

The Lulu Effect: A Retail Analysis of an Athleisure Giant

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Executive Summary

Brand image is well-known to be a hallmark factor contributing to a company's marketing strategy and overall success. To build a memorable and effective image, it is imperative for brands to consider consumers' behavioral responses to all interactive components associated with the brand (both implicit and explicit): two examples of such influential factors are employee-customer interactions and in-store retail atmospherics.

Our consumer psychology team chose to evaluate how employee-customer interactions and in-store atmospherics shape the brand image of the popular athleisure clothing brand, lululemon. Established in 1998, lululemon runs 450 stores across the US, with an annual revenue of \$9.619 billion (ScrapeHero, 2024; MacroTrends, 2024). Prior to this class, all members of our team were familiar with the brand's reputation as having a well-established, successful image, thus wanted to understand what strategies enabled the household image from a consumer psychology-informed perspective.

To begin our preliminary research, we conducted two mini-lit reviews for the following topics: 1) atmospherics in general retail spaces, and 2) the influence of employee interaction on consumer behavior. Next, we visited the available resources on the Lululemon website to gather easily accessible information; in particular, one useful tool included the Lululemon 2020 Impact Agenda (lululemon, 2020), where we were able to find explicit statements on their brand pillars.

Next, our team visited a local Lululemon store to better understand the brand image and intricacies of these components up close. We succeeded in collecting data on the store atmosphere. However, our attempt to interview employees was denied, left with the direction to seek advance approval from a corporate-level entity.

Informed by this approach, we pivoted our strategy by conducting a virtual interview with a corporate employee. We also utilized a feature on the website allowing virtual, one-on-one consultations with Lululemon product experts. In our analysis, we compared and analyzed data across our teams' separate interviews. Through this ethnographic research tactic and our preliminary research, we were able to draw conclusions about the company's brand identity, peering into a robust, effective strategy.

After data collection, we determined suggestions for improvement, summarized our research, and presented our findings to our consumer psychology class. This report further details our research in the form of a comprehensive retail analysis.

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The Lulu Effect: A Retail Analysis of an Athleisure Giant

Since its founding in 1998, Lululemon Athletica (more popularly referred to as the shortened, intentionally lower-case “lululemon”) has not only revolutionized technical apparel but also cemented itself as a leader in the ever-expanding "athleisure" space. With a workforce surpassing 38,000 individuals spread across 700 stores globally, lululemon has become synonymous with a lifestyle centered on holistic well-being (About Us, n.d.).

The brand specializes in attire tailored for athletic activities, including yoga, golfing, workouts, and running. Similar to other household name retail brands, their reach extends beyond their primary focus and into segments for more casual wear and even formal occasions. Lululemon is recognized for its emphasis on functionality, quality, and sustainability, leading with simple silhouettes and a wide variety of both muted and vibrant colors. This commitment to both performance and style has greatly contributed to the company's success as consumers increasingly seek clothing suitable for the gym and the street.

Lululemon attracts a broad spectrum of consumers, ranging from fitness enthusiasts and athletes to casual wearers seeking comfort without compromise. Innovative fabric technologies, community-driven initiatives, and unwavering dedication to quality sets lululemon apart from competitors in the activewear market. Their products tend to cater to consumers willing to spend more on retail and activewear, enabled by the claim for garments with unparalleled comfort and longevity. This is especially cemented by the brand’s promise to “replace any item that doesn't perform as intended within one year of purchase” (Quality Promise, n.d.)

In the competitive landscape of athletic-inspired fashion, lululemon's presence is unmistakable. Stores such as Vuori and Fabletics are among the many that seem to draw

inspiration from Lululemon's innovative designs and ethos. However, Lululemon's drive to provide superior products and develop in-store community engagement set it apart from other brands and make it a standard that similar companies aspire to emulate.

Mini Lit Reviews

Before selecting Lululemon as our subject company, we first began by conducting two mini-lit reviews to better understand two separate aspects that impact a clothing company's brand image. We decided to focus on atmospherics and how employee interactions contribute to the brand identity. The purpose of these reports was to gain a background understanding of the overall clothing industry so we could make more insightful observations for the data-collection phase of the project. In conducting the reviews, we used a systematic approach to gathering relevant literature, utilizing both academic databases and online sources. Through this method, we identified several main themes and issues related to the impact of employee-related factors and atmospherics on brand identity. The 1st review discusses the relationship between retail atmospherics and brand identity within the context of clothing stores (Appendix A). The review aims to determine how various atmospheric elements, such as design, ambient conditions, social factors, and trialability, influence consumers' behaviors. In particular, the review seeks to uncover strategies employed by retailers to leverage atmospherics effectively in shaping brand identity and fostering consumer engagement and loyalty. Our key insights are outlined below:

1. Dimensions of Retail Atmospherics: These dimensions encompass various sensory experiences that shape consumers' perceptions and responses within retail spaces (Roggeveen, Grewal, & Schweiger, 2020).
 - a. Design: refers to functional (layout) and aesthetic elements (presentation)
 - b. Ambient: refers to elements that exist in the background conditions (lighting)

- c. Social: refers to people present or felt in the environment (people's behavior)
 - d. Trialability: refers to the ability to try the product/service (sampling)
- 2. Consumer Responses: Sensory experiences (visual, auditory, etc..) affect consumer emotional responses and decision-making. However, consumers' psychographics may not consistently correlate with their responses to store atmospherics, highlighting the intricate nature of consumer behavior in relation to atmospheric design (Hyllegard et al, 2006).
- 3. Themed Approaches and Consistency: Integrating brand messages into store design and maintaining a consistent visual identity is crucial for reinforcing company identity and fostering brand recognition. Moreover, maintaining consistency across various touchpoints, including online presence and product design, strengthens overall brand identity and enhances consumer engagement (Foster & McLelland, 2015).

The 2nd review explores the intricate relationship between frontline store representatives and brand identity (Appendix B). We begin by emphasizing the crucial role of brand identity in the competitive retail landscape and how it influences consumer behavior. Specifically, the review focuses on employee behavior, customer interactions, and appearance as key factors shaping a brand's perceived identity. We discovered the following insights:

- 1. Employee Training and Leadership Style: Research suggests that effective leadership and employee training on how people should embody company values can enhance brand authenticity and employee motivation. Additionally, Companies that prioritize mentorship over strict supervision tend to foster more authentic employee behaviors, positively impacting brand perception (Morhart et al, 2009).
- 2. Employee Understanding of Brand Identity: Studies indicate that frontline employees who have a clear understanding of their role and the brand's identity are more committed

to the brand. This understanding translates into more authentic interactions with consumers, reinforcing the brand's identity and fostering meaningful consumer relationships (Siqueira et. al, 2021).

3. Internal Marketing and Consistent Messaging: Internal marketing initiatives, such as emotionally connecting employees to the brand, play a significant role in enhancing customer experience and loyalty. Consistent communication of brand values internally and externally is crucial for reinforcing brand identity and minimizing brand inconsistency (Mitchell, 2002).

Retail Space Analysis

Following our literature review, we visited a Lululemon storefront in Somerville's Assembly Square to conduct a retail space analysis (Appendix D). Again, Lululemon is an athleisure apparel company supplying clothing for a variety of activities from working out and running to golf and formal events. Their stores are clean and simple, letting their items' silhouettes speak for themselves. Our examination focused on target audience characteristics, store atmospherics, and accessibility/sustainability aspects of the space.

