

REBRANDING AND VISUAL BRANDING OF GAP

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Introduction

Rebranding and visual branding are pivotal for every company's stabilized growth and competitiveness in today's globalized market. Those are crucial strategies that often contribute to either the success or the failure of the company/brand. Similarly, Gap has undergone many ups and downs due to its branding strategies and visual branding characteristics. Specifically, over the past decade, Gap has faced thousands of challenges, which were more expressed through a decline in sales, loss of loyal customers, loss of competitiveness in the fast-developing market, and eventually, its position and trendiness as an American cultural icon. Before delving into the analysis of the current status and position in the global market, it is crucial to emphasize that the capstone project worked on the Gap Brand, but not Gap Inc. The primary distinction between those is that Gap Inc. is the parent company of the Gap brand. That is to say, being a multinational corporation, Gap Inc. owns several retail clothing brands including Gap, Old Navy, Banana Republic, Athleta, and previously, Intermix and Hill City. Regarding Gap Brand specifically, it is casual, American-style clothing. It includes and produces GapKids, babyGap, GapBody, and GapFit. Thus, to implement the rebranding and visual branding, the capstone project worked with only the Gap Brand.



Gap's official logo

Once one of the most iconic and brilliant brands in the retail industry, Gap remained behind the curtains in the current industrial market. Despite all the attempts that Gap made through rebranding and visual branding changes, it still failed at every attempt. Notably, in 2010, Gap took a significant step towards changing its visual identity, changing the Gap's iconic logo that has been etched in the memories of thousands of customers.



Gap logo redesign in 2010

Instead of restoring its former glory and love, this change became a fatal failure in Gap's history, negatively affecting almost every aspect of the brand. All historical failures argue that the time is ripe for Gap to create a unique rebranding and visual branding, restoring its former demand and competitiveness. Despite all the attempts that Gap made through rebranding and visual branding changes, it still failed at every attempt. The analysis of Gap's sales performance has shown that it hardly endures the market challenges and sells its latest products. According to the market analysis, Gap had the following performance:

Revenue Growth Stagnation

10-year CAGR (2000–2010):

Only +0.7% growth annually

10-year CAGR (2010–2020):

–0.6% (negative annual growth)

EBIT Margin Contraction

EBIT margin in peak years: 12.1%

Current EBIT margin: 5% Decline of 710 basis points (7.1%)

Gap Brand Revenue Drop

2003 Gap North America sales: \$7.3 billion

2024 Gap global sales: \$3.3 billion

55% drop in sales over two decades (M. Driscoll, 2024).

This capstone project addresses the challenges Gap and its identity have faced because of its branding and visual branding. It suggests pivotal strategies to ensure its future development and restoration of position, returning its leadership in the marketplace. The project, grounded with a solid background, suggests literary pieces by various experts in the field, elaboration on brand identity, corporate rebranding, visual branding, and sustainability, and their importance in the contemporary market. Based on those authors' valuable pieces and insights and engaging other scholars like Elikan Pigneur, Winit, Kantabutra, and others, this capstone project develops a strategic rebranding and visual branding strategy for Gap to overcome the current challenges in the contemporary market and contribute to the restoration of its once prosperous and glorious

past. Creating a strategic plan via combining various theoretical insights practices and adding sustainability as the essential focus of the brand's new identity, this capstone project promises to win the hearts of Gap customers, restore their trust, re-establish a connection between customers and the brand, and ultimately, spread its passion for sustainability throughout the industry. The combination of Gap's historical heritage and identity and its failures one by another shows that the brand is worthy of exploring and studying various analyses of branding strategies to break the continuous shortcomings from the past and ultimately restore the iconic Gap to its dazzling brilliance as a stylistic brand representing American identity.

Literature Review

Rebranding and visual branding are pivotal strategies that ensure every company's growth or failure. The importance of successful branding is especially notable for the brands surviving in a global market where competitiveness is high. Throughout the decades, Gap has experienced these ups and downs because of its rebranding and visual branding, as well as the highly shifting and fluctuating perceptions of its consumers. This literature review synthesizes various works by scholars primarily concentrating on brand identity, effective and ineffective rebranding processes and strategies, visual branding, and its perception by potential consumers, with a preeminent focus on the Gap.

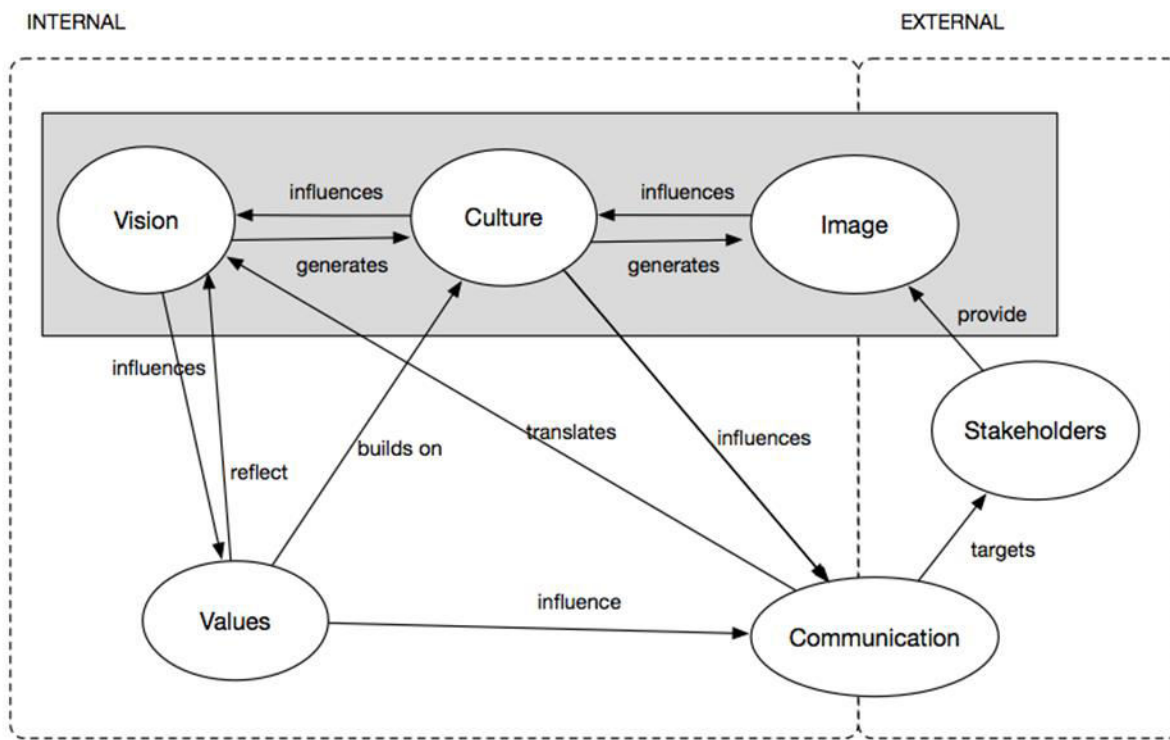
In order to achieve effective branding, understanding a brand identity and its function is crucial. An insightful book titled “Building Strong Brands” by David A. Aaker gives a strong foundation on the definition of brand identity, expanding on overall rebranding and visual identity. In his book, Aaker discusses four essential elements that have critical significance for rebranding and visual branding. To be more specific, Aaker's framework explores brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and, finally, brand loyalty. Exploration of these dimensions sets the floor for solidly establishing the rebranding process based on the given criteria. Firstly, after defining and explaining the pivotal role of brand identity, Aaker emphasizes the purposeful role of visual elements, concentrating primarily on logos and typography. He highlights that one of the most critical roles for a brand's identity is given to visual triggers, which hugely raise the product's/brand's differentiation, creating consumer loyalty (Aaker, 1995). Referring to brand equity, the author mentions that the most crucial element here is brand awareness. To be more detailed, he believes that in order to have a successful visual rebranding, it is necessary to maintain the basic foundation of the brand's initial colors, logos, and typography so as not to lose the brand-consumer connection. Thus, it will foresee a balance between innovation and its core traditional elements in order to maintain a solid brand identity and not risk consumer recognition of the brand. Ensuring and maintaining the effectiveness of the new rebranding of the visual identity of the Gap, the new logo, following the framework of Aaker's “Building Strong Brands” will keep the brand's primary palette colors and typography, adding some innovative elements just to breathe new life into the brand making it again competitive in the new market.

