**Executive Summary** In 2005, Gap Inc. launched the pilot store concept named “Forth and Towne” in attempt to win the large demographic of women over 35. The new division of stores joined the existing family of Gap Inc. brands, which included Banana Republic, Old Navy, and the flagship namesake Gap.   
 Unfortunately, sales never took off. During the Gap Inc. Q4 2006 Earnings Call, executives announced that given the sales, productivity levels, and the traffic momentum within the pilot stores, they felt that the probability was too low to achieve an acceptable return on investment from a full rollout of the brand (“The Gap Q4”, 2007, p.1). As a result, Gap Inc. ended the 18 month pilot program and closed the Forth and Towne pilot stores in June, 2007 (“Gap Shares Drop,” 2007, p. 1).   
 This paper will outline a multi-channel dissemination plan for the now defunct brand and will explore optional marketing channels and target markets that may have resulted in a successful full brand rollout of the Forth and Towne apparel stores.   
 The concept for the Forth and Towne apparel store was in response to research that showed the Gap Inc was under servicing the profit rich Baby Boomer demographic. As of 2005, no Gap Inc brand had a marginal market share of the Baby Boomer demographic. The Boomer market can be broken into eight segments, with three of them standing out as being those that the new brand should have spotlighted as primary target markets (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 4). These segments have much in common, including no young children at home, excellent money savers, working whether full- or –part time, enjoy staying in touch with friends and family, and use shopping as a way to socialize (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 4-8).   
 The objectives for the rollout of the brand focused on penetrating the target markets through brand positioning, engaging customers, and building and maintaining customer relationships. A mix of marketing communications and operations would have been necessary in order to implement the advertising and marketing programs. The mix includes mass, social, personal, direct and street marketing channels with a focus on launching most of these different pieces prior to the opening of the first store. An evaluation plan to make mid-course corrections would be based on quantified objectives related to time period of six months after the opening of the first store. The mid campaign metrics to show success and opportunities for improvement include traffic momentum as related to sales, target market penetration, sales return on special events, and freely provided contact information from target markets for future marketing efforts. Finally, the raise in target market penetration, investment returns on special events, and overall sales from foot and Web traffic would have been used to show campaign effectiveness.

**Analysis of the Communication Situation**

*Overview:*

The idea of the new Forth and Towne retail brand began with the parent company Gap Inc identifying a need in the marketplace and an opportunity within the company’s portfolio (“Gap Inc. Analyst,” 2005, p. 3). Gap Inc’s family of brands was targeting a diverse group of demographics. They included:

* The retail parent company name sake *Gap* was geared towards men and women ages 25 to 35 “…looking to express their unique, personal style (“2008 Annual Report”, 2008, p. 5)”.
* *Old Navy* targeted budget-conscious young moms shopping for their families and themselves (“2008 Annual Report”, 2008, p.8).
* *Banana Republic* appealed to a broader range of customers looking for sophisticated style with the quality and affordability (“2008 Annual Report”, 2008, p. 6).

The missing target market in Gap Inc’s portfolio was women over the age of 35 or Baby Boomers (“Gap Inc Analyst,” 2005, p. 1). In 2003, this demographic accounted for 39% or $66 billion in total apparel sales across all specialty and department stores (O’Loughlin, 2005, p. 1). *2005 Market Share Situation*   
 As of 2005, Gap Inc. held only 3% market share of women over the age of 35 across all Gap Inc brands (“Gap Inc Analyst,” 2005, p. 1). This percentage was considerably less when compared to the company’s 8% market share with women under the age of 35 (“Gap Inc Analyst,” 2005, p. 1). The women over 35 or “Boomers” as Gap Inc nicknamed the segment represented the long-lost Gap Inc. customer and, therefore, became the primary reason for the development of the Forth and Towne brand (“Gap Inc Analyst,” 2005, p. 1). *Competitor Overview*  
 During 2004 and 2005, numerous specialty apparel companies that had only concentrated on marketing to the youth (women under 30), found themselves in the same situation as Gap Inc; they had low market share of women over 35 (“Ageless Fashion,” 2007, p. 1). Specialty store chains like Chico's, Eileen Fisher and Janeville, and department store brands Ellen Tracy, Dana Buchman and Sigrid Ols sprung up quickly to meet the underserviced demographic (“Ageless Fashion,” 2007, p. 1). Other specialty chain stores that had catered to under age of 25 crowds were also going after the Boomer market (Barbaro, 2007, p. 2). These chains included Abercrombie & Fitch creating Ruehl No. 925; American Eagle Outfitters rolling out Martin & Osa; and J. Crew starting Madewell (Barbaro, 2007, p. 2).