The target customer is a fashion-conscious fitness aficionado who purchases clothes that support their active lifestyle. They look for high quality materials and good design, placing a high priority on functionality and aesthetics, often overlooking price tags. While Lululemon targets a wide range of ages – anyone that is in need of performance apparel – we estimate from advertisements and observation of customers that most are teen to middle-aged. Most are also relatively well-off, as the company's high quality comes with high prices – most t-shirts cost roughly \$80. Wearers of Lululemon aspire to be the best version of themselves and refuse to sacrifice on cheap clothing that could compromise their personal progress or appearance. They

fear falling out of shape, placing an emphasis on mindfulness and holistic wellness that enables continuous improvement.

The space itself is simple and uncluttered. Rows of mannequins sit atop the shelves, displaying the distinct styles and emphasizing the athletic-fit of the pieces. The layout feels considered, separated by genders and open-concept to enable easy browsing and clear access to mirrors and dressing rooms. The store has a zen atmosphere supported by soft lighting, muted colors, and minimalist stainless steel displays and shelving. The floors are a subtle concrete and the walls are largely blank, save for branded decals near the register. The quiet material and color choices of the interior allow the clothes, which are often quite colorful, to pop, commanding immediate customer attention. The design of the store lends itself to easy navigation and access to information. Most displays and shelving are placed along the wall, leaving the store's interior clear. Clothing racks that are in the center are below eye-level, enabling visibility of the entire store no matter your position within it. Sales representatives are abundant and eager to help, greeting you within seconds of entering the space.

Lululemon storefronts curate a calm, welcoming environment; they hope guests leave with an impression of a commitment to well-being and zen. The company prioritizes accessibility, ensuring wheelchair-friendly entrances and, in their larger stores, including spaces for large events focused on mental health and community well-being. They also emphasize sustainability, made clear by their third strategy pillar, "Be Planet" (Speck & Jones, 2021). Lululemon has pledged to decrease water usage in manufacturing by 50% in 2025 and use 100% sustainable materials by 2030. They are already developing fabrics from renewable sources such as mycelium and have made real efforts to cut their environmental impact.

Research Methodology

Our research goal was to understand how lululemon's brand image is shaped by employee-customer interaction experiences. A brand focused on wellbeing and health, lululemon orients their customers at the center of their marketing and brand strategies. We decided to understand how direct customer interactions contributed to the brand's image, and to investigate this via immersion – i.e., by positioning ourselves as customers.

Our first objective was to evaluate the customer experience during employee-customer interactions. Initially, this consisted of three modalities: 1) a store visit, 2) an interview, and 3) a virtual shopping consultation with a lululemon Product Expert.

The location we visited for the store visit was the pop-up location at Assembly Row in Somerville. During this visit, we were unfortunately turned away prematurely due to the lack of a pre-existing approval from a corporate-level entity, as explained to us by one of the sales associates. However, this did not stop us from gathering valuable insights about the brand, which are detailed in the data collection results.

Because we were turned away from both the store and an email request for a private interview to answer our in-depth questions, we opted to take advantage of the personal consultations on the brand's website (Lululemon Athletica, n.d.). Consequently, our second objective was to evaluate the extent to which lululemon Product Experts portrayed the three brand image pillars of personal/community wellbeing, advocacy for physical and mental health, and environmental consciousness, as stated explicitly on their 2020 Impact Agenda (lululemon, 2020). The separate trials enabled a third objective, which was to assess the themes across each of our consultations.

The process of scheduling consultations entailed scheduling a time (of which there were

several thirty-minute availability slots to choose from, including on the same day of selection), and filling out personal details for shipping, meeting, and accessibility purposes. This was followed by receipt of a zoom link, and meeting with the assigned consultant. To evaluate the second objective, we each took notes during our meetings. To evaluate the third objective, we compared our findings, which are detailed in the next section.

Data Collection Results

Store Visit. The barrier to public information-seeking is one indicator that the brand protects assets of value. Furthermore, prior to being turned away, our team was able to take photographs of the retail space (Appendix E). We also noticed that the employees' outfits were consistent with the products for sale in-store; notably, they each sported the popular lululemon belt bag product. Despite turning us away, the employees also exhibited a genuine friendly demeanor. This observation is key to our next research objectives, which were also evaluations of lululemon employees, but on the corporate level.

Product Expert Consultations. Consultants used the same specific buzzwords when talking about the brands' products. This included descriptors such as "comfort" and "breathability", and branded fabrics such as "Warpstreme" and "VersaTwill". In two interviews, the Product Expert explained how their role was developed to address knowledge of their niche product lingo and characteristics.

Each of the consultants prioritized customer needs and comfort. This was exhibited by ensuring that we, as customers, had our corresponding submissions addressed on the pre-meeting submissions (e.g., led with inquiring about the task of looking for leggings for bouldering, which one group member submitted), reminding each of us that "there are no stupid questions", and accommodating Zoom-related requests such as turning on subtitles or turning off camera.

Similarly, employees were committed to fostering an inclusive, inviting environment. They were all outgoing, friendly, and patient from the start of the call.

Conclusion

Our investigation into Lululemon's brand image provides a nuanced understanding of its strategies and consumer perceptions. Despite initial data access challenges, our methodology, which involved virtual consultations and observational analysis, proved effective in gathering valuable insights. Through virtual consultations, we gained firsthand knowledge of the brand's interactions with customers, while observational analysis provided context to our findings. Our research not only delved into employee-customer interactions but also examined in-store atmospherics and target audience characteristics.

Observations revealed the alignment of employee behaviors with brand values and the creation of a welcoming in-store environment, indicating a commitment to customer satisfaction. Additionally, our analysis of sustainability initiatives showcased lululemon's dedication to environmental responsibility, resonating with a growing segment of eco-conscious consumers.

These findings, coupled with our research methodology, offer a comprehensive view of Lululemon's approach to brand management. Moving forward, leveraging these insights can guide strategic decisions aimed at enhancing brand perception and fostering consumer loyalty, ensuring continued success in the competitive retail landscape.

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Appendix A

Mini Lit Review: Atmospherics

Abstract

Atmospherics play a crucial role in designing retail spaces: the amalgamation of various sensory experiences controlled by retailers influence consumers' emotions, attitudes, and decision-making towards consumption. Brand identity, a key mediator in this process, shapes customers' perceptions of the store's corresponding brand(s) and fosters customer adoption, retention, and loyalty. This mini literature review examines sources discussing how atmospheric elements shape brand identity. It covers dimensions of retail atmospherics, strategies for leveraging these aspects to enhance brand identity, and the psychology behind consumer responses to brand-oriented atmospheric design.

Introduction

In 2024, the United States apparel market accounted for \$358.7 billion in revenue and is projected to grow 2% annually (Apparel, n.d.). In-store clothing sales are a massive component of the apparel industry, contributing around \$26 billion monthly (U.S. Clothing, n.d.). As a research team, we are intrigued as to what factors enable success for brick-and-mortar clothing retailers. Why does Lululemon opt for simple, colorful displays in presenting their products? Why does Trader Joe's incorporate taste testing stations in their stores? Why does Apple prioritize sleek, minimalism in both their products and retail spaces? Though our team is yet to narrow-in our focus on a specific store, we identified store atmospherics as extremely important for building a brand's identity. With the present literature review, we sought to answer the question: How do atmospherics contribute to brand identity?