Corporate rebranding is one of the most critical and complicated processes when implementing a rebranding strategy. Requiring an insightful and comprehensive planning process and

considerable integration of the brand's core values, corporate rebranding necessitates consideration of both external and internal factors. Merrilees and Miller, in their "Principles of Corporate Rebranding," discuss six main principles crucial for implementing corporate rebranding. More specifically, in their first principle, the authors suggest that to achieve a successful rebranding, it is necessary to effectively analyze the brand's strengths and weaknesses and identify the factors that make it noticeable and different from other brands (Merrilees & Miller, 2008). According to the second principle, it is crucial to identify the brand's or company's primary goals and objectives to ensure the company's future success. In its third principle, it is mentioned that one of the critical points is the examination of addressing the needs and expectations of customers to satisfy their needs and preferences. Fourthly, in the global market, where every brand needs uniqueness to be identified by its potential customers, every company should understand its focus on differentiation in order to achieve a successful rebranding. This means that a precise definition of the company's advantage in the market can contribute to strengthening and enhancing its position and competitiveness in the market. In its fifth principle, the article suggests that employees, customers, and partners should be considered key stakeholders and that they need to evolve in the process of rebranding. Finally, according to the authors, in this complicated process of rebranding, it is essential to be consistent in visual elements, customer experience, and so on to be sure that the trust will be maintained. The new identity of the brand will not ruin the company's reputation or position in the market (Merrilees, Miller, 2008). Analysis shows that clearly, Gap has suffered during its previous rebranding experience. Factually, the principles mentioned above were not used during the redesign of the logo in 2010, which is one of the reasons it failed. As mentioned in its fifth principle, the connection between employees, partners, and particularly customers collapsed, resulting in the

brand's alienation and non-acceptance by the consumer. Factually, after the new logo of Gap, sales declined by approximately 10%, which is a clear indication that the company failed in its new rebranding (Williams, 2021).

Visual branding is crucial in maintaining and developing a brand's identity and ensuring its growth via various elements. In the process of implementing rebranding, it is essential to conduct the analysis of visual branding strategies. Delving into the introduction of the role and importance of brand identity and possible challenges in the rebranding path, Elikan and Pigneur in their "A Visual Inquiry Tool for Brand Identity" introduce a brand identity tool that effectively aids in strategizing any brand identity, which is a necessity for Gap's rebranding to make it more reliable and provable that it will be successful.



A visual inquiry tool for brand identity by Elikan and Pigneur, 2019

The tool suggested by Elikan and Pigneur provides a practical framework for evaluating core identical values and appropriate visual elements of any brand, including its logo, typography, color schemes, and so on (Elikan & Pigneur, 2019). Giving opportunity to visually and tangibly understand the fundamental alignments of the brand's objectives and the visual elements used, the framework enhances the chances of being relevant and competitive in today's fast-paced global market. For example, the very well-known 2010 Gap's logo redesign was a famous case of unsuccessful visual rebranding (Williams, 2021). The profound analysis of the above-mentioned framework ensures that the strategies used while recreating the logo are not aligned with the suggested strategies. That is to say, the minimalist design made in 2010 did not really convey the Gap's strong historical identity/heritage and emotional vividness, which resulted in a massive critique by professionals in the field. Moreover, the new design of Gap's logo has severed the emotional and associative connection between customers, resulting in alienation. While implementing the visual identity rebranding, in this case of recreating the logo and applying the framework suggested by Elikan and Pigneur, the creator have succeeded in maintaining the historical heritage and emotional resonance of the brand, simultaneously adding some innovative elements to its identity, to ensure a smooth transition to its new visual appearance. Moreover, this approach suggested by Elikan and Pigneur has highly contributed to integrating consumers' perspectives and the brand's main objectives into the visual representation process, which was previously stated by Aaker as well (Aaker, 1996).

Finally, as the new rebranding strategy of the Gap has to be trendy and contemporary, it has a specific focus on sustainability and inclusivity in branding. As in today's globalized world, mindful consumption and maintenance of eco-friendly environments continue to play an increasingly important role every day; it is crucial to implement sustainable rebranding strategies. An insightful article titled "Toward a Sustainability Brand Model" by Winit, Kantabutra, and Kantabutra (2023) effectively provides a detailed and informative framework on sustainability and brand interconnection. The article succeeds in incorporating the process of integrating sustainability into brand strategies. That is to say, the article exploring corporate sustainability suggests that sustainability is directly related to brand reputation and equity nowadays. This means that for the rebranding and visual branding of the Gap, while making it a more sustainable brand, it is an effective strategy to align the brand's visual elements, including its logo, packaging, typography, and advertisements showing its labor work, with sustainability objectives. This strategy ensures a good reputation for the Gap, contributes to its brand equity, and gains trust and long-term assistance from various stakeholders and its customers (Winit et al., 2023).

