

SALES AND MERCHANDISE MANAGEMENT

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1. Introduction

This report is about the current trends within the apparel industry and how the rise of athletic wear is affecting the positions and operations of big sporting businesses such as Nike and Adidas. Furthermore, an analysis has been made on how customers behave when purchasing athletic wear and what trends may come.

2. Athletic Wear

Sportswear is clothing, including footwear that is worn for sporting activities. A lot of sport specific clothing is worn to be practical, comfy and provide safety to athletes when participating in a physical exercise. Typical sports garments include polo shirts, tracksuits, and shorts (Shishoo, 2015: p8).

However, in recent years a lot more sports clothing has been purchased but for more of everyday use outside of physical activities. No one's sure when the trend started to kick off. But, the phrase "athleisure" was used in 1976 (Armstrong, 2016) on a trainer's advert. The word started to come back later in April of 2016 (Armstrong, 2016) and defined as "casual clothing to be worn for exercising and for general use (Armstrong, 2016). Many businesses such as Sweaty Betty (Armstrong, 2016) and JD Sports have introduced their own athletic wear range and have seen a rise in income coming into the business (Armstrong, 2017).

Furthermore, celebrities have helped the growth of athletic wear such as Beyoncé, Selina Gomez, and Rita Ora by wearing these clothes and using the internet to recommend them to the public. Many businesses such as Adidas worked with Rita Ora to showcase a new version of classic tracksuits. Some such as Brooke Burke have their own sports clothing line in place. In the case of Brooke Burke that would be sports bras and leggings (RODULFO, 2016).

Nike is regarded as the leading sportswear provider of equipment, footwear and apparel in the world. This is because of Nikes abilities with their marketing, brand power and awareness from customers. Internationally, the key to doing well is to be very distinctive over your competition. Thus, this has helped Nike's market share by number one in the sports apparel industry within most part of the world (Carpenter, 2016). Their phrases like "Just Do It" and the symbol such as the Nike "Swoosh" helps them to stay on top (Johnson, 2017). Also, they use many sports icons to help sponsor their products. What's more, they are the leader in being innovative and known for their technological advancements (Nike News, 2018).

Just behind Nike is Adidas with their company being number two in the world just behind Nike (Kell, 2016). Their business iconic three-stripe logo appears on their apparel and other jock accessories (Foley, 2017). Adidas main product line focusses on athletic shoes (Adidas, 2018). Therefore, they link themselves with many football and basketball athletes such as the New York Yankees (Adidas, 2018). The company expanded quickly when they bought Reebok for \$3.8 billion (The New York Times, 2005).

Another world leading sports lifestyle business that competes against Nike and Adidas is Puma. They are dedicated to working different ways that help the world by supporting creativity, sustainability, and peace. This is because they aim to stay true and be fair with their

products. One way that Puma strengthens their sports lifestyle brand is by using unique events and marketing campaigns (PUMA, 2018).

3. Customer Behaviour

According to Kumar (2010: p219), customer behaviour is the performance of when customers exhibit a certain action such as searching, buying, using, assessment and disposing of products or services that they expect to satisfy their needs. Others such as (Chitty et al., 2011: p214) believes that individuals buying habits are the results of unplanned decisions that result in being directly involved with gaining, consuming and disposing of goods and services. Nisbet, Elder, and Miner (2009: p336) notes that customers behave a certain way with the goods and services depending on different factors that may influence the individual decision and goods usage. This is because people are complex in nature and keep changing continuously. (Pasmore, 2015: p29)

Thus, it's imperative for businesses to understand the buying habits of existing and potential customers because it allows them to market effectively (Pillai, 2010: p89). Therefore, when you observe a customer, you will start understanding the correct outlook they are coming from. This allows businesses to reduce any uncertainty when creating the marketing mix (Schiffman et al., 2013).