Methods

We began by formulating a question of interest relating to consumer psychology in retail stores. We decided that "atmospherics" was a general broad topic to venture within, as we learned in class that it covers many design components of in-store shopping, such as the shop's lighting, visual design, layout, etc. Another important aspect we learned was the concept of "brand identity", so we refined our question into the following: How do atmospherics contribute to brand identity?

Using the Tufts Jumbo Search tool, we chose the advanced search option to search the keywords: "atmospherics" AND/OR "consumer" AND/OR "psychology", sorting by "Relevance". This technique yielded 2,455 results. Because this query was relatively sizable, the keyword "brand" was added to the same search (added with AND/OR), and this yielded 154 results. Through this, we aimed to investigate academic literature with titles that emulated general ideas (as opposed to literature focusing on specific or nuanced populations and brands), because we assumed that general topics would help us find translatable topics of interest. With this search technique, we chose to incorporate the third result, *The DAST Framework for Retail Atmospherics: The Impact of In- and Out-of-Store Retail Journey Touchpoints on the Customer Experience* (Roggeveen, Grewal, & Schweiger, 2020).

Appendix A

Mini Lit Review: Atmospherics

In a second search, we inputted the following into the general JumboSearch database: “‘store atmospherics’ and ‘brand identity’”. The search was not particularly lucrative, yielding only two sources; however, the first result, *The Influence of Consumer Identity on Perceptions of Store Atmospherics and Store Patronage at a Spectacular and Sustainable Retail Site*, was valuable in describing the impact of consumer identity on reception to store atmospherics.

Our search for online reports and blogs were somewhat unstructured, prompting Google with questions such as “How do store atmospherics influence a brand’s identity?” and “What can a company do to reinforce their brand identity?”. We scanned through results looking for reputable sources and relevant information.

Main Themes and Issues

1. Retail atmospherics are manifested through four multifactorial dimensions: **Design, Ambient, Social, and Trialability**. According to the DAST Framework (Roggeveen, Grewal, & Schweiger, 2020), these dimensions are manipulable by the retailer and used to describe both in- and out-of-store customer experiences.
 - a. **Design** refers to elements of the forefront. It includes two categories:
 - i. *Functional Elements* (Layout, Comfort, Signage, Search speed, Organization of website/app Interface used to make selections) and
 - ii. *Aesthetic Elements* (Merchandise presentation, Color, Style, Graphics, Pictures).
 - b. **Ambient** (Elements) refers to elements which exist as background conditions. This includes:
 - i. Lighting, Music, Smells, Temperature, Brightness/contrast, Sounds, Enhanced zoom feature, Entertainment aspect
 - c. **Social** refers to people present or felt in the environment. This includes:
 - i. Number of others, Appearance of others, Behavior of others, Physical/virtual presence of others, Volume of others, Number of comments/likes of others
 - d. **Trialability** refers to the ability to try the product/service. It is a new dimension introduced by the DAST Framework paper. This includes:
 - i. Sampling, Augmented reality, Virtual reality
2. Atmospherics mediate the customer’s response to the retailer, through cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses.
 - a. Related to the previous point, the dimensions of atmospherics affecting the retailer interact with the consumer’s sensory experiences: visual/auditory/olfactory/touch/taste. These senses determine the consumer’s affect (emotion) and cognition (decision-making):

Appendix A Continued

Mini Lit Review: Atmospherics

- i. Affect is augmented by altering valence (ex: positive/negative/neutral) and level of intensity (how much of the valence is felt: high/moderate/low).

- ii. Cognition is augmented by garnering attention (direction/duration of mental resources) and the consumer's level of elaboration (relation to familiar/learned ideas).
3. Consumers' psychographics may not have an influence on their response to store atmospherics. Hyllegard et al. (2006) analyzed the relationship between consumer identity and perceived importance of store atmospherics at REI flagship store in Denver, Colorado, an "award-winning example of sustainable retail design". Using in-store surveys, the researchers found that customers who identified as outdoor enthusiasts and/or environmentally responsible citizens placed no greater value on total store atmospherics in their decision to shop at REI. However, those who identified as environmentally responsible were *in general* more likely to shop at the store suggesting they view REI as having concern for the environment.
4. Sound in retail spaces has a significant influence on customer experience and perception of brand identity, but is often overlooked in retail design. An article on Retail Touchpoints, *Amplifying sound's role in retail design* (Peralta, 2023), reports how the cacophony of other customers, alarms, background music, clashing audio from announcements, and other sources of sound can create an environment which deters customers from optimal experiences, detracting their potential patronage. On the other hand, curated acoustic environments are pleasurable, evident in the self-reports of customers' experiences from empirical research. The article also points out a recent investigation into Spatial Sound: immersive audio experiences which are dynamic in response to movement through physical spaces. This technology is postulated as a future endeavor which can highly benefit retailer brand refinement, by pushing the boundaries to include more sensory experiences customers may associate with the brand.
5. Themed approaches to retail atmospherics can increase brand differentiation and promote positive brand attitudes. Themed retailers are stores that "use a concrete interpretation of a brand message to dictate the design of the retail atmosphere" - for instance, the presence of Rock 'n' Roll memorabilia in Hard Rock Café (Foster, 2015). In an online survey-based study, Foster & McLelland (2015) compared how this form of atmospherics influences consumer opinions and shopping habits. Comparing Hard Rock Café (themed) to Applebee's (non-themed), and Hollister (themed) to American Eagle (non-themed), found that the themed approach to store design resulted in better brand differentiation and interaction and increased shopping enjoyment.
6. Consistency is crucial in maximizing the benefits of store atmospherics on brand identity. As Elie Katz writes in piece, *In-Store Branding And The Psychology of Shopping*, consistency in branding is an essential component of developing a recognizable brand. Be it visual identity -

Appendix A Continued

Mini Lit Review: Atmospherics

logo, color palette, typography, etc. - in-store atmospherics, or online presence, consistency reinforces a brand's identity. For instance, Apple's commitment to sleek, minimalist design is reflected not only in their industrial design, but in the clean, uncluttered layout of their stores (Katz, n.d.)

Future Directions

Looking to the future, retailers' understanding of how atmospherics impact brand identity may benefit from furthering several different areas of research, including: advanced technology, cultural personalization, sustainability, neuromarketing techniques, and ethics.

Advanced technology might look like AI or VR, which can both help personalize experiences and enhance experiences by immersion. Due to the increasingly international reach of businesses, incorporating cultural differences in how sensory experiences affect consumers is pertinent to expanding sectors to international horizons. Sustainability is also a growing trend in consumer focus, and understanding how this might be communicated in a retail environment through atmospherics might help capture the consumers interested in products and brands that resonate with this value. Neuromarketing becomes more available to researchers with the advancement and popularization of technologies like fMRI, EEG, SCR, which can quantify neurological responses to stimuli, which might serve useful to test dimensions of new sensory experiences that marketers are interested to explore. However, it is important to understand the ethical implications of neuromarketing: is it an invasive technique used to manipulate consumer wallets, or a sound reason to explore the future of implementing brand identity in retail environments? Ethical questions like these which poke at consumer behavior manipulation are another valuable area of research, especially when it comes to furthering where the previous bounds of retailers lied prior to today's advanced technologies.

