

Analyzing the Rise of the GM's Brand from a Brand Development Perspective

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Abstract: The global eyewear industry thrives on the dynamic interplay of shifting consumer preference, technological advancements, and the emergence of new brands. This study examines the rise of the GM brand, focusing on its positioning, design and communication method to understand the factors behind its success. Employing case study and analysing second-hand industry data, the study investigates effective brand development within the fashion sector. It offers insights into how emerging brands navigate competitive landscapes through innovation, consumer engagement, and strategic positioning. By analyzing GM's growth from a brand development perspective, this research examines its core principles, design strategies, and marketing approaches that have propelled the brand's success. Through the analysis with established and emerging eyewear brands, the paper identifies the unique elements driving while also exploring the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The case study provides valuable insights into effective brand-building strategies in the fashion industry, underscoring the crucial role of innovation, design excellence, and consumer engagement.

Keywords: Brand Development, Marketing, Brand Development.

1. Introduction

The global eyewear industry has experienced substantial growth in recent years, fueled by shifting consumer preferences, technological advancements, and the emergence of new brands. Eyewear has transcended its functional role to become a fashion statement, reflecting individuality and lifestyle choice. Brands like Gentle Monster (GM) have capitalized on this trend by offering distinctive designs, innovative retail experiences, and strategically crafted marketing campaigns.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the rise of GM from a brand development perspective. By examining its core principles, design strategies, and marketing approaches, this study seeks to identify the factors that have contributed to the brand's success and to provide insights into effective brand development strategies in the fashion industry. The research is significant as it enhances the understanding of how emerging brands can navigate the competitive global market through innovation in design, customer engagement, and strategic marketing.

To achieve the outlined objectives, this paper employs a case study research methodology. The study begins with an introduction to the relevant theories of brand development, followed by an in-depth analysis of GM's brand positioning and marketing strategies. Building on the challenges and

opportunities discussed in the fourth section, the fifth section offers several strategic recommendations for the brand's continued development.

2. Brand Development Theory and Concepts

Brand development remains a pivotal aspect of marketing strategy, underpinned by several interrelated concepts that guide how a brand grows, sustains itself, and adapts to changing market dynamics. These concepts include brand positioning, integrated marketing communications (IMC), and understanding the target audience. Each plays a crucial role in how brands establish their place in the competitive landscape, differentiate themselves from competitors, and build meaningful relationships with consumers. This literature review synthesizes findings from leading academic studies in these areas, providing a holistic view of brand development.

Brand positioning is the act of designing a brand's offer and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target audience [1]. The goal of brand positioning is to ensure that the brand is seen as offering unique and valuable benefits that are difficult to replicate. The researcher highlights the importance of competitive differentiation in positioning [2]. Brands that fail to differentiate themselves effectively risk becoming commodities, engaging in price-based competition, which erodes profitability. Positioning involves not only differentiating the product or service but also creating an emotional connection with consumers [3]. Emotional branding exceeds the functional benefits of a product to create a lasting connection that appeals to consumers' emotions and values [4]. This kind of differentiation has proven to be especially effective in crowded markets where functional attributes alone are insufficient to sway consumer choices. In the context of positioning, Researchers introduced the idea of "perceptual mapping," a technique used to visualize how consumers perceive a brand in relation to competitors along various attributes [5]. Understanding these perceptions allows brands to identify gaps in the market and position themselves accordingly. However, as consumers' preferences evolve, brand positioning is not static; it requires continuous reassessment and refinement to maintain relevance [6]. This adaptive approach to positioning ensures that brands remain competitive while still adhering to their core identity.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) refers to the process of coordinating and integrating various marketing communication tools—such as advertising, public relations, direct marketing, and digital marketing—into a seamless program to maximize the impact of the brand's message [7]. IMC's central premise is that brand communication should be unified and consistent across all platforms to create a cohesive brand image. Researcher asserts that the value of IMC lies in its ability to provide clarity and synergy across different communication channels, ensuring that every touchpoint reinforces the brand's identity and positioning [8]. This is particularly relevant in today's digital age, where consumers engage with brands through multiple channels, from social media to traditional advertising. A fragmented communication strategy risks confusing consumers or diluting the brand message [9]. Scholars have also noted that IMC is instrumental in enhancing brand equity. A researcher identifies a positive correlation between integrated communication efforts and brand equity, suggesting that a well-executed IMC strategy leads to higher levels of brand awareness and stronger consumer loyalty [10]. Importantly, IMC allows brands to tailor their message to different audience segments while still maintaining a consistent core identity [11]. Moreover, the rise of digital platforms has expanded the role of IMC, with many scholars emphasizing the importance of two-way communication [12]. In contrast to traditional one-way advertising, digital channels allow for interactive engagement between brands and consumers. This interaction fosters deeper relationships and enables brands to respond in real-time to consumer feedback, enhancing both customer experience and brand loyalty.