3.1 Role, Status, and Age

Many of us will have different positions depending on what groups, business establishment we associate with. This is because we all have an important role to play in everyday life that affects us individually and the people around us. For example, the role could be being a father or student, and they both inhabit different roles and responsibilities. There is numerous prospect placed on an individual person, and this affects customer behaviour (Mahajan and Mahajan, 2016: p55).

A person can influence an individual shopping behaviour with their role, but someone who has several roles could make it harder as they are seen to be unpredictable (Ramaswamy, 2013: p254). Bearing in mind, the varied kind of sports accessories out there. It may affect a person buying that depending on what sport or team they support. On the other hand, they could just like the accessory. However, these kinds of settings are expected. So, businesses must accept that these expectations will come whether it fits with the accessories purpose. The expectations of these customers could influence the acquisition of these sports accessories and merchandise (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 2011: p80).

Customers sometimes select athletic wear range which is applicable to their current roles and standing (Taloo, 2007: p204). For example, a mother who works in Nike or Adidas would be wearing athletic wear. But, a mother who works in a bank would have your usual smart professional uniforms. Thus, businesses must understand that a role and position of a person can play a factor in their buying habits (Sood, 2017: p59). Thus, the mother who works in the bank could also be interested in a sporting club and will purchase her favoured sports

accessories. The mother in a manager position within a sports company will obtain sporting garments as that's her role in the business (Kotler et al., 2015).

Everyone will purchase different merchandises and use different services over their life. Different types of clothing you wear and foods you eat are certainly different from the early years of your life especially when we were children (Aaron, 2016). Every person will have different styles of clothing and age plays an important role as these days people wish to wear athletic wear as it makes them look sportier in appearance (Weingus, 2014).

Furthermore, the difference in age affects the purchase of products (Kolb, 2015: p85). For example, Michael Jordan's shoes and Jerseys will attract more youngsters to the market than mature customers (Patterson, 2017). The athletic wear style is completely different to young and mature customers. This is because mature customers will most likely to buy more comfortable clothes than looking sporty (Bailis, 2016).

3.2 Lifestyle

Understanding the lifestyle of customers is important for businesses as it's more important than personality and ideals. A lifestyle is an individual form of living by way of articulated in their area. Looking at different lifestyles is about measuring customers activities. This is done by looking at an individual and how they express themselves through different means such as interest, hobbies, and family. Lifestyle can help businesses to understand a customer position than knowing about their social class or personality (Batra and Kazmi, 2009: p33).

What's more, different understanding lifestyle will help to know the different process a customer will go through during the purchasing stage. Furthermore, a customer lifestyle affects the needs of a product, what's their favourite brand, type of media they use and how they shop. Thus, lifestyle plays an important role in the individual behaviour (Crane, 2012: p64).

So, we understand that someone's lifestyle is affected by everyday habits. It also affects one spending habits. However, in some cases, it sometimes comes to the perspective and values hooked up to those patterns. Every customer features a completely different fashion, and they all behave accordingly in that fashion. Hence, it eventually affects their behaviour. For example, someone who's buying a sports outfit will be identified of their lifestyle and their preferences on that sports outfit. The individual who wears that outfit makes a statement about themselves about who they are or who they wish to be recognised as (Strydom, 2005: p51).

3.3 Personality

Personality is a collection of character affected by internal or external factors. They are completely different to the behavioural tendencies that affect one buying behaviour. Every personality is different as everyone went through different experiences and raised differently that make each one of us unique. Someone's personality can be labelled to have one or more traits such as being competitive, arrogant or ambitious. This what makes that individual and plays a major role in consumer behaviour (Whitbourne, 2017).

Each one of us is different. This can be even seen with our own biology and fingerprints. Thus, each person will have a different personality (DeSalle and Heithaus, 2008: p345). It is a unique psychological makeup that influences how we react to one's environment. For example, some wish to go to movies while others wish to go shopping. It all depends on the individual personality (Cooper, 2015).

Everyone has a personality, and that means everyone will have different desires. However, in some cases, a someone's personality can change and under these situations. Many can thrive on it. For example, When Nike replaced Adidas as NBA kit sponsors. This gave Nike the opportunity to sway many to purchases their products because their brand was seen (MailOnline, 2015). As you can see, there are different ways to change someone's personality, and this affects a customer behaviour (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte, 2012).