On the other hand, another astute and perceptive article titled "Brand Activism for Sustainable Development Goals: A Comparative Analysis in the Beauty and Personal Care Industry" by Confetto, Palazzo, Ferri, and Normando (2023) elaborates on the idea of Brand activism which is the active involvement of social, environmental, economic or political spheres in order achieve good outcomes for the society. Although the article concentrates on specific examples of L'oreal and Dove, it still provides a good insight into the integration of sustainability into the brand's development process (Confetto et al., 2023). Specifically, the article highlights how a brand's

engagement with a more sustainable and stable environment can attract more consumers, especially environmentally conscious ones. This restates that Gap's new rebranding and visual branding need to evolve more sustainable elements in its visuals and integrate some sustainable materials to be more relevant for today's environmentally conscious consumers. Making Gap a sustainably appealing brand for its consumers who prioritize sustainability and a healthier environment will be a decisive and successful step towards new horizons in the business sector.

To go further, it is undeniable that incorporating sustainability is one of the strategic principles that play a pivotal role in Gap's success since it is used as a competitive differentiator in the global market, grabbing the attention of environmentally conscious consumers. That is to say, in today's highly competitive marketplace, every brand has a characteristic or, in other words, competitive advantage that hugely influences the enhancement of its position. Using sustainability as a competitive advantage for Gap, one can influence consumers' emotions, enhancing trust between the brand and its customers. Incorporating the same article by Confetto et al. that suggests that brand activism is the same as the involvement of brands in different social, economic, and environmental practices, value global changes in the market, one can use the practice as an impactful tool for differentiation in the market (Confetto et al., 2023). Using this tool and standing by the eco-friendly society, the brand will gain a competitive advantage in the market and, as a result, restore its reputation and become more relevant to the modern world.. Finally, using this competitive differentiator will not only contribute to attracting its loyal customers but will also grab the younger generation's attention. As a result, sales will noticeably increase.

To conclude, a brand's rebranding and visual branding is a fateful step towards either new successes or even its destruction.. Thus, it is crucial to understand and analyze the literature reasonably and incorporate essential strategies and principles to ensure the rebranding's possible success. Gap's rebranding and visual branding must be done based on various field professionals and their studies, specifically Aaker (1996), Merrilees & Miller (2008), and others. Moreover, the new rebranding will incorporate sustainability in its new visual identity as a marketing strategy that will appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and present itself as a responsible and forward-looking brand in the global market.

Research Questions

This capstone project discusses the following central question: How can Gap's newly developed strategy integrate sustainability and enhance consumer loyalty and competitiveness in the market while maintaining its core brand identity? The research question addresses the necessity of developing a new rebranding strategy. It highlights the critical outcomes that the integration of sustainability can bring to the brand, simultaneously enhancing sales/consumers and restoring its position in the market. Another research question addressed in this capstone project is: What role do visual elements, logos, typography, and color combinations play in creating the successful brand identity of Gap? The research question is studied based on essential insights by experts in the field, researchers, theoretical and practical guidelines, and analysis.

Methodology

Incorporated rebranding strategies and frameworks suggested by experts/scholars.

The literature review written above and the research questions precisely show the necessity of scholarly research. As this capstone project proves that the newly developed strategy that integrates sustainability will enhance consumer loyalty and competitiveness, the scholars' contribution is unavoidable. The researcher studied various failed cases of Gap's rebranding and visual branding to clarify the essential elements that did not work in that process. Then, the researcher integrated and utilized various frameworks suggested by rebranding and corporate branding experts that promise successful brand identity development. More specifically, applying the framework by Aaker, who indicates a framework balancing the core brand identity and innovation, the researcher worked on the visual identity of Gap, making it more innovative but simultaneously keeping its historical identity. Moreover, the researcher incorporated Merrilees and Miller's shaping principles for planning to place specific stress on differentiation and stakeholders' and consumers' engagement in the process.

Examined successful cases of rebranding and sustainability engagement from competitors.

The researcher implemented market research to precisely understand the positions of the various brands in today's fast-paced market. Then, the researcher examined the competitors' brand identity characteristics and rebranding strategies to identify how sustainability was integrated through their visual patterns.

Implemented surveys with potential customers.

The researcher implemented online surveys with potential customers of Gap via various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Telegram groups, and so on, to have a better understanding of consumers' perceptions of sustainable rebranding and expectations.

After demographic questions about the respondent's age and gender, respondents were asked how frequently they go shopping for clothing. These survey questions helped the researcher to come up with valuable information on what to maintain and add in the new visual branding of the Gap to be more attractive for its customers from specific demographics, age, and gender, and grab the attention of new ones, highly aligned with their preferences and expectations.

Interview and discussion with a Graphic Designer

At the end, the researcher had a meeting with a graphic designer to bring the new logo and visual identity of the Gap to life. More specifically, the rebranding strategy and developed visual branding campaigns were presented to the graphic designer and professional in the design field, the talented Irina Pirumyan, who gave valuable advice about the contemporary market and the

best trends accepted by consumers. The discussion and the constructive feedback of Pirumyan provided a conclusion for the project to create the logo and visualize the visual imagery of the Gap, incorporating sustainability.