*Summary*  
 The Forth and Towne brand was born out the need for the parent company to gain market share and positioning within a profit rich demographic that was being underserviced by the current family of Gap Inc brands. Therefore, the communication was to a new target market that Gap Inc had never focused on before.

**Identify and Profile Audiences/Publics/Consumers***Original Marketing Plan* In 2005, the Forth and Towne brand was launched to meet the needs of women over the age of 35 or Boomers as they were nicknamed by Gap Inc. (“Gap Inc Analyst,” 2005, p. 1). This is a large demographic, that was composed of both Baby Boomers (women born between 1946 and 1964) and the older segment from the Generation X (women born between 1965 and 1976) (Wuest, Welkey, Mogab & Nicols, 2008, p. 31-32). Forth and Towne described itself as a retailer for moms, grandmothers, suburbanites and city dwellers, which represents a huge cross-section of the American population (Barbaro, 2007, p. 2).   
*Outcome*  
 Important aspects of the target market were overlooked during the customer research process, resulting in certain segments of the target market feeling isolated and disconnected from the brand. In an effort to meet such a vast and diverse target market, Forth and Towne never connected with any niche group and subsequently, sales didn’t take off (Barbaro, 2007, p. 2). *Proposed New Plan* Forth and Towne should have considered concentrating on segments within the large demographic market of women over the age of 35. This may have produced a stronger point of view that would have cut through the clutter of competitors.  *New Target Segments*  
 The Baby Boomer market is made up of people born between 1946 and 1964 and they are part of the largest single generation of Americans numbering some 77 million (as cited by Roberts and Manolis, 2000, p 481).Of these 77 million, 38 million are women (“Ageless Fashion,” 2007, p. 1). The large Baby Boomer market can be dissected into eight groups, each with different attitudes and priorities (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 4). These are people born between 1946 and 1964 and they make up the largest single generation of Americans numbering some 77 million (as cited by Roberts and Manolis, 2000, p 481).1). For the Forth and Towne brand, women from three specific segments of the Boomer population should have been the target markets. They are *Single Bloomers, Leading Edge Couples* and *New Family Frontiers.* These segments featuring women in their 50s and 60s, and have more than $1 trillion of spending power a year (Lee & Kiley, 2005, p.1). Much of the intra-generational difference with Baby Boomers has more to do with the makeup of the households, and less to do with membership in age-based brackets (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 6).  
*Primary Target Market* The primary market to target would have been the Single Bloomers, who represent 22.1% of the overall Boomer market (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 6). Some characteristics that make up this segment are that they are educated, 41% never opted for marriage, no children, and have lived in the same home for at least five years (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 8).   
*Secondary Target Markets (One of Two)* The Leading Edge Couples, who have at least one head of household born between 1946 and 1951 and they represent the first group of the Boomer generation to serve as social change agents (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 8). They make up 11.5% of the total Boomer segment (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 4). . They are characterized by being one of the top three best-educated Boomer segments, no children, half the unmarried rate of the next segment, and two-thirds have shared a residence for five or more years (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 8).  
*Secondary Target Markets (Two of Two)* Finally, the New Family Frontiers segments are characterized by three or more adults sharing a household (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 6). They make up 11.3% of the total Boomer segment (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 4). They have 1.1 children between the ages of 18 and 24 living in the same household, with 40% of the segment claiming another resident relative such as a parent (1/3 of such family units) or adult siblings (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 9). From an economic perspective, 54% of New Family Frontiers households have three or more employed workers in the home, are among the highest earning households in the Boomer generation, and are only second to Leading Edge Couples when it comes to on the savings (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 9).   
*Tertiary Target Market*  
 The tertiary market then could be the remaining segments of the Baby Boomer market, especially since there are some general similarities between all the segments.   
*General Similarities Between Segments*  
 Due to the stock market decline, Boomers lost approximately $7-8 trillion in shareholder wealth eating away at large chunks of their retirement savings (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, they are continuing to work, forced into second careers, part-time work or even lower paying positions in order to make up the losses (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 9).   
 They like to stay connected with friends and families, accounting for their 50% higher spending rate on cellular phones and pagers (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p. 10).   
Boomer spending rates outpace the average for audio equipment, televisions and radios (Anderson & Kennedy, 2006, p.11). They are Internet savvy with those ages 55 to 63 (30%) watching videos online and 74% of those ages 65 and older send, and receive email (Jayson, 2009, p.1).  
*Specific Apparel Information*  
 Additional information about Boomer women when it comes to apparel is that they don't want to be addressed as baby boomers and don’t want to make a public branding statement about their age by walking into a specialty store (Hanft, 2006, p. 2). Also, these women cultivate relationships with their clothing, and the relationships impact their sense of self, brand affinity, and fashion identity (“Ageless Fashion,” 2007, p. 1). They can feel alienated when shopping for brands that gravitate towards younger women, and they're not interested in brands that gravitate towards older women. (“Gap Inc. Analyst”, 2005, p.3) They are looking for better service and attention to their specific needs. (Wuest et al., 2008, p. 36). Shopping is a way to socialize (“Gap Inc. Analyst”, 2005, p. 3). Finally, these women want to be thanked for their loyalty to a brand (Wuest et al., 2008, p. 36).  
*Summary*  
 The three target segments of the Boomer demographic represent active women, educated, technically savvy who are most probably working, whether full- or –part time; they enjoy spending time or keeping in touch with friends and family, they don’t want to define themselves through age, and they are looking for services that will meet their individualized needs. They also represent over $66 billion in apparel sales in 2003 alone. By focusing on the most affluent of the Baby Boomer segments, Forth and Towne may have found the long-lost Gap customer who had the time and the extra income to build a relationship with a new brand.