3.4 Attitude

According to Majumdar (2010: p30), an attitude is a way of thinking or feeling towards to a product or idea. Therefore, businesses need to either meet with their framework or change customers attitude about their products. However, it is hard to change a person's attitude as it a basis of what they like and dislike. But, of course, some can change. Though some attitudes are a lot stronger than others and this can affect the buying of sports products (Pride and Ferrell, 2008: p203).

One's attitude can affect an individual or groups of people buying certain things (Pride and Ferrell, 2008: p216). For example, die-hard sports fans of a football team that they are extremely dedicated to and have so much passion for the game. If a sponsoring company provides a kit for the players and they use that on the pitch. It will make those fans to purchase the same kit as the players as they all have the same attitude to the sport (Smith, Stavros, and Westberg, 2017: p80).

3.5 Brand Loyalty

Many customers these day are brand loyal. This is where they are loyal to a specific brand and continuously purchase products from the same brand. They do this regardless of the value of the item of the suitability of the product to them (Keller, 2014: p365).

This leads many companies to build customer loyalty within their business to set them apart from the competition. This has helped businesses such as Nike as they were pioneers of this with products such as Nike+ and Nike Fuel band fitness trackers (Forte, 2016). Many such as Under Armor are trying to link their fitness data with customer loyalty. They are doing this by working with Map My fitness to understand purchasing behaviour and activity levels which will help them to create more products relevant to customers (Pathak, 2016).

4. Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising is a common practice that is used within the retail industry. It refers to anything that is seen by customers within or outside of the store. Businesses will develop a floor plan and three-dimensional displays to engage customers to come into the store and spend on their products. If done effectively it can create awareness of the brand and stimulate customers in being brand loyal (Ramaswamy, 2013: p501). This is especially seen by businesses selling athletic wear (Rapid Retail, 2016),

A report by the Global Retail Sporting Goods industry has stated that the key factor that has helped the retail sporting goods industry is the rise in disposable income, the government promoting sports activities and participation, and the upsurge of people being concerned about one's health, diet, and lifestyle. Thus, this provided an opportunity for sports retailers to rethink their store layout and brand offering (Dennis, 2016).

Furthermore, there is now more product choice for customers from a wide range of businesses locally and internationally with the internet. A lot more products have been designed to become customizable for customers to create their perfect masterpiece. Thus, sports retailers must use necessary tools to fulfil customers desires as the competition in the market is an all-time high (Dennis, 2016).

Therefore, sports retailers must be able to diverse themselves from the market to make them look more new and unique (Waters, 2018). There are many methods that a sports retailer can do to make their store more appealing to their customers.

4.1 Mannequins

A mannequin is a doll that is used by individuals to display or fit clothing onto it. Within the retail industry, they are an important element of the visual merchandising concept as they used throughout the store to display the apparel product. Mannequins have transformed over the years from having no human features to looking like a human. This is because it helps the individual looking at the apparel on the mannequin on themselves like they are wearing it (Bhatia, 2008: p223).

Nowadays they are looking even more and more human that it is almost like they are a real person. This is because some businesses have started to model the mannequins out of real people. These mannequins will have different impairments such as curved spines and shorted limbs to attract disabled customers to the store as well. They want to remind people that beauty doesn't come from your physical appearance (Dougherty, 2014).

Even mannequins are being more diverse to different sizes of women. Shops such as Debenhams are displaying plus-size mannequins with their apparel to show customers that their products are for anyone (Martinson, 2013).

Furthermore, more technology is being used on mannequins such as allowing a smartphone to connect with the mannequin and send information about the clothing to the receiver. This benefits the retailer as they still engage with their customers even when the store is closed. This means they constantly interact with their customer can send whatever information to develop customer insight and help increase sales (Curtis, 2014).