Relevance

Our project focuses on how retail atmospherics help shape brand identity. While we have not yet decided on a specific retail space to explore further, all of this information from the mini literature review can help inform how we navigate the project. For instance, we know that from our second point (Consumers' psychographics may not have an influence on their response to store atmospherics) how our understanding of retail design— regardless of how much research is done to support it— functions in the real world. Or, from our last point (Consistency is crucial in maximizing the benefits of store atmospherics on brand identity), we might keep our eyes peeled for the brand outside of the store, online, in the products, or other sources that might not necessarily be bound by the walls of the store we might visit.

Another important thing to consider would be our ChatGPT Glide (see Appendix for link). Because this portion was completed after our literature review, we may gather additional insights from the suggestions, like the crucial foundational atmospherics theory proposed by Kotler in 1973, for more understanding of our topic from its earliest stages. Furthermore, the glide proposes promising ideas for the data collection

in our research design, including: conducting observational studies in the retail space, surveys/interviews of consumers, and, if possible, an experimental design where a dimension of the retail atmospherics can be manipulated. These can be bolstered further by using a deeper LLM glide on how we might conduct these proposed experiments, especially once we decide on our retail space.

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Appendix B

Lit Review: Employees

Abstract

Within the highly competitive retail landscape, companies seek to stand out amongst the competition by creating and fostering a distinct brand identity. Brand identity encapsulates a company's unique values, personality, and visual elements, which serve to influence consumer behavior. One pivotal aspect in communicating brand identity at retail stores are the frontline store representatives. In particular, employee behavior, customer interactions, and appearance are major factors that impact a brand's perceived identity. This mini literature review examines sources discussing how in-store employees shape brand identity. It covers the importance of representative training, customer interactions, employee behavior, and how these factors affect consumer behavior.

Introduction

Though we have yet to identify a particular retail store that we want to investigate, we recognize that in-store employees significantly impact brand identity. Why do some retail sales associates wear a uniform while others simply wear clothes from that given brand? Should employees actively engage with shoppers or wait until they are approached? How should frontline representatives manage an unhappy customer? By synthesizing existing literature, this review aims to understand the intricate relationship between brand identity and frontline employees.

Methods

We began by formulating a question of interest relating to consumer psychology in retail stores. We decided that in-store employee behavior and appearance were notable factors that impact brand identity. Interactions that consumers have with frontline representatives can significantly influence consumer behavior and willingness to buy a product. Thus we decided to learn more about how in-store employees relate to a brand's identity.

Using the Tufts Jumbo Search tool, we chose the advanced search option to search the keywords: "employee" AND/OR "consumer behavior" AND/OR "brand", sorting by "Relevance". From there we scanned the first few results by reading the abstract and determining if the information was relevant to our topic. Once we found a few useful and relevant journal articles, we then looked through those article's sources to find more related sources. This method yielded several research articles and we identified several valuable journal articles.

Our search for online reports and blogs focused on promoting Google with questions relating store employees to brand identity. After a few prompts and some directed scanning, we found a few reputable sources and relevant information relating to our topic. When browsing for sources, we prioritized articles that related to the retail industry, and in particular clothing stores.

Appendix B Continued

Lit Review: Employees

Main themes and issues

The interactions between consumers and employees are an important part of the consumer experience. According to Carbone and Haeckel, “humanistics are most effective when they are integrated with mechanics”. Many companies today do not think nor design their humanistic experience, employees are not trained on how to read and respond to various consumer situations, which results in employees having to work out the situations and consumer issues at the moment creating a difference between each consumer. The article also mentioned that eye contact positively affected the consumer experience during payment (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994). Training employees, however, is not so simple. In research by Monheart et. al, researchers found that the more successful leadership style of brands over employees was to use a brand-specific transformational model, which requires managers to show the company values in their work and act as more of a mentor rather than just a supervisor. In contrast, when a transactional model was used, with employees using scripts and being rewarded when taking proper actions, the motivation of employees decreased. Overall employees showed more brand authenticity and proactivity when their mentors had a transformational leadership style (Morhart et al, 2009).

Siqueira et. al, analyzed the influence of front-line employee’s understanding of brand identity and brand commitment as it associates with the brand’s relationship with the consumer. The research showed that employees were more committed to the brand if they had a clear understanding of their position and their expected work. Researchers inferred that a clear understanding of expectations resulted in the understanding and replication of the brand’s identity to consumers. The article also mentioned that it is important that frontline employees are committed to the brand as they are the brand’s direct access and understanding of the consumer and the “relationship market” (Siqueira et. al, 2021). The following images and table illustrate the hypothesis and findings from the article.



Table 4. Results from the MCMC regarding the four hypothesized latent associations.

Hypotheses		Posterior Mean (Standard Deviation)	95% Credible Interval	Evidence
H1	Brand Identity → Brand Commitment	0.340 (0.067)	0.211–0.339	Strong +
H2	Role Clarity → Brand Commitment	0.524 (0.072)	0.383–0.669	Strong +
H3	Brand Commitment → IRBBB	0.557 (0.068)	0.425–0.691	Strong +
H4	Brand Commitment → Job Satisfaction	0.337 (0.048)	0.244–0.433	Strong +

A Visier article also highlighted the significance of internal marketing within clothing shops, emphasizing the impact of emotionally connecting employees to the brand on customer experience and loyalty. The article shows how the issues of inconsistent internal-external communication create brand inconsistency. They also mention the importance of ensuring that employees embody and understand the brand values to create a consistent experience.

Another article by Colin Mitchell, in the Harvard Business Review, 2002, indicates the necessity of aligning internal and external marketing messages in clothing shops. The article also demonstrates how coherent communication enhances employee engagement and ultimately affects the customer experience which was also reflected in earlier paragraphs. Cases where divergent messages led to confusion and dissatisfaction among employees highlight the crucial role of cohesive messaging in reinforcing brand identity.

Future Directions

Despite the existence of research exploring the relationship between store employees and brand identity in clothing stores, several gaps and unknowns remain. One area of ambiguity lies in the measurement and assessment of the impact of employee-related factors on brand identity. While existing studies have provided valuable insights into consumer perceptions and preferences, there is a need for more standardized methodologies to quantitatively evaluate these variables across diverse retail contexts.

Moreover, the dynamic nature of consumer behavior and market trends poses challenges in predicting the evolving role of store employees in shaping brand identity. As technological advancements continue to reshape the retail landscape, particularly with the rise of e-commerce and automation, the impact of human interactions on brand perception may undergo significant change. Understanding how increasing levels of automation (and decreasing levels of human interaction) impact consumer behavior in traditional retail channels could be an intriguing possibility for future research.

Additionally, future research could explore how clothing shops can seamlessly integrate the brand vision into various employee touch points such as workspace design, recruitment practices, and internal communications. Examining the effects of these strategies on staff engagement and brand alignment could

provide valuable insights for enhancing internal marketing strategies tailored to clothing retail environments.

Another promising avenue for future research is how the integration of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR), can enhance employee interactions. This research could delve into the development and implementation of AI-driven recommendation systems, AR-enhanced fitting rooms, or other technological solutions aimed at fostering deeper connections between customers and brands. By examining the effectiveness of these approaches in reinforcing brand identity, scholars can contribute valuable insights to the evolving landscape of retail innovation and consumer engagement strategies.

