchase.
3. The Gap app can also apply the **AR try-on clothing technology**, which can assist the consumers gain the accurate size and fit recommendation. (Smink et al., 2019)
4. The pop-up store can follow the trend to offer the **Smart Mirror** which is a 3D virtual fitting room with realistic cloth simulation(Huo et al., 2019), which will help consumers avoid to change again and again.



This strategy aims to deliver a revived version of GAP to the public through:

- A sustainably-committed capsule collection.
- A sustainability-focused advertising campaign.
- An in-house print magazine.
- A proposal for a gender neutral capsule collection.
- A digitally innovative pop-up store.

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GAP