4.2 Mirrors

A mirror is made from glass that will reflect a clear image back to the individual looking at it. Therefore, stores will use mirrors in many ways such as making the individual look smaller or the store larger depending on how mirrors are laid out within the store. Nowadays with the rise of technology, there has been an increase of different types of mirrors used within these stores (Bhalla, and Anuraag, 2010: p167).

Some stores now have delayed mirrors that captures an image and holds it for the individual to look at. Therefore, you cannot look how the clothing looks on you from behind and front (WILKES, 2008). Other stores such as Macy's will have different lighting options when putting on clothing. This is to help customers picture themselves in different scenarios. For example, walking outside, having a meeting within an office or going out with friends (Brown, 2015).

However, many stores such as Superdry within Berlin have incorporated smart mirrors. These mirrors are not made from glass and reflect at you but take a virtual picture of you and can put you into any outfit within the store. This allows customers to take more time to the store and be engaged with the brand and products (Dennis, 2016).

4.3 Store Layout

A good store layout will serve many purposes. One of those purposes is to create a smooth customer flow throughout the store. Therefore, the speed of how fast the customers walk in important. Slowing them down will help them get exposed to the store's products and make them think in buying other products that they didn't need (Ribeiro, 2016).

Another purpose is to prevent shoplifting. Thus, a poorly layout store would make it easy for people to steal. So, the store must place variable heights of products on stores or have the most sensitive products within sight of staff (Ribeiro, 2016).

Besides that, having a store concept is key as it allows customers know what type of store you are. New stores opening such as Arket to opening outside of London at Bluewater for the first time will have a new modern-day market concept. They will have a spacious layout with the store for customers to breathe in and a Nordic café for customers to relax. This will allow their customers to walk around wherever they want without bumping into someone and stay longer and be exposed to the brand and products as they are relaxing having a coffee (Dennis, 2018).

Different use of store concept can be seen by the Guildford Tunsgate Quarter. They have remodelled with a focus of their designs on interacting with the surrounding streets of Tunsgate and Castle-street. This is because they want to provide a special shopping experience and brand offering (Dennis, 2018).

Even Welsh Rugby Union flagship store in Westgate street has completely changed their store concept to allow more natural customer flow and flexible merchandising layout. Customers can now roam around the store easier and an inspiring space that begins or ends with a stadium

visit. Even the lightings have been dropped to produce a more theatrical atmosphere and use of red LED lights in the background (Dennis, 2018).

4.4 Lighting

Lighting can be a great tool if used correctly to influences customer buying behaviour and how long they spend within the store. If stores are not well designed or illuminated in the correct place, this can make the customer not enter the store. Over the years more advanced lighting has been used in unique ways to promote products. Some of these methods include using video projectors to display the classic history of an event or just images, uplighting to shine upwards than downwards and gobo lights to move the light in a different direction (Green, 2018).

4.5 Windows Displays

A window display is the first thing seen by customers when walking passes a store. Therefore, it must be attractive to look at and be able to communicate to the customer. Thus, whatever products are used within the window display will provide the first impression to the customers about what the store is about if they haven't seen it before (Bhalla, and Anuraag, 2010: p144).

However, window displays seem to be fading as it attracts too little of customers. They have become too static and too flat to become impressive for customers. Therefore, businesses need to be more creative when using windows displays such as Nike. Nike has produced Kinetic sculptures of their products and makes their displays interactive for their customers. They understand that technology has evolved and made the most of what's out there in their store to make them more innovative over their competitions (CAMPBELL-DOLLAGHAN, 2013).

4.6 Online Visual Merchandising

Online visual merchandising is how retailers pull their customers from the streets onto the web. They will need to create the similar atmosphere that a customer will get from the store. Therefore, as soon as someone goes to your site, you must make sure that your homepage has a clear story to tell. Like a window display of a store, it is often the very first thing seen by customers. This is where they learn about who you are (Wallace, 2018).