Relevance

The future directions outlined present several possible avenues to further our research on the relationship between store employees and brand identity in clothing stores. The identified gaps and unknowns, particularly regarding the measurement and assessment of employee-related factors' impact on brand identity, highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of these dynamics. Moreover, the potential impact of increasing levels of automation on consumer behavior in traditional retail channels underscores the importance of examining the relationship between technological advancements and human interactions.

As we look toward the next phase of our project, we plan to take into consideration the points touched upon in the future directions section. Although we have not yet chosen a specific retail store, the points discussed in the literature review reveal key aspects of frontline employees that impact consumer behavior. We plan to review our main takeaways and potential future directions before deciding the direction we want to take this project.

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Appendix C

LLM Glides

Store Atmosphere Focused -

<https://chat.openai.com/share/f9d08009-2c1c-42fa-9466-ca7824f271b7>

Employee Focused - <https://chat.openai.com/share/b1d2ec6f-0462-4cac-9f17-21b7aa97a9c1>

ChatGPT 3.5

Prompt: Aspects of retail experience

Chat: The retail experience encompasses a wide range of elements that contribute to the overall satisfaction and engagement of customers. Here are some key aspects:

1. **Store Layout and Design:** The physical layout and design of a retail space can significantly impact the customer experience. Clear signage, easy navigation, and attractive displays can enhance the shopping experience and encourage customers to explore.
2. **Product Availability:** Customers expect a wide selection of products available in various sizes, colors, and styles. Stockouts and long wait times for replenishment can frustrate customers and lead to lost sales.
3. **Customer Service:** Friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful staff can make a significant difference in the retail experience. Prompt assistance, personalized recommendations, and efficient checkout processes contribute to customer satisfaction.
4. **Convenience and Accessibility:** Retailers need to offer convenient shopping options such as online ordering with multiple delivery or pickup options, extended store hours, and easy returns or exchanges.
5. **Technology Integration:** Integrating technology into the retail experience can enhance convenience and efficiency. This includes self-checkout kiosks, mobile payment options, interactive displays, and augmented reality for virtual try-ons.
6. **Atmosphere and Ambiance:** Creating a pleasant atmosphere through lighting, music, and scent can influence the mood of customers and encourage them to linger and make purchases.
7. **Promotions and Discounts:** Customers appreciate value-added promotions, discounts, loyalty programs, and special offers that make their shopping experience more rewarding.
8. **Community Engagement:** Hosting events, workshops, or charity drives can help retailers connect with their local community and build loyalty among customers.
9. **Post-Purchase Support:** Offering post-purchase support such as installation services, maintenance, or troubleshooting can enhance the overall customer experience and build long-term relationships.

Appendix C Continued

LLM Glides

10. **Feedback and Improvement:** Actively seeking and responding to customer feedback demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and ensures that retailers are meeting the evolving needs and preferences of their customers.

Prompt: What is the relationship between customer service and brand image

Chat: Customer service plays a crucial role in shaping brand image. Here's how:

1. **First Impressions:** Customer service is often the first point of contact between a customer and a brand. A positive experience can create a strong first impression and foster a favorable perception of the brand.
2. **Brand Perception:** Consistently high-quality customer service reinforces positive perceptions of the brand as reliable, trustworthy, and customer-focused. On the other hand, poor customer service can damage the brand's reputation and erode trust.
3. **Word-of-Mouth and Referrals:** Positive experiences with customer service can lead to word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals, which are powerful drivers of brand awareness and growth. Customers who feel valued and supported are more likely to recommend the brand to others.
4. **Brand Loyalty:** Exceptional customer service builds loyalty among customers, encouraging them to return for future purchases and choose the brand over competitors. Customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands that prioritize their needs and provide excellent service.
5. **Differentiation:** In a competitive market, outstanding customer service can differentiate a brand from its competitors. When customers receive exceptional support and assistance, they are more likely to choose that brand over others, even if the products or prices are similar.
6. **Brand Advocacy:** Satisfied customers who have positive experiences with customer service are more likely to become brand advocates, actively promoting the brand to their friends, family, and social networks. This advocacy contributes to the brand's positive image and helps attract new customers.
7. **Crisis Management:** During times of crisis or challenges, effective customer service can help mitigate negative perceptions and restore trust in the brand. Transparent communication, timely resolution of issues, and empathetic support can help maintain the brand's reputation even in difficult situations.

In summary, customer service is closely intertwined with brand image, influencing perceptions, loyalty, differentiation, and advocacy. Brands that prioritize exceptional customer service can cultivate a positive image that resonates with customers and drives long-term success.

Appendix C Continued

LLM Glides

Prompt: expand on each number

Chat: Of course, let's delve deeper into each point:

1. **First Impressions:** The initial interaction a customer has with a brand's customer service team sets the tone for their entire experience. Whether it's a phone call, an email inquiry, or an interaction in-store, the manner in which the customer service representative handles the query or concern can leave a lasting impression. A positive experience at this stage can create a sense of trust and confidence in the brand.
2. **Brand Perception:** Consistency is key when it comes to customer service. Brands that consistently deliver high-quality service across all touchpoints reinforce positive perceptions of reliability, integrity, and customer-centricity. Customers come to associate the brand with positive experiences, which strengthens their overall perception of the brand.
3. **Word-of-Mouth and Referrals:** Satisfied customers are more likely to share their positive experiences with friends, family, and colleagues. Word-of-mouth recommendations are highly influential and can lead to new customers trying out the brand based on the endorsement of someone they trust. This organic form of marketing is invaluable for building brand awareness and credibility.
4. **Brand Loyalty:** Excellent customer service fosters a sense of loyalty among customers. When customers feel valued and appreciated, they are more likely to return for repeat purchases and become long-term advocates for the brand. Loyalty programs and personalized service further strengthen this bond, incentivizing customers to choose the brand over competitors.
5. **Differentiation:** In today's competitive marketplace, where products and prices can often be similar across brands, exceptional customer service becomes a key differentiator. Brands that go above and beyond to meet customer needs and exceed expectations stand out from the crowd. Customers are willing to pay a premium for superior service, giving these brands a competitive edge.
6. **Brand Advocacy:** Happy customers are the best brand ambassadors. When customers have positive experiences with a brand's customer service team, they are more likely to share their experiences with others, whether through social media, online reviews, or face-to-face interactions. This word-of-mouth promotion is highly influential and can significantly boost brand awareness and credibility.
7. **Crisis Management:** During times of crisis or challenges, such as product recalls, service disruptions, or negative publicity, effective customer service becomes even more critical. Brands that handle these situations with transparency, empathy, and swift resolution demonstrate their commitment to customer satisfaction and can mitigate potential damage to their reputation. By addressing customer concerns promptly and effectively, brands can maintain trust and loyalty even in the face of adversity.

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In essence, every interaction with a customer is an opportunity for the brand to reinforce its image and build long-term relationships. By prioritizing excellent customer service at every touchpoint, brands can create a positive perception that resonates with customers and sets them apart from the competition.