Research Findings and Analysis

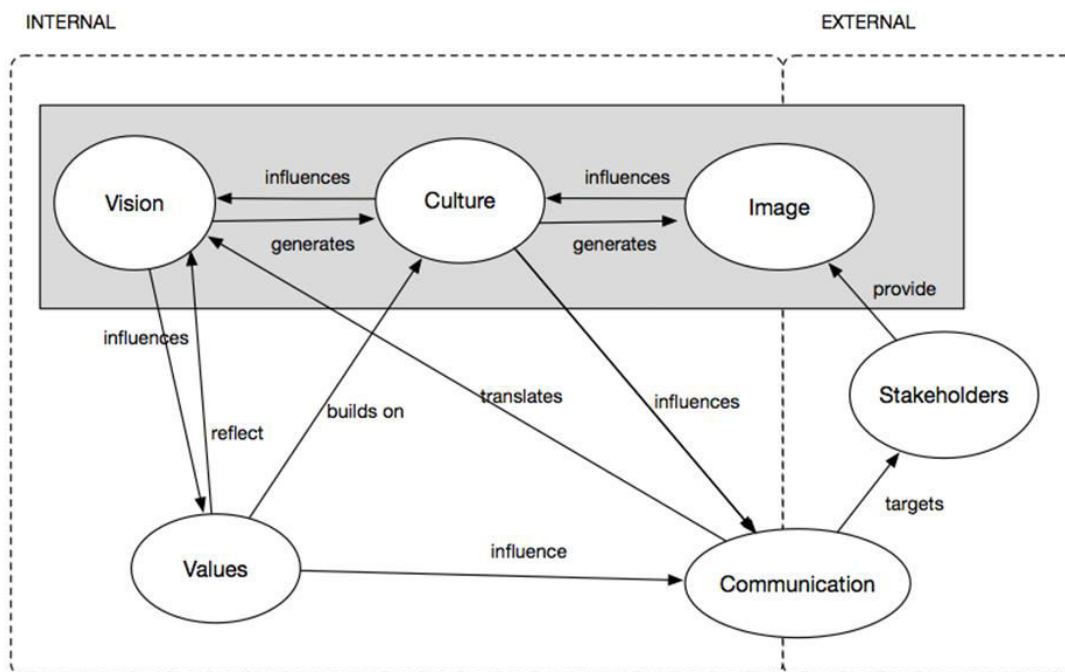
How does Gap define its ethos?

Gap, a well-known American clothing brand since 1969, has always represented American casual style and has been a representative and symbol of accessible fashion. However, it has also always been appealing with its ethos, communicating deeper values and cultural commitments. The primary ways Gap defines and communicates its ethos are through internal and external messaging, visual identity, website, corporate initiatives, and overall brand strategy. To start with, in branding, ethos is the core identity of a brand, which encompasses its traits, culture, mission, community, and goals. In other words, it expresses the brand's character and authenticity (Macy, 2018). In the case of Gap, it has always succeeded in making ethos a central and compelling element to connect emotionally with its consumers and symbolize itself as a symbol of American casual style in the market. The analysis of the content presented on Gap's official website shows that Gap defines its ethos through core values concentrated on modern American style, comfort, a commitment to sustainability, and ethical responsibility. Although it positions itself as a brand that promotes optimism, individualism, and sustainability, it functions vividly only in its internal communication sector. More specifically, if one looks at the Elikan

and Pigneur visual inquiry framework, it clearly shows two main subsections of communicating brand identity: internal and external. Further analysis of the internal components shows that Gap has a clear vision of moving toward a better world with its consumers and team (Gap, 2025).

According to the inquiry tool, the vision is influenced by culture. It influences it simultaneously, which means that its vision shapes culture and communicates its internal culture through inclusivity, diversity, and creativity. Finally, it influences values and drives internal values like curiosity and excellence. Secondly, as mentioned before, Gap fosters a culture of inclusion, curiosity, collaboration, and excellence, and builds on values such as ethical labor, sustainable fashion, and human rights. Moreover, it generates vision and image through aspirational and external images, which highly promote diversity and social responsibility.

Furthermore, it translates to communication in which Gap emphasizes its cultural identity in its brand storytelling.



A visual inquiry tool for brand identity by Elikan and Pigneur, 2019

To understand another component titled values, the “our values” sector in Gap’s official website was analyzed, where it is clearly stated that Gap incorporated core values and aims of bridging the equity gap, the inclusion gap, the opportunity gap, and the climate gap (Gap, 2025).

Evidently, these values form the broader vision of shaping culture and influence communication through campaigns, where it is stated like “Create for All, With All.”

The image is the first component appearing in the external section of the Elikan & Pigneur inquiry tool. Overall, consumers perceive Gap as an inclusive and classic American brand.

According to the inquiry tool, this is generated by culture and vision, which means that Gap’s image is shaped by cultural emphasis on ethical practices. Moreover, it influences culture through public perception, which “comes back” to the company making significant changes and updates, towards, for example, sustainability or new innovative shifts in the market. Another critical component is the stakeholders’ section, which basically consists of investors, employees, customers, communities, and partners. With the assistance of stakeholders’ reactions, responses, feedback, sales data, and so on, Gap’s public image is refined. This is targeted by communication, meaning that various marketing campaigns are designed to engage broader audiences and stakeholders. The final significant component is communication. Gap’s primary communication is basically done through digital marketing, personalization via AI, influencers’ or celebrities’ collaborations, purpose-driven storytelling, advertisements, and so on. The position of the communication component shows that it is directly influenced by culture and values, translates vision and targets stakeholders, and directly affects the public image.

Although the analysis interprets that Gap, according to Elikan and Pigneur’s inquiry tool, effectively aligns between internal identity and external expression, it lacks in its successful

communication in the external section. Although Gap successfully defines clear internal values and has a definite vision and internal culture, delivering all these components and the overall brand image to its stakeholders and the public is becoming difficult. One of the major issues can be considered the fact that factually only a minority of younger generations would check the official website and its subsections to find out what the visions, values, and culture of a specific brand are before consuming it, meaning that a brand needs to communicate those components through more accessible channels.

Thus, deeper stakeholder engagement is required in underperforming segments specifically and to leverage the vision further in future innovation, like tech in fashion. To sum up, Gap's brand ethos through Elikan and Pigneur's visual inquiry framework centers on bridging gaps to foster a better world, which is obviously rooted in the company's history and is reflected in its mission, vision, values, and overall culture. To improve this experience, this rebranding campaign suggests using the power of social media platforms nowadays, including Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and so on. Specifically, YouTube can be used to create and post documentaries and podcasts that present branded content and, in a very detailed way, explore its primary visions, mission, and cultural values. Finally, it would be a good idea to partner with social impact organizations with the same vision and values and integrate them into the product's packaging, digital channeling, and so on. This experience will definitely further enhance the authenticity of the brand.