Many apparel brands will use collection based visual merchandising because products are often collection based which makes it easy to create collections. They don't have to fashion brands as collections allow customers identify themselves with the items they are looking for and dice into the site for increased engagement. On many sites, they will showcase brands on bestselling or featured products to get customers to dive more into specific categories and looking at the product range quicker (Wallace, 2018).

It's imperative that a visual merchandising strategy is in place to make the site engaging and attractive for customers. One strategy is to use carousels to drive customers to any collections. To do this well, you would need an attention-grabbing image that is relevant to the collection (Wallace, 2018).

5. Forecasting

Forecasting is important as it allows you to discover from a great range of planning and decision-making circumstances (Khosrow-Pour and Mehdi, 2008: p1030). Many businesses see this as an indispensable tool used by many managerial departments within an organisation because you are using those perspectives to plan. Dependable forecasts of the market size and characteristics can help businesses to make better decisions from a marketing standpoint (Jain and Malehorn, 2005: p39).

Bearing this in mind a company that aims to sell products needs to be able to forecast the demand for their product by looking geographically and the type of customers they are aiming for. The most important forecasting is looking into the area of product demand. This allows businesses to plot their manufacture timetable and arrange suitable inventories (Chase, 2013: p82). Hence, businesses such as Nike and Adidas have spent more money on their research and development departments to forecast future trends (Green, 2017).

5.1 Biotech Clothing

With the rise of athletic wear, many believe that it's here to stay and this is just a stepping stone and will progress from this to biotech clothing that allows us to transform into whatever we want in the future. This means there will be a built-in temperature tracker in place of a shirt that sense what you are feeling. Therefore, if you're feeling a cold or hot it can change the length of sleeve accordingly. Another future trend that may appear is the ability to change the colour of sneakers or clothing instantly (Garfield, 2016).

5.2 Smartphone technology

These days there are several smartphones that connect with fitness clothing. This is because brands like Nike and Adidas have brought out gear to connect to your smartphone. Nike is reported to be in developing a body sensor. This will monitor the movement of your body and stream it into your smartphone. This isn't far off into the future as in July, Under Armour released a pair of sneakers calling it the speed form Gemini 2 record equipment. The sneakers will record an individual run in real time and will upload that data to the smartphone (Garfield, 2016).

5.3 Workplace

Athleisure is becoming more than a trend but of everyday life. It's not going away as the importance of being healthy and looking after your wellbeing will still circle around the air. Thus, athleisure is going to take the next step into the future of being worn more within the workplace. Many businesses are combining athletic look into workplace uniforms. This will allow people to wear their exercise clothes right into the office (Doyle, 2017).

5.4 Smart Clothing

Another future trend that could take athleisure the next step is smart clothing. Clothing will be more practical for everyday use such as charging up your mobile phone and that they can change depending on their environment. This might sound far-fetched, but Nike is in talks with Apple about it and the help with SpaceX. They are even considering having clothing to adapt to both piles of earth and mars environment in the distance future (Everett, 2018).

6. Channels

Nowadays, globalisation and evolving technological advancements have made physical distribution not what it was. Currently, distribution has grown because of new advanced tools that are presented to manage these aspects as well as the use of IT in this regard. Consequently, this has affected businesses as they have different opportunities to improve and handle their strategic challenges (Stadtler, Kilger and Meyr, 2014: p109).

6.1 In-Store Logistics

For the distribution network to be effective, businesses must be able to store and focus on keeping added value to their customers while decreasing the cost. One way to do this is to have in-store visibility (Fernie and Grant, 2015: p121). RFID technology has helped businesses to have real-time insight into their stock. Plus, it alerted them when the stock was low through their suppliers and if any thefts occurred (Gupta, 2008: p147).

Additional tools used within in-store is customer interaction as it requires the greater convenience of customer information for facilitating both the manufacturer and retailer. Customer interaction can similarly be used to store information with the use of mobile phones and used successfully on time to undertake further decisions (Shibata and Takeuchi, 2006: p22).