Prompt: how to properly train employee to represent a brand well

Chat: Training employees to represent a brand effectively is crucial for maintaining consistency in customer service and reinforcing the brand image. Here's a comprehensive approach to properly train employees:

1. **Understand the Brand Identity:** Before training employees, ensure that they have a clear understanding of the brand identity, including its values, mission, and personality. Provide training materials, brand guidelines, and examples of brand messaging to familiarize employees with the brand's voice and tone.
2. **Lead by Example:** Managers and supervisors should exemplify the brand's values and standards in their own behavior and interactions with customers. Lead by example to demonstrate the desired level of professionalism, empathy, and customer-centricity.
3. **Provide Comprehensive Training:** Develop a structured training program that covers various aspects of representing the brand, including product knowledge, customer service skills, communication techniques, and problem-solving strategies. Incorporate role-playing exercises, real-life scenarios, and case studies to make the training interactive and practical.
4. **Focus on Customer Experience:** Emphasize the importance of delivering exceptional customer experiences that align with the brand's values and standards. Train employees to anticipate customer needs, actively listen to their concerns, and go above and beyond to exceed expectations.
5. **Communicate Brand Messaging:** Educate employees about the brand's messaging and key selling points to ensure consistency in communication. Teach them how to articulate the brand's unique value proposition and address common customer inquiries or objections effectively.
6. **Empower Decision-Making:** Encourage employees to take ownership of customer interactions and empower them to make informed decisions to resolve issues or satisfy customer needs. Provide guidelines and frameworks for decision-making while allowing flexibility to adapt to individual situations.
7. **Promote Emotional Intelligence:** Customer service often involves dealing with diverse personalities and challenging situations. Train employees in emotional intelligence skills, such as empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution, to handle interactions with empathy and professionalism.
8. **Offer Ongoing Support and Feedback:** Training should be an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. Provide regular opportunities for skill development, feedback, and coaching to help employees continually improve their performance and alignment with the brand.

9. **Recognize and Reward Excellence:** Acknowledge and reward employees who consistently exemplify the brand's values and deliver exceptional customer service. Recognition programs, incentives, and performance reviews can motivate employees to maintain high standards and strive for excellence.
10. **Solicit Employee Feedback:** Encourage employees to provide feedback on their training experience, as well as suggestions for improvement. Actively listen to their input and incorporate their perspectives into future training initiatives to make them more effective and engaging.

By following these steps, businesses can ensure that employees are well-equipped to represent the brand effectively and deliver memorable experiences that resonate with customers.

Prompt: Now that you have reviewed lots of great stuff, let me be clearer about what we are doing. We are a team of undergraduate students (studying Human Factors Engineering and design) and we are taking a class on "Consumer Psychology". This class has a final "big project" where we have to analyze some aspect of a retail establishment (we chose lululemon!) from the perspective of Consumer Psychology. We also need to do a lit review (we chose to focus on employees) and then collect and analyze some data to generate insights and recommendations to the retailer. What do you think of that? Can you please think about all that and then offer extended thoughts, insights, and recommendations to us?"

Chat: That sounds like a fascinating project! Analyzing a retail establishment like Lululemon from the perspective of consumer psychology offers a wealth of opportunities to explore how various psychological factors influence consumer behavior and experiences within the retail environment. Here are some extended thoughts, insights, and recommendations to consider for your project:

1. **Understanding Consumer Behavior:** Consumer psychology encompasses various aspects of human behavior, cognition, and emotion that influence purchasing decisions and interactions with retail brands. Consider exploring concepts such as perception, motivation, emotion, decision-making processes, and social influence within the context of Lululemon's retail environment.
2. **Employee Influence:** Employees play a critical role in shaping the retail experience and influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors. Your focus on employees in your literature review is highly relevant, as their interactions with customers can impact satisfaction, loyalty, and overall brand perception. Explore research on employee engagement, training, motivation, and their effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty.
3. **Brand Experience:** Lululemon is known for its strong brand identity, which encompasses elements such as quality, community, and wellness. Analyze how the brand experience is conveyed through various touchpoints in the retail environment, including store design, visual

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merchandising, employee interactions, and marketing communications. Consider how these elements contribute to brand salience, differentiation, and emotional connection with customers.

4. **Customer Engagement:** Consumer psychology can provide insights into strategies for enhancing customer engagement and loyalty. Explore concepts such as experiential marketing, customer relationship management, and social influence to understand how Lululemon can foster deeper connections with its customer base. Consider how personalized experiences, community-building initiatives, and social proof can drive engagement and advocacy.
5. **Data Collection and Analysis:** In collecting and analyzing data, consider employing a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior and perceptions within Lululemon stores. Qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observational studies can provide insights into customer experiences and preferences, while quantitative methods such as surveys and sales data analysis can offer broader trends and correlations.
6. **Insights and Recommendations:** Based on your findings, generate actionable insights and recommendations for Lululemon to enhance the retail experience and drive business growth. Consider areas such as employee training and empowerment, store layout and design, product assortment and merchandising, digital integration, and community engagement initiatives. Tailor your recommendations to address specific pain points or opportunities identified through your research.
7. **Ethical Considerations:** Lastly, consider any ethical considerations related to your research and recommendations, particularly regarding data privacy, participant consent, and potential impact on employees and customers. Ensure that your research adheres to ethical guidelines and that your recommendations prioritize the well-being of all stakeholders involved.

By leveraging insights from consumer psychology and conducting rigorous research and analysis, you can provide valuable recommendations to Lululemon that enhance the retail experience, drive customer satisfaction and loyalty, and ultimately contribute to the company's success in the competitive retail landscape. Good luck with your project! If you need further assistance or guidance along the way, feel free to reach out.

Appendix D

Retail Space Analysis

ENP 193: Retail Space Analysis Lululemon

Tage, Evelyn, Shamim, Isabelle & Wilson



Introduction

Lululemon is a technical apparel company founded in 1998 to reimagine yoga clothing. The company has found massive success, **employing over 38,000 people** in over **700 stores** (About Us, n.d.). They now produce apparel for golf, working out, running, casual wear, and even formal events. With **simple silhouettes, bright colors, and a priority on functionality**, Lululemon has cemented itself as a massive player in the "athleisure" space.



Appendix D Continued

Retail Space Analysis

Demographics

Age

The Lululemon customer represents a wide range of ages from **teen** to **middle-aged**. Anyone who values comfort and lives an active lifestyle could happily wear the brand.

Income

Lululemon is a premium brand, with t-shirts costing roughly \$80. The target customer is thus **fairly well-off** and comfortable trading large sums of money for quality fabrics.

Location

Lululemon customers are located all over the world. Though storefronts are generally constrained to urban areas, e-commerce allows shoppers in more rural areas to get their hands on the brand.



Psychographics

Interests

- The target customer of Lululemon enjoys exercise; they live an active lifestyle.
- They prioritize mindfulness and holistic wellness.
- They value aesthetics and take care in purchasing stylish clothing.

Fears

- They fear falling out of shape.
- They fear injury or physical setbacks that can slow their personal progress.

Aspirations

- They aspire to be the best version of themselves.
- They aspire for continuous improvement in any aspect of their life.
- They aspire to lead a balanced lifestyle, finding equilibrium between fitness, work, and social responsibilities.