Another significant source through which Gap's new rebranding strategy is formed is the insightful book titled "Building Strong Brands" by David A. Aaker, which suggests four

essential elements that play a crucial role in rebranding and visual branding. The author states that for successful rebranding, it is critical to concentrate on four main elements, which are brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. Firstly, particularly in North America, Gap succeeded in high brand awareness, many people recognize it as a well-known American casual brand, and its logo and heritage tell a lot more about the brand's several decades of history. However, there is a problem with raising awareness among younger generation and create as strong bonds between the brand and them and also, reach audiences in an international level. For example, many people from Armenia were unfamiliar with the brand Gap during the survey implementation process. In order to overcome this issue, the new rebranding suggests collaborating with Gen Z-centric influencers and allowing them to be co-designers to contribute to their engagement in the process and encourage their engagement, which will result in better outcomes. Moreover, in order to reach international consumers, the new rebranding suggests collaborating with famous designers from different countries who already have successful personal branding. For this specific project, later well-known Armenian singer and designer Sirusho's collaboration will be suggested with Gap, which will initiate the creation of their jointly designed products. Another essential element, according to Aaker, is the perceived quality of the product: product durability and style relevance. Although Gap is known for its durable and high-quality products, it has issues with style relevance since it lags behind in the competition with fast fashion brands offering trendier and cheaper products (like Zara, H&M, etc.). In order to overcome this issue, it is crucial not to start producing more affordable and stylish products than other competitors, but to preach a new philosophy with the following slogan: One piece, many seasons. Not one trend, one wear. The brand should reach the target market with the idea that the consumer must invest in something essential to his/her wardrobe

because style lasts, but trends fade with every week. Thus, the concept that Gap's products are more durable, promise to be used forever, and simultaneously suggest timeless essentials, instead of micro-trends, should be incorporated into its primary branding. Gap successfully functions in brand associations since it has positive historical associations with American casual style and inclusivity. Finally, Gap has a firm, loyal base while analyzing brand loyalty. The survey results and interviews done during this capstone project show that people who consumed Gap once continued to consume it for their lifetime.

In order to achieve an effective corporate rebranding, Gap has also been analyzed through six principles suggested by Merrilees & Miller in their "Corporate Rebranding" article. Firstly, Gap's strengths and weaknesses have been identified to find its competitive advantage in the market and overcome its weaknesses. Gap's first and most crucial strength is its heritage and trust, which have formed over the decades. In an era where the market is overfilled with fast fashion and brand churn, Gap's heritage is a stabilizing force, which can be used in the future as a competitive advantage over competitors. One weakness hindering Gap's progress is its lack of effective messaging and external communication. As mentioned already, Gap needs to incorporate various strategies to efficiently communicate with its target audience through social media platforms, podcasts, and collaborations with Gen Z-centric influencers and creators. Then, Gap needs to identify its primary goals and objectives. Although it has a clear vision for its future, it should specifically focus on forming short-term and long-term goals, like growing e-commerce sales to present x% + of total revenue in the upcoming four to five years. Moreover, in order to attract and strengthen the bond between Gap and its current and younger generations' consumers, it is crucial to create a platform where they can address their needs and preferences.

By being introduced through social media platforms and podcasts, the younger generation will definitely share their basic expectations and experiences related to Gap, which will contribute to the fulfillment of the principle suggested by Merrilees and Miller. Finally, it is critical to rely heavily on the visual elements of the brand as a tool for creating and maintaining trust. As Merrilees and Miller mentioned, the brand's new identity will not ruin the company's reputation or position in the market. Following this principle, the latest visual rebranding of Gap keeps the primary classic elements of Gap, which shows its heritage and classic American identity; therefore, it will not ruin the customers' trust in the brand.

Another central strategy incorporated in the new rebranding of the Gap is the focus on sustainability and inclusivity because evidently, Gap has no clear external communication showing that it is a brand emphasizing sustainability and mindful consumption. As Winit, Kantabutra, and Kantabutra state, nowadays, one significant element directly connected to the brand reputation and equity is sustainability. They believe aligning the brand's visual elements, including its logo and packaging, with sustainability objectives is an effective strategy. Following the advice of the experts, Gap's new visual branding has vividly incorporated sustainability in its logo and packaging to gain trust and long-term assistance from its stakeholders. The idea of integrating sustainability is also supported by Confetto, Palazzo, Ferri, and Normando who in their "Brand Activism for Sustainable Development Goals: A Comparative Analysis in the Beauty and Personal Care Industry" clearly state that the incorporation of a more sustainable environment can contribute to attracting more consumers from every demographic and boost trust. Besides the competitive advantage mentioned above (Gap's heritage and trust), another efficient competitive advantage is considered the

incorporation of sustainability, since although nowadays it is becoming more and more impactful and appealing for consumers, many brands continue to bypass it.

Competitor Analysis

The image shows the ZARA logo in a large, bold, black serif font. The letters are closely spaced and have a classic, elegant appearance. The logo is centered on the page.

In this fast-moving global market, it is not easy to find a differentiator and stand out among the many trendy and successful brands, which, in any case, cast a shadow over older and classic brands. One of the most vivid brands is Zara, a trend-driven and premium-positioned brand. Zara, which is owned by Inditex, is primarily located across 96 countries with 2264 stores (Roll, 2021). This contributes to its international recognition in almost a hundred countries and, consequently, increases the number of international consumers. One strategy Zara has incorporated is that it primarily produces fashion-forward designs that limit the quantity, automatically creating a sense of urgency among its consumers. According to the research, approximately 12.000 new designs are produced annually, and the maximum period for which items stay in stores is less than a month (Burgen, 2012).

In comparison with H&M, which is another competitor in the market, Zara's average price point is approximately \$40.46 (EnvZone, 2025). Zara tries to incorporate sustainability in its branding; however, it promises to use only organic materials by 2030. While analyzing its external communication strategies, it becomes clear that it uses the same technique as the production strategy. That is to say, it follows the philosophy of "less is more", which means that through providing high-quality but exclusive content, they keep the intrigue and they create a "hunger" in the customer through limitation, which makes them dependent on the brand. Moreover, according to the same source, Zara has a strong visual storytelling, agility, and consistent brand identity: "From Instagram to YouTube, Zara's messaging and visuals align perfectly, reinforcing its identity" (Brafton, 2024). While discussing Zara's weaknesses, it is crucial to mention that Zara lacks strong relationships and follow-up communication with its customers, which logically affects the company's ability to maintain trust and an effective emotional bond and loyalty towards the brand. Moreover, Zara never collaborates with influencers or fashion enthusiasts in order to attract various audiences and reach different communities.