**Definition of Objectives/Strategies/Tactics***Original Objective/Strategy Plan* In 2003, Gap Inc developed a set of business strategies that focused on developing growth opportunities for the company. These strategies were mining opportunities from existing brands, expanding internationally, growing online business, and creating new brands. By looking at the Gap Inc. portfolio, it became apparent that none of the brands had a significant share of the women over the age 35 target market. This deficit in the existing portfolio became the primary objective for the Forth and Towne brand, which was to meet the parent company business strategy of creating a new brand that penetrated a target market that was not being met by the current family of Gap Inc. brands.  
 Unfortunately, as discussed in the audience section of this paper, Gap Inc was so focused on meeting all the needs of this huge demographic that they were unable to meet any of them. Perhaps objectives that concentrated on certain segments of the original target market may have resulted in a more successful outcome.   
*New Proposed Objectives* The following proposed objectives look at penetrating the targeted segments of the Baby Boomer market by taking into consideration their specific demographic characteristics and meeting them.  The Forth and Towne objectives were to raise penetration the three Baby Boomer target markets from 3% to 5% through the launch of the Forth and Towne concept stores by:

* Positioning Forth and Towne as a unique brand that addresses the target markets’ specialty apparel needs:
* Providing better service and customer attention than the competition
* Offering variety of styles whether for work or play
* Offering great fashion at great prices
* Engaging the target audiences in the highly competitive market through development of customer care programs.
* Build and manage relationships with the target markets by providing options for apparel purchases.

*Strategy Expectation*  
 Through these objectives, Gap Inc. could have reasonably expected to accomplish:

* Educating the target markets about the Forth and Towne brand and teach them about the brand’s value through traditional, social, and personal marketing channels.
* Developing dialogue with customers by collecting information about them through database development via brick and mortar interactions and social/personal channels.
* Maintaining relationships with customers and refine points of contact through traditional, social, personal, and direct mail channels to ensure the relationships’ integrity.

*Original Marketing Plan Tactics* The Forth and Towne IMC campaign was considered a departure from Gap Inc’s typical marketing campaigns that were heavily dependent on traditional media outlets such as network TV commercials and national ads in high rotation. The Gap also had a history of using a variety of celebrities to sell its products in order to appeal to a range of demographic markets.

The reason for the departure was that Gap Inc was challenged to develop communication tools that would resonate with the largest majority of the demographic within a new store region and could be quickly and economically changed as needed without damaging the brand. Also, the new brand was considered a pilot program, not a full rollout. The idea behind this was to learn which communication tools worked and, more importantly, which didn’t. The information would then be used to further evolve the plan for future store openings. For example, mediums like television commercials would be difficult to change last minute.