6.2 Cooperative Physical Logistics

What's more, businesses must focus on their collaborative physical logistics as well as in-store logistics. Cooperative physical logistics allows businesses to share their physical infrastructure such as warehouses storage and transportation vehicles to adopt the overall physical footprint. Also, unite different flows together, and this will allow product distribution and asset utilisation to be greatly improved. As a result, businesses can benefit this sharing scheme throughout their supply chain (Tokhi and Virk, 2016: p174).

6.3 Warehousing

Warehousing is a physical location where you store goods and products that are then distributed to customers and other businesses. Sometimes this is known as a distributing centre and is great for effective management for distribution purpose. It is imperative that the

warehouse is managed effectively as it helps to process and line up the incoming goods or products. Then they get stored around and chased to their correct arrangement before being distributed to their correct destinations products (Pride and Ferrell, 2004: p431).

6.4 Transportation

Transportation plays an important role in a business distribution operation because products that are delivered depend on selecting the right mode of transport that will help take the shipment to the right destination and as quick as possible. Therefore, transportation management is vital as it's part of the distribution role and provide the materials at a moment notice. There are different modes of transport such as road, rail, air and water that have different advantages and disadvantages that will help businesses to use in different situations while maintaining cost low and providing high customers service at the same time (Magad, 2013).

6.5 Robots

Regards to the distribution of products and how technology has come so far. It's not surprising how Nike and Adidas will use robots to provide the increasing demand of athleisure wear. Both businesses want to speed up their supply chain and to do this is going to move towards more automation of producing their products (Bissell-Linsk, 2017). This will help companies like Adidas not to have child labors and serve low wages within their factories anymore (Burke, 2000).

7. Conclusion

To conclude, athletic wear is not going anywhere (ADAMIC, 2015) as we are informed about having a healthy lifestyle and looking after our wellbeing (Chambaud, 2018). It seems Nike will still stay number one (Carbasho, 2010: p11) as sports equipment provider as they are innovative and creative with engaging customers to their brand and producing new exciting products. Wearing athletic wear casually is just the beginning as it will soon sprout into our workplace (Nike News, 2018).

Technology is changing and becoming better in making clothing more functional such as the stainless t-shirt (Express, 2017). Athletic wear will turn from being a trend to the new norm as it will be seen everywhere (Salter, 2015). There are many designs out there that use sports clothing for other functions. This is because many want to work out before or after work. Thus, sports performance clothing having been made to be used in the workplace as well (Simonetti, 2018). Athletic wear will become more durable and functional that everyone will be wearing it and using it for everything other than physical activities (Dorene, 2014).

What's more, it seems customer attitude is the most significant influence on consumer behavior such as whether they like or dislike a product. Thus, if they hate a particular brand or product, then businesses must try and change their influence in creative ways. For example, using a

specific celebrity that individual likes utilizing the brand and this will make them into buying it because their favorite star is using that brand (Batra and Kazmi, 2009: p471).

Furthermore, it is established that visual merchandising is so important in a store and online. This is because having something visually appealing will make people want it because many believe the more pleasing it looks, the better it is. Therefore, a product purpose may not be that great but if it looks good will mean customers will buy it as they want to see themselves as a certain way with that product (Ries, 2014).

But, businesses must stay innovative like Nike to stay ahead of the market and the competition (Shaughnessy, 2014). Therefore, forecasting future trends is imperative. Businesses must research what technology is out there and implement them with their products. This makes that product stand out more and in turn potentially creating the next big trend. Or, making the current trend more interesting with the use of technology (Hooda, 2016: p249). For example, have changeable clothing or sneakers (Garfield, 2016).

To finish, all businesses must have effective management with their distribution function as it plays an important role in producing profits by having the ability to balance service levels and cost throughout a wide range of activities (Ross, 2015: p408). Also, having an effective and spending less on expenses on warehouses will allow businesses to spend on other service level and advance with customer service (Ross, 2015: p605). Plus, electronic method to manage transportation will help direct products to be on time and quick to customers. Having all this is key for businesses to succeed within the competitive athletic wear environment (Ross, 2015: p687).

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