Compared to Zara, Gap already has a strong bond and trust from the consumers towards it, providing a tremendous competitive advantage over Zara. Moreover, the new rebranding campaign concentrates on initiating new collaborations on social media platforms with Gen Z-centric influencers and international designers, which is obviously an omission in Zara's case. This practice will not only engage and attract new audiences but will also provide an effective, non-direct communication channel for consumers better to understand their needs and expectations from the brand. Finally, sustainability is not fully integrated into Zara's visual and brand communication as a central visual theme. Incorporating the new visual branding suggested

below (new logo of Gap), Gap gains the opportunity to take one step forward and leave another competitor behind, since it integrates sustainability in its visual communication as a central theme.

As part of the research, as mentioned earlier, in order to understand the current needs, brand perception, and expectations of the potential customer, the researcher conducted a series of interviews, both in the Armenian market and abroad, and conducted an online survey. Although depending on a number of factors, the outcomes of the interviews and the survey formed a somewhat contradictory picture, based on in-depth academic research and studies, and combining them with the interviews and the survey, the researcher was able to create GAP's new branding and its new visual branding.

Starting with the process of conducting the survey and its implementation, it is essential to note that it was conducted not only in the Armenian market and with citizens of the Republic of Armenia, but also in several foreign countries, such as the United States, Canada, and China (since it was conducted online). Depending on many factors, such as cultural, economic, social, age-related, and market-related factors, people's perceptions, views, and choices naturally change. One of the striking examples of this was that, unlike other foreign countries (the United States, Canada, and China), in the Republic of Armenia, out of 102 online and 78 in-person survey participants, about 26 did not know what sustainability was. This raises a new challenge, as the public cannot attach importance to something about which it does not have sufficient knowledge and information. Meanwhile, the survey results in foreign countries showed that people are aware of sustainability. Moreover, they consider it one of the most critical indicators

in making a decision to consume a given brand. More specifically, around 53.8% of 52 foreign citizens believe that a brand consumer should pay attention to whether the brand incorporates sustainability or not. According to the survey participants, this is more often expressed and implemented through visual triggers, so for effective engagement, the consumer must understand at first glance that the brand is sustainable. When asked what the first associations and visual triggers that remind consumers of sustainability are, around 37% of the survey participants (who were the majority) claimed that minimalist design. Another 28% thought eco-friendly elements and symbols were the first associations and visual triggers that remind consumers of sustainability. Furthermore, 23% thought integrating the color green into the process was essential, and the remaining participants suggested integrating blue or natural imagery (they were clearly in the minority).

Further research led to an interview with Ani Zadikyan, a 58-year-old fashion designer born in Istanbul who moved to the United States. She has been a loyal GAP customer for over 30 years and, with a high sense of pride, mentioned that GAP, for her and her other acquaintances, is not just a brand but a part of their personal history. Elaborating on the visual identity of the GAP brand, she, with deep admiration, noted that it has something comforting and trustworthy in its classic look, “I mean, the clean lines and the sense of simplicity, is not just about fashion, but it awakens the feelings of trust and loyalty towards the brand”. When asked what strategies she would prioritize during the GAP rebranding process, as a professional designer who has worked in the fashion industry for nearly 40 years, she clearly stated that although the above-mentioned “heritage” has excellent value for her, it is no less critical to evolve. She assured that market research shows that today’s generation has high demands and expectations from the market,

which means that they are aware and very passionate about sustainability. Sharing her own experience and the conclusions she made along the way to success, she noted that today's thoughtful generation stands for not a brand but something else, "You know, the young generation notice and value when the brand just not produce and sell its products, but contributes and stands for something more- for the planet, for transparency, and overall, for a better future". Referring to what she perceives as the formula for GAP's success, Zadikyan limited her remarks by saying, "Create the new visual branding of the GAP in a way, that will make it to stay rooted in what made it iconic- and grow into what makes it relevant for the next generation, make the tradition to meet transformation". Zadikyan's interview analysis and survey results show that maintaining the basic visual appearance of GAP is very important. However, the new visual branding requires compliance with the demands of the younger generation, which implies, first, the incorporation of sustainability, second, minimalist design, and third, the integration of green color.

Having a clear picture of the specific requirements I have for creating the new visual look of the GAP, I pursued the question of selecting a Graphic Designer. After studying the job market in detail and conducting a series of interviews, I selected designer Irina Pirumyan. The main reason for my choice of the young designer was her connection with the younger generation and deep knowledge of different periods and stages of fashion development. Moreover, studying her work, I realized that she does not just draw; her every choice of color, size of elements, and style has its own background and results from deep analysis. After a short conversation, Pirumyan understood in a very short time what we should create together. One of my key questions, which was addressed to Pirumyan, was how she can ensure that a rebranding resonates with a brand's

existing customers while also attracting new potential customers. Her professional response impressed me: “Rebranding helps many companies increase brand awareness and change stereotypes associated with that brand. To be sure, you just need to conduct consistent research and never stop promoting the brand” (Pirumyan, 2025). Moreover, she was asked how she ensures the new visual identity is scalable and adaptable to future marketing campaigns or product expansions. She mentioned that the newly created brand can be challenged in the future if it is not created entirely based on trends. Brand details are durable when they are not based on what is beautiful at the moment. To expand the product, you need to have simple, straightforward, and non-conforming brand elements. For example, do not include a product image in the logo, and do not use fonts in any style. Her approach to rebranding a brand is highly aligned with the research results of the previous studies and interview outcomes. That is to say, Elikan and Pigneur’s suggested model of implementing visual identity rebranding, evidently highlights that in order to succeed in this process, it is crucial to maintain the historical heritage and emotional resonance of the brand, while adding little bit of innovative elements, but most importantly, ensure a smooth transition to its new visual appearance and not be “too trendy” and ensure its future adaptability. Through our joint efforts, we were able to create a new GAP logo that confidently addresses all the needs of the younger generation while maintaining GAP's core visions, missions, values , and historical heritage and association with its classic look.