The communication tools that solved the dilemma were:

* Brand program
  + The branding was beautiful and elegant; however, the modern twist to it didn’t go far enough, which in fact aged the brand.
  + It was confusing, forcing the target market to ask the question, “Who would shop at this store? Is it me or is it my grandmother?”
* Regional print advertising
  + Ads could be customized to a region for new store openings.
  + Ads used iconic statements, but featured young models which sent conflicting message of whom the customer should be.
* Regional promotional sponsorships
  + Designed to be customized to the store’s region.
  + An opportunity was missed by not having more sponsorship events at the store. They were one-time events and were not carried through the communications plan.
  + The target market wasn’t reminded on a consistent basis that Forth and Towne cares not just about them, but their community as well.
  + The events could have been tied into the loyalty program with direct marketing pieces mailed to select group from the database.
  + The events could have also been perfect PR pieces, providing Forth and Towne “free” publicity to the regional store area, further reaching their target market.
* Web marketing
  + It was never an e-commerce site, but rather a place to learn about the store’s concept.
  + The objective of the site was to bring customers into the store and interact with the store environment, not purchase online, which would lose the concept of social shopping.
  + The biggest fault with the site was that it didn’t include e-commerce, which was contrary to the actual needs of the target market.
  + By not having e-commerce, large portions of the vast target market felt alienated from the brand
* Loyalty program
  + Most thoughtful of all the original communication tools.
  + Rewarded repeat shoppers, inviting them to special events outside the daily shopping routine or providing them discounts on future purchases.
  + Spoke to all members of the vast demographic, a hard thing to do when you are trying to speak to both women in their 40s as well as their 60s.

The original set of communication tools were used to focus on the one-on-one relationship with the store and the customer. None of the tools focused on the relationships within the target market. Also, the communication tools could be changed so easily that there was never a commitment to the market. To make up for this, tactics would have had to generic enough to meet the largest majority, but still make the customer feel special and unique.   
*Proposed New Tactics* A mix of marketing communications and operations would have been necessary in order to implement the advertising and marketing programs including;

* Mass media advertising (Print, radio, Web site) could have built brand awareness
* PR posted to Web site could have educated customers about the brand
* Branding program such as visual identities (logos), store signage, packaging and merchandise cards could have reinforced the brand’s personality and provide visual differentiation from competitors
* Mix of direct mail, point-of –purchase, SMS, and Web site could have directed customers to become part of the database development
* Private brand credit cards, blog, word-of-mouth, Web site commerce could have built individualized customer loyalty programs
* Web site, direct media, SMS may have helped to ensure that the brand was meeting customers’ expectations

**Proposed New Dissemination Plan Overview Chart**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Communication Channel** | **Target Market (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)** | **Message(s)** | **Schedule (how often; when)** | **Implementation Steps** |
| Mass Media   * Print * Radio * Web site (E-commerce) | Primary and secondary markets; they are mostly working and have discretionary monies to spend on magazine. They are tech savvy and have computers and televisions. Without children, they have more dollars to spend on themselves and have time to become acquainted with the new brand. | Print: Iconic statements that remind customers of their youth and connect them to clothing apparel (“The Chic Revolution Begins”, “Go forth and be chic” and “Speak softly and carry a big purse”)  Radio: Announcements on new store openings and special events.  Web site: Informative about new and seasonal merchandise; fashion updates and their relations to apparel found on Web site; special offers to Web site users only. | Print: Regional editions of national fashion magazines geared towards the Boomer generations such as *More* and to support new and existing stores; months in advance prior to the store opening and continued support afterwards. National ads after full roll out of test stores.  Radio: One month prior to launch during drive times to support new store openings. After store openings, use radio ads to announce sales and special events  Web site: Launch in advance of first store opening in order to introduce customers across the country to brand. Request customers to answer specific questions to help development of database in exchange for discount on next purchase. Press releases posted on Web site to inform the customer of new and important store events and changes. | Outside creative agency (agency of record) lead creative and production of mass media including Web site  Media agency contracts for print and radio time  Agency coordinates launch of print and radio to correspond with store openings.  Web site to be launched prior to first store opening in order to garner word-of-mouth advertising. |
| **Communication Channel** | **Target Market (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)** | **Message(s)** | **Schedule (how often; when)** | **Implementation Steps** |
| Social Media   * Blog | Primary and secondary target markets: no children and tech savvy people means that they have time to spend on the Internet. They want to keep in touch with friends and would be open to posting on blogs; shopping is a social event and a blog is a way to connect with others of similar interest. | Current fashion topics relating back to in store apparel.   Promote in-store and Web site special events; with pre and post blogs about the outcomes. Immediacy and informative should also play parts in messages.   Keep customers feeling like the blog provides them an “in” to the brand that not everyone has access to. | Post EOD written by Forth and Towne brand managers, such as marketing manager, fashion manager, etc.   Blog should start prior to first store opening to increase word-of-mouth advertising.   Post immediate and informative details so customers come back again and again to check for new news. | Creative agency should develop plan to prioritize blog topics before, during and after first store launch.   Plan should include monthly subject in which weekly topics can be pulled from. |
| **Communication Channel** | **Target Market (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)** | **Message(s)** | **Schedule (how often; when)** | **Implementation Steps** |
| Personal Media   * Push SMS campaign | Primary and secondary markets: these segments are connected to their mobile phones | Thank you to customers’ loyalty to brand; each individual customer is special to the brand and can expect to be treated as such.   Request information from special customers as a way to build database. | No more than once a month after launch of first store | Agency of record to kick off SMS campaign three months after opening of stores and launch of commerce Web site; give time to build database and chart customers buying trends. |
| **Communication Channel** | **Target Market (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)** | **Message(s)** | **Schedule (how often; when)** | **Implementation Steps** |
| Direct Media   * Print * Email | Primary and secondary target markets; Internet savvy and have lived in same residence over 5 years. They are social and would be open to hearing about opportunities to meet and socialize with like-minded people. | Print: Thank you to customers and invites for special events along with coupons for discounts. Reinforce that each customer is special to the brand.  Email: Informative; provide information about specials and invitation to link to the commerce Web site. | Print: Limit to only for special events and invites to ensure that the pieces having meaning to the customers.  Email: Daily updates whether about brick and mortar events or Web site specials. | Agency build year in advance plan that kicks offs with print piece inviting local Web site customers to come to opening of brick and mortar store. |
| **Communication Channel** | **Target Market (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)** | **Message(s)** | **Schedule (how often; when)** | **Implementation Steps** |
| Street Media   * Mall posters * Billboards | All three target markets; active people who spend time in malls since shopping is seen as a social event; they would see billboards while driving to and from work for example. | Malls: Informative and iconic. Informative to feature special events and iconic to mimic magazine ads.  Billboards: Mimic print advertising messages with a violator about grand store openings. | Change out once a month; could even add violators to posters for special events.  Billboards: No changes for six months; people are attracted to immediacy messages such as “Grand Opening” “Come see us now”. | Media buyer to purchase both mall and billboards; both should go up two months prior to the opening of new store.  Creative agency will lead design and production of mall posters with billboard company produce actual billboard piece. |