Interior Design

+ Lots of manikins

Emphasizes their athletic-fitting clothes and allows them to display many color variations

+ Zen Atmosphere

Focus on yoga and meditation through soft lighting, and a minimalist design – aligns with brand values



Appendix D Continued

Retail Space Analysis

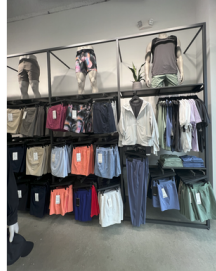
Interior Design ,

+ Functional Layout

Clear and designated aisles, store is separated by genders and offers easy access to mirrors/ dressing rooms

- Community Space

The store we visited was small and lacked room for customers to gather for activities or try out the yoga mats



Style Choices ,

Floors

Floors are a muted concrete color, matching the building complex theme and creating contrast for clothing colors

Overall look/feel

Vibrant ambiance that combines minimalist design elements and community themes to create a welcoming environment

Lighting

Lighting is soft and not overbearing, huge windows at front of the store bring in lots of natural light -

Constraints

Functional: space limitations and accessibility requirements
Psychological: brand identity & target demographic preferences,
Economic: budget & unit price



Style Choices ,

Materials

Clothes are displayed using stainless steel shelves, creating a minimalist tone

Colors

Structures, hangers, and walls are muted colors, creating contrast and making their clothing products pop out

Images

Walls are mostly bland except for community imagery near the checkout, creates sense of belonging and relatability

Themes

Store decor relates to yoga, athleticism, community, and healthy lifestyle - allows people to relate

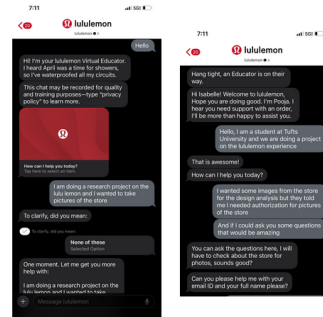


Appendix D Continued

Retail Space Analysis

Navigation

- Navigation was a 10/10
- The store space was very open and the clothing racks were mostly lower than eye level which helped see the whole store.
- The store was also small which might be why finding things were easier
- There were about 5 sales representatives on Wednesday afternoon
- One representative met us with some seconds of us inside the store
- Information was rapidly given to us when we asked
- Navigating the online space of the store was also easy and informative



Impressions

Intended Impressions

- Athletic and Healthy Lifestyle
- Calm/Zen atmosphere

"The wellbeing of our guests, teams, and communities remains our top priority"



Materialized Impressions

- The uniform of the sales representatives and the design of the store accomplished most of the work to create the intended impressions
- The amount of workers on the store made the walking around a big uncomfortable as all the reps were looking at us

Accessibility

Physical Accessibility

There are no direct online lululemon sources stating the brand's wheelchair access.

However, according to [Assembly Row](#), all of the retail stores at the shopping centre are wheelchair accessible, including the lululemon location we visited, which is on the ground level.

Mental Accessibility

"Be Well" is lululemon's second [Impact Strategy Pillar](#), between the other two, "Be Human" and "Be Planet". This is described as: "Provide wellbeing tools to 10+ million people; invest \$75 million in community wellbeing by 2025."

Many of their stores include extra spaces for gatherings & events focused on mental health and community well-being:

- + Free in-store yoga classes and workshops
- + Goal coaching workshops
- + Local vendor markets & social events



Signage at the front of the store is an example of their **mental and emotional health brand values**. The sign to the right says: "Be open about falling apart. It's what #willkeep you together."

Appendix D Continued

Retail Space Analysis

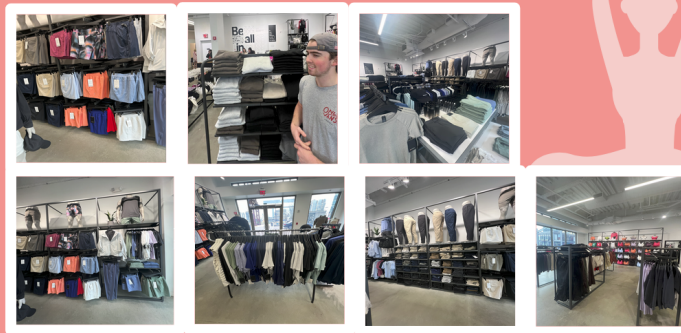
How successful was the space

In summary,

Lululemon's retail space effectively embodies its commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and action (IDEA), fostering a welcoming environment through functional layouts, minimalist aesthetics, and community-focused initiatives. While showcasing strides in sustainability, such as its "Be Planet" initiative and innovative materials like Mylo™, there remains an opportunity to enhance visibility of sustainability efforts within the store environment, perhaps through product tags or labels. Despite criticisms, Lululemon's global success and substantial revenue growth underscore its enduring relevance in the retail landscape, reflecting its ability to balance consumer preferences with ethical and environmental considerations.

Although some critics see Lululemon as controversial and too exclusive, the company has continued to see success and growth. As of January 2023, Lululemon operates more than 650 stores throughout the United States, China, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Lululemon reported a net revenue growth of 30% to over \$8 billion in fiscal year 2022.

Retail Space Photos



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Appendix E

Pictures of the LuluLemon Retail Space

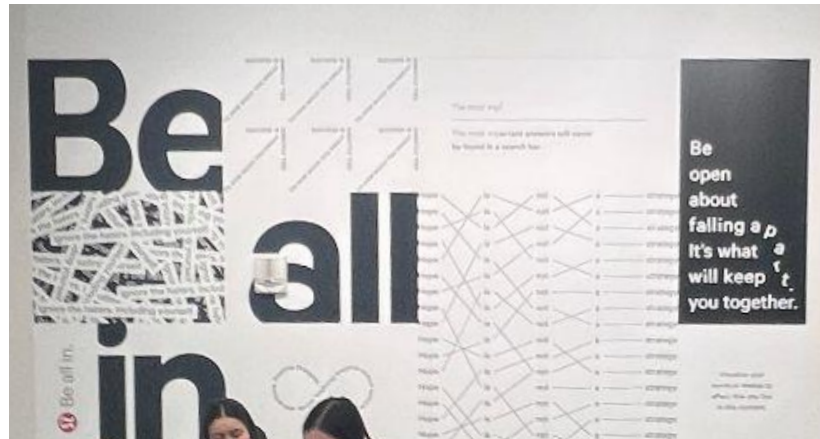


Figure E1: Check-out Wall Picture



Figure E2: Pictures of Lululemon store clothing hangers

Appendix E Continued

Pictures of the LuluLemon Retail Space



Figure E3: Picture of the front of Lululemon pop up store in Somerville



Figure E4-6: Pictures of store displays

Appendix E Continued

Pictures of the LuluLemon Retail Space



Figure E7: Lululemon changing rooms

Appendix F

Data Collection Plan

Data Collection Plan

Includes:

1. Instructions for each step based on canvas assignment file
2. Group Member Assignments (highlighted in this color)
3. Content - your work goes in the designated boxes

Test Focus

Group Member: Evelyn

Select test focus. Choose an aspect or element of the space/task that you wish to test. It can be almost anything; however, some elements/aspects will lend themselves to testing more easily than others. Of course, ideally the focus may be based on/around topics covered in your lit review(s).

The purpose of this test is to evaluate how the brand image is shaped by employee-customer interaction experiences.

Ethnographic Observations of Interpersonal Interactions with the Virtual Shopping Assistant

A brand focused on wellbeing and health, Lululemon puts their customers at the center of their focus. We decided to understand the direct customer interactions by observing the in-demand virtual shopping experience. The best way to accomplish this was by immersion – i.e., by being customers ourselves.