Gap's new logo

The logo visibly retains the traditional GAP look, with a navy blue background, white Spire Regular font, 12-point font size, and standard letter spacing. This helps maintain customer connection to the brand and builds trust in GAP. In other words, consistency in design plays a crucial role in ensuring brand recognition and contributes to the brand's familiarity and confidence, which customers have built over the years. Nevertheless, to meet the expectations and demands of the new generation, there was a need to accept the challenges of changing its basic look. To evolve those demands, Pirumyan and I incorporated subtle yet meaningful changes. Firstly, we added thin and delicate green lines to the letters of GAP, which do not simply convey the “responsibility” to make the logo aesthetically appealing but emphasize the message of sustainability, as expected by the audience. As they mentioned, green is widely

associated with sustainability and signals GAP's commitment to environmentally conscious practices. Moreover, we decided to add a green leaf element from the upper right side of the letter P, which has a deep explanation. Firstly, we aim to create natural imagery that is associated with the eco-friendly environment and nature. On the other hand, the leaf is a powerful symbol in the logo. That is to say, it represents nature, renewal, and sustainability. The position of the leaf, which is placed in the upper right corner of the letter P, is consistent with the practice that we read from left to right, and our eyes naturally will move toward the top right. That automatically makes the element visually dominant and memorable, yet it ensures that the GAP and its iconic simplicity are not neglected. Finally, a leaf carries an impressive metaphor associated with a beginning and growth. Although the size of the leaf is small, it holds the potential to grow and evolve. Growing from a single little leaf to a tree, GAP carries the mission to connect and create a bridge between generations, making a single family tree with the young generation and the old



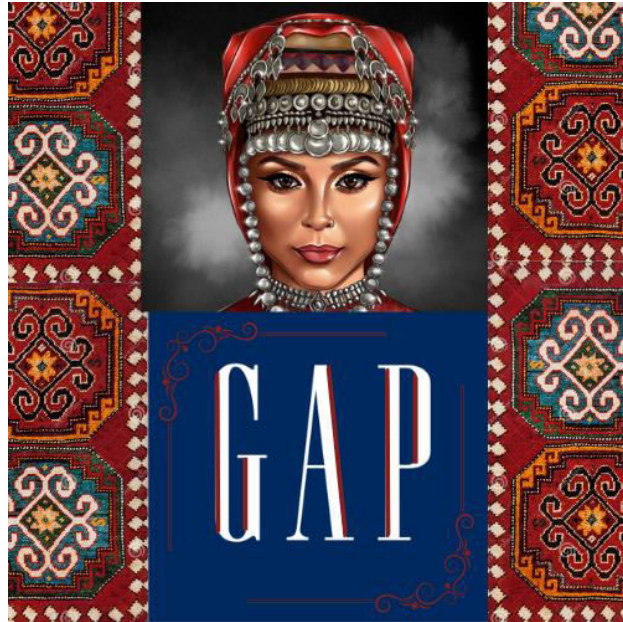
loyal customers. To sum up, the little green leaf becomes a symbol of continuity and growth, technically also visually reminding us of nature and sustainability.





Another suggested aspect of the rebranding of Gap includes a collaboration between Gap and Sirusho. The survey results made clear that many people in Armenia hope and are ready to see Sirusho's new steps towards the international market, which could be implemented through the

collaboration with Gap. To be more concrete, around 30% of the survey participants believed that it is a good idea to start a partnership with a designer, specifically Sirusho. On the one hand, we had Gap, which represents American classic style and its heritage. On the other hand, we had Sirusho, who is the epitome of bridging old Armenian heritage to contemporary Armenia, trying to make today's generation aware of what their ancestors wanted to pass on to them. The cooperation between Gap and Sirusho is predicted to have efficient outcomes since Sirusho is the one who successfully maintained the old Armenian heritage while making it fashionable and attractive, and meeting the demands of the younger generation. At this point, GAP needs the same campaign to win the hearts of young customers. The opinion of American Armenian designer Ani Zadikyan regarding the collaboration between GAP and Sirusho also played a key role in this choice. When asked what prospects she sees as a result of this collaboration, she confirmed that this collaboration could be a powerful fusion of modern fashion and cultural influence. Moreover, she confirmed that this collaboration will likely be a global turning point not only in the American and Armenian markets but also internationally, because this partnership has the potential to bring unique designs incorporating Armenian motifs and vibrant patterns with modern takes on traditional elements. Furthermore, Zadikyan assured that Sirusho's international reach "will definitely help Gap to connect with new markets and younger generations looking for fashion with cultural depth and meaning" (Zadikyan, 2025). Graphic designer Irina Pirumyan and I set out to create a visual image highlighting the collaboration between GAP and Sirusho, which would be a hint for potential customers about the new collaboration. Thus, the selection of details required long and meticulous work, because combining brands with two different cultural backgrounds was quite a challenging task.



As a result, the main visual was decided to focus on two primary colors: navy blue, which is characteristic of the GAP, and red, which is associated with traditional Armenian heritage. Moreover, in order to emphasize the ancient Armenian identity, it was decided to take several ancient Armenian artifacts that Sirusho often used. Moreover, in order to visually include the GAP in the full Armenian culture, delicate and thin shaded red lines and delicate ornaments of the same color were added to the GAP. Finally, we decided to place the image of an Armenian woman from Sirusho's song Pregomesh. The image is ideally combined with the red ornaments and Sirusho's painting. Finally, it successfully conveys the primary purpose of the image, which is to highlight the collaboration between Sirusho and GAP.

Another suggested version of the new rebranding includes a very minimalistic combination of two collaborators: GAP and Sirusho. Pirumyan and I decided to entirely rely on the core visual features of GAP, incorporating Sirusho's name. As a result, by creating a minimalist image and



maintaining the two primary colors characteristic of GAP – navy blue and white – we were able to showcase GAP’s enduring identity and highlight its new partnership with a new and engaging visual.

Moreover, this new branding implies a complete transition to eco-friendly raw materials. The new product will fundamentally update its packaging preferences as part of this mission. It is planned to use recycled Craft Paper, which is biodegradable and recyclable, and often can be made from post-consumer waste. Furthermore, it is planned to ensure that the paper comes from responsibly managed forests and is FSC-certified paper.



To conclude, by incorporating eco-friendly raw materials into the production process of the new GAP & Sirusho collaboration, the researcher aims to enhance brand credibility by showing commitment to ethical sourcing and, therefore, being purposeful towards a greener future.

Another impressive collaboration enthusiasm was generated among the survey participants regarding the cooperation between GAP and Levi's. A large number of survey participants claimed that the joint work of Levi's and GAP will certainly bear excellent outcomes. As a result of the studies, the researcher came to the conclusion to establish contact with Susanna Ghushchyan, who volunteered to be interviewed after participating in the survey, a 35-year-old young woman with a great passion for the fashion industry and modern trends. According to her, she is an individual who goes shopping at least four days a week, because it is a lifestyle for her. When asked whether she could imagine the cooperation between GAP and Levi's (two competing brands in the market) at all, she noted that they are both walking towards the same

path. Expanding, she explained that this cooperation would combine Levi's' expertise in denim with Gap's versatile, everyday style and simultaneously appeal to both loyal customers and trend-conscious consumers. Moreover, incorporating sustainability and innovative designs will definitely boost both brands' relevance and make them go viral.