**Proposed Evaluation Plan to Make Mid-Course Corrections**

*Time period*

* Produce quantified objectives related to time period of three months after the opening of the first store
* Provide information to Forth and Towne lead team while store numbers were still small in order to modify plan as needed

*Customer Information (qualitative)*

* Online surveys that printed on receipt tapes
* Comment cards in all fitting salons
* Blog feedback
* Web site questionnaire responses
* Customer feedback to sales representatives on what they think; about fit, quality, color, styling, and any other elements of the stores.

*Customer Actions (quantitative)*

* Loyalty program coded invites and coupons (direct mail, SMS, emails)
* Sales increase before and after events
* Measure brand awareness through mass media
* Measure Web site traffic and monitor brick and mortar sales
* Measure retail traffic before and after particular sections of the marketing campaign schedule
* Code coupons in ads or from emails and print direct mail pieces to find which pieces generate best results
* Use dedicated phone lines to track responses from customers

This information was then fed back to Forth and Towne lead team to analyze and calculate next steps. The goal was to institute information gathering while the stores’ numbers were still small and continue to make modifications as needed.

**Proposed Post-Campaign Effectiveness Evaluation Plan**Campaign effectiveness would have been proven through:

* Raising the target market penetration from 3% to 5% within two years for a total return of $315,000,000
* 10% cost return rate on all special and promotional events; whether through Web site or brick and mortar
* 5% of target market provides demographic information for direct and personal media marketing opportunities for use in future marketing efforts
* Significant sales related to store traffic momentum (cost to lure each customer into store verses actual amount of dollars each customer spends while in store or online)

**Conclusion**  
 The Forth and Towne brand faced an upward battle from the beginning. The decision to go after one large demographic, women over 35, made it almost impossible for the brand to find anything close to a niche market. Also, important aspects of the target market were overlooked during the research process, resulting in certain segments of the market feeling isolated and disconnected from the brand. Simply, Forth and Towne was so generic in its attempt to meet a broad based demographic that it never had strong point of view that could cut through the clutter of competitors.  
 Therefore, the proposed plan outlined in this paper may have helped the Forth and Towne brand finds its voice within the cluttered women’s apparel market. Focusing on niche target segments of the larger and lucrative Baby Boomer demographic and defining the marketing plan based on these segments needs would have perhaps made it easier for these women to develop a relationship with the brand. The chosen marketing channels in the proposed plan pay tribute to the complexities of the target segments by blending a variety of channels together rather than just using traditional mix of mass media only. The mix of traditional, social, personal, direct and street media may have reached a larger part of the target segments.

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