Test Plan Overview

Write a test plan (should be around 4-5 pages, double spaced). This plan will help you decide how to conduct your tests. It should include the following sections:

Background

Group Member: Wilson

- Description of retail space
- Description of dimensions or domains of interest (wayfinding, branding, choice, color, ...)
- Study focus– what subset of the space AND what particular features/components will be tested

Lululemon stores typically feature an open and inviting layout with ample space for customers to move around freely. The design incorporates natural elements such as wood with a minimalist focus, creating a sense of tranquility. The lighting is usually bright, but natural, enhancing the overall ambiance. Additionally, Lululemon stores may have areas designated for community events, yoga classes, or other wellness activities, fostering a sense of community engagement. The particular location our group visited was a pop-up store so it was smaller than most Lululemon stores.

In particular, we thought that Lululemon had very effective branding and company priorities.

1. Branding

- a. Athletic Lifestyle: Lululemon positions itself as a brand that promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. Their branding often reflects this through imagery of people engaged in various fitness activities like yoga, running, or gym workouts.
- b. Logo: The company strategically places its logo on the interior and exterior of all its products. Their products use a simple design with no graphics and the logo while visible, does pop out against their products

2. Company Priorities

- a. Community and Culture: Lululemon fosters a sense of community among its customers, often hosting events like yoga classes, running clubs, and workshops in their stores. Their branding reflects this emphasis on community engagement and creating a sense of belonging among their customers.
- b. High-Quality Material: Many Lululemon products are very expensive, but the company promises to cover the cost of any defects or replace products that do not perform well within the 1st year of purchase

Study focus: Evaluate how the brand image is shaped by employee-customer interaction experiences. We intend to determine how effective customer service agents are in answering consumer questions and how this affects the online purchasing experience.

Objectives

Group Member: Evelyn

- Describe the purpose of the study in the context of objectives
- Some example objectives (you may include multiple objectives within your plan):
 - Evaluate the extent to which the retail space supports:
 - Effective branding
 - Effective wayfinding
 - Effective cross- and up-selling

Overview: The purpose of this test is to evaluate how the brand image is shaped by employee-customer interaction experiences. This will be accomplished by conducting an ethnographic study of an interaction with a virtual shopping assistant.

Objective I: Understand the customer experience during a virtual shopping consultation.

Objective II: Understand the extent to which the product expert portrays the lululemon brand image of personal and community wellbeing, health, and environmental consciousness.

Objective III: Assess the prevalence of any themes amongst separate trials.

Data Collection Materials

Group Member: Shamim

- Describe all of the materials used for the study (Note: This list of materials can serve as a preparation checklist later).
- Materials should include: Data collection tools (observation guides, checklists, interview guides, surveys, etc)
- Informed consent forms (if applicable)

1 Choose Appointment

Shop over Video with a Product Expert
30 MINUTES

Choose this option if you have questions about product sizing, fit or style, including our Shoes— it's like getting an in-store experience, but way more personal.

TIME ZONE
(GMT-4:00) Eastern Time

MORE TIMES >

TODAY Tuesday APRIL 23	TOMORROW Wednesday APRIL 24	Thursday APRIL 25	Friday APRIL 26	Saturday APRIL 27
11:15am	8:00am	8:00am	8:00am	9:00am
11:20am	8:05am	8:05am	8:05am	9:05am
11:25am	8:10am	8:10am	8:10am	9:10am
11:30am	8:15am	8:15am	8:15am	9:15am
11:35am	8:20am	8:20am	8:20am	9:20am
11:40am	8:25am	8:25am	8:25am	9:25am
11:45am	8:30am	8:30am	8:30am	9:30am
11:50am	8:35am	8:35am	8:35am	9:35am
11:55am	8:40am	8:40am	8:40am	9:40am

We searched for online reports and blogs, ethnographic study and using advanced questioning techniques to extract valuable information related to employee behavior, brand identity, and consumer interactions. With this knowledge, we crafted an introduction outlining the demographics, psychographics, and aspirations of our target customers. We explored store interior design, considering style choices, intended impressions, and accessibility.

Our data collection plan involved gathering objective store background data, conducting interviews with Lululemon employees and experts, and attempting virtual calls. Through a combination of methods, we explored the relationship between employee behavior, brand identity, and consumer behavior in Lululemon retail stores.

[Employee Interview - Google Docs](#)

Study Logistics

Group Member: Tage

- Confirm the study methods your group will use
- Provide a rationale for why you are conducting these tests: what outcomes are you measuring for? Why?
- Provide a description of each data collection method and the duration of each activity.

- Study methods:
 - Informal observation at store:
 - Planned to observe consumers who visited the store but were turned away when we started to take photos
 - Wanted to use observation to assess store navigation/see typical routine of Lululemon customer

- Interviews:
 - Attempted to conduct interviews with Lululemon representatives but were asked to do so via email and we were not fond of the lack of personal connection/did not think we would be able to get valuable insights from an email interview
- Virtual Shopping
 - Measuring store employee knowledge and explanation of the store and products through one-on-one shopping consultations with product experts
 - Conducted three 30-minute Zoom interviews

Participants

Group Member: Isabelle

- Identify the end-user population in the context of target consumer groups and provide a rationale
- Describe the number of participants you will engage
- Describe the participant recruitment criteria
- Identify any limitations of your recruitment approach

- End consumer are people who are interested in higher end sports apparel because that is the focus of the store and store language
- We engaged with 4 participants
- Our limitations are on how strict and close off the store is to pictures, videos, and employee interviews

Environment

Group Member: Isabelle

- Describe the environments in which your data collection methods will be conducted
- Identify the location and environment in which you will conduct your study
- Identify the times-of-day and days-of-week that you will do your data collection. Justify why those choices are GOOD (will it be representative of people, crowds, interests, needs, etc)

- Data was collected virtually on virtual appointments, email and over the phone
- Those choices were made based on our necessity in the class and LuluLemons policies
- The

Data Collection and Analysis

Group Member: Wilson

- Specific type of data you will collect (background information/observations of interactions with space/products, responses to interview questions/survey responses)
- Tools used to collect data (checklists, spreadsheets, draft qs)
- Methods used for analyzing data (anticipated)

For our data collection, we conducted [virtual interviews](#) with Lululemon experts that help shoppers make purchasing decisions while shopping online. Each of our 5 group members interviewed someone and took note of how helpful the representative was and how their behaviors contributed to the brand image.

To collect the data, we created a Google doc with all of our questions and created a space for each person to document notes for their interview. The notes we took were based on personal interactions with our representatives and up to our own interpretations. However, we focused on ethnographic observations and how willing the representative was to help us find the product we were 'looking for'. All of our notes and the questions we asked are compiled together in [Employee Interview](#)

Our method for analyzing the data was to compare our experiences and determine whether we had overall positive experiences with our given representative. We shared specific anecdotes that proved to be either helpful or offputting and determined to what extent the representative added to the Lululemon brand image.

Researchers

Group Member: Shamim

- Number of individuals conducting the study
- Each individual's role and responsibilities (who did what)

Group Member	Responsibilities
Evelyn	Product expert consultation
Wilson	Product expert consultation
Shamim	Product expert consultation
Isabelle	Employee interview
Tage	Product expert consultation