To create better harmony between the color combination of the two brands, Pirumyan and I decided to change the navy blue to a slightly brighter blue, which perfectly suits the red background of Levi's. As the background cut and the shape of Levi's are not standard, we decided not to overburden the image by making Gap's background extraordinary. The choice of letters' colors was intentionally kept white to maintain visual clarity and highlight contrast and visibility. Moreover, the choice of white color suggests transparency, honesty, and trust, which are central values aligned with modern sustainability and ethical branding.



While creating and redesigning the Gap Kids logo, the deliberate design choices were made by the researcher and the graphic designer that besides the overall aesthetics of the visual, it should convey a sense and spirit of childhood, a sense of responsibility towards future generations, and maintain a strong decades-long connection with the consumer and the Gap's primary logo. For this purpose, a joint decision was made to keep the navy blue background, which can be seen in the background of all official Gap visuals. At the same time, in order to brighten up the seemingly gloomy blue and give it a childish touch, it was decided to place a color palette within the GAP letters, arranging them in a particular order, which also had its purpose and reasoning. Not forgetting that one of the key strategies of the new GAP branding was to incorporate sustainability, the color gradient starts with blue and green. The reason is that people usually study/read specific visuals either from left to right or from top to bottom, and since the colors are arranged on a certain gradient, the viewer is likely to look at them from top to bottom. Seeing the blue and green colors, which the majority of survey participants and interviewees considered the

first to be associated with an eco-friendly environment and sustainability, people will remember that GAP has a message to promote the conscious conservation of green resources. Moreover, blue reminds people of clean skies and water, while green evokes growth and renewal. Its sequential perception by the visual apparatus will evoke a sense of harmonious relationship with nature and enhance care and responsibility towards the environment, which are key values in Gap's new rebranding campaign.

The transition to yellow and orange colors serves to attract children with warmth and energy, usually perceived through these colors. Yellow commonly represents optimism, curiosity, and the sun, with which children often associate as they bring wonder and joy into the world. Moreover, orange conveys creativity and enhances enthusiasm, symbolizing the youth: playful and active. Finally, colors are finalized with red color, which, besides giving the overall composition to the image, adds vitality to it.

The complete sequence of the colors intends to convey a story to the viewer: from ecological mindfulness to vibrant self-expression. Promoting the values Gap's new rebranding and visual branding stand for, the latest visual builds a subconscious emotional connection with the younger generation, persuading them to eco-conscious decisions and enthusiastic individuals' expression. While deciding on typography, the researcher and graphic designer intentionally and consciously decided to keep the official Gap's classic serif font for credibility, timeless elegance, and maintaining trust with the consumers. Moreover, to make the new logo clearly perceptible in its category, the researcher and the graphic designer decided to pair it with a clean and modern sans-

serif typeface for the word “KIDS”. This introduces a more approachable and playful tone and clearly emphasizes that the edition is specifically designed for kids.

To sum up, the new logo for the kids' edition introduces a combination of traditional and innovative elements to appeal both aesthetically and meaningfully to its consumers. More importantly, the new logo not only highlights market’s present needs but also emphasizes its forward-looking vision towards sustainability and a better world.



Another suggested version of the Gap logo for Kids Edition was designed in a very minimalistic and simple way, which is typical of Gap. Pirumyan and the researcher decided to reverse the background and lettering colors, making the background white and the lettering navy blue. With this choice, we were able to innovate and make the overall visual look of the logo more modern, which is very important for the younger generation, while maintaining the basic Gap look, which will remind parents of their strong connection with Gap. Moreover, the basic Gap typography

was preserved for the same purpose, which will undoubtedly contribute to the brand's decades-long trust, heritage, and, of course, timeless elegance. Moreover, another essential change was integrating the word "KIDS" at the bottom of the image in order to specify the purpose of the visual. The word "KIDS" is rendered in a bold sans-serif font, which shows clarity, modern contrast, and approachability. Moreover, coloring each letter of the word "KIDS" in a different color aimed to convey the energy of childhood. Firstly, the target audience of the visual branding is children, in this case, who are highly appealed to and are naturally drawn to bright and vibrant colors. That is why a choice was made to color the letters in orange, yellow, green, and blue, and at the highest possible alignment with the world children perceive. Moreover, from the psychological perspective, children and their emotions are hugely influenced by saturated colors. For example, orange evokes enthusiasm, yellow energy, green growth, and blue calmness. The combination of these colors provides a harmonious emotional palette, simultaneously reassuring and persuading them to be attracted by the product. Finally, very often these colors can be noticed in various educational materials and learning/gaming activities, which automatically attract children because they associate this coloring with positive experiences, such as learning activities, playing, and so on. To sum up, in the case of this logo as well, the researcher and the graphic designer enthusiastically synthesised tradition and innovation and designed a thoughtful visual conveying essential values core to Gap's identity.

Conclusion

This capstone project created a complete package, designing it based on the in-depth research of well-known scholars, equally evaluating and applying the opinions of potential and non-potential customers, the input of several field specialists, and, of course, the participation of a professional graphic designer. As a result, about five new products and collaborations were created and transformed, which are exclusively aimed at preserving the identity, core visions, missions, and values formed over several decades of GAP. All of them ideally suggest a design concept fitting the evolving market and younger generations' expectations and demands while directly impressing and attracting all the demographic groups. Finally, as a competitive advantage in today's fast-moving and globalized market, Gap's new rebranding and visual branding incorporated sustainability as its new core value in its future operations, making it visually appealing and remarkable in its new primary logo.

Gap, which seems to be several decades behind its competitors, has every chance to take a leading position in the market with the right strategy and branding. First, in its next steps, Gap should rely on the practice of testing new design concepts and exchanging messages with real customers to understand whether they meet their needs and expectations. Moreover, a fundamental question that needs to be raised for each demographic group is whether they still feel like "Gap", because regardless of the strategy or branding campaign, there must be a clear goal to maintain the true identity Gap, because when the feeling of "Gap" among customers is lost, Gap itself will be lost in today's fast-paced market and, indeed, will not even be noticed among its trendier and relevant competitors.

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