Understanding the target audience is a fundamental aspect of brand development. A deep comprehension of consumer behavior, preferences, and motivations is key to developing effective

branding strategies [13]. Audience segmentation, based on demographic, psychographic, and behavioral data, allows brands to tailor their marketing efforts to specific groups, thereby increasing the relevance and impact of their communications [14]. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of data-driven insights in understanding the target audience. Big data and analytics enable brands to gather detailed information on consumer behavior, from purchasing patterns to social media interactions [15]. This data-driven approach helps brands to not only understand current consumer needs but also anticipate future trends. Furthermore, personalization has emerged as a crucial element in connecting with today's consumers. Research suggests that personalized content, which addresses individual preferences and needs, significantly increases engagement and brand loyalty [16]. This is especially pertinent in the digital age, where consumers expect brands to deliver tailored experiences. Understanding the target audience also involves recognizing cultural, social, and economic factors that influence consumer behavior. Cross-cultural branding requires brands to adapt their messaging to different cultural contexts while retaining their core identity. This adaptability is essential for global brands seeking to maintain relevance across diverse markets.

3. GM and its brand development strategies

In 2011, Hankook Kim, a visionary entrepreneur based in Seoul, identified a critical gap in the eyewear industry, which was predominantly shaped by imitation products derived from Western brands. Recognizing the distinct facial structures of Asian consumers and the demand for eyewear that aligns with both functional and aesthetic preferences, Kim founded GM with a targeted mission: to create eyewear specifically tailored to the needs of Asian faces. By introducing designs featuring larger frames and lower-profile nose bridges that better accommodate these facial features, GM swiftly disrupted the market, establishing itself as a leader in fashion-forward eyewear. At the core of GM's strategic vision is the fusion of high-end fashion with design innovation, driven by a comprehensive understanding of consumers' desires for both aesthetic refinement and individual expression. Central to this vision is the brand's ethos, "made for Asians, by Asians," which has resonated deeply with consumers, fostering strong brand loyalty through an emphasis on authenticity, originality, and cultural relevance. GM's commitment to meticulous craftsmanship, coupled with its synthesis of functionality and avant-garde aesthetics, underscores its pursuit of design excellence. In its ongoing development, GM has strategically leveraged integrated marketing communications, utilizing diverse channels to cultivate brand communities and enhance consumer awareness. This approach has been instrumental in solidifying GM's position within the competitive global eyewear market, reflecting its dedication to innovation and consumer engagement [7]. In GM's development, key elements such as brand positioning, product innovation, and digital marketing initiatives play a critical role. The following section offers a comprehensive analysis of GM's brand development and marketing strategy, focusing on these essential components.

3.1. GM's Brand positioning

GM's market positioning has been a fundamental factor in its success within the highly competitive global eyewear industry. The brand has successfully identified and capitalized on the specific needs of Asian consumers, setting itself apart from the myriad of imitators replicating popular Western designs. Unlike many of its competitors, GM has honed in on the distinct anatomical features of Asian consumers, particularly by developing large-framed glasses and low-profile nose bridge models specifically tailored to Asian facial contours. This approach has allowed GM not only to meet the functional requirements of its target market but also to establish a strong and unique brand identity rooted in addressing underserved needs.

This strategic market positioning has enabled GM to stand out in an increasingly crowded market, forging deeper connections with its target demographic by focusing on their specific needs and preferences. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach or imitating Western trends, GM has demonstrated the importance of understanding and catering to the unique preferences of its consumer base. This thoughtful positioning resonates deeply with consumers who may have previously struggled to find eyewear that both fits their facial structure and appeals aesthetically. Furthermore, GM's positioning has been instrumental in driving its global expansion. As the brand ventures into international markets, it continues to adapt its product offerings to local consumer preferences without compromising its core design philosophy or aesthetic vision. For instance, GM retains its avant-garde and minimalist style while incorporating regional cultural nuances, ensuring that its products remain relevant and appealing to a broad, diverse global audience. This adaptive strategy has enabled GM to thrive across various markets, particularly in regions where local consumer preferences differ from its Asian-centric designs, while maintaining the brand's distinct identity.

In summary, GM's strategic market positioning has been a key driver of its success and differentiation within the eyewear industry. By addressing the specific needs of Asian consumers and crafting designs that cater to their unique preferences, the brand has cultivated a strong identity and laid a solid foundation for its impressive global growth.

3.2. Product Innovation and Unique Design

GM has revolutionized the eyewear industry through its innovative and distinctive designs, which are meticulously tailored to accommodate the facial contours of Asian consumers. By introducing oversized frames and designs optimized for low-profile nose bridges, GM challenges conventional eyewear norms while offering a functional and aesthetically appealing solution for its target market. This approach has allowed GM to carve out a unique niche in the market, where its designs stand out for their boldness and creativity.

The brand's collections often embody a futuristic and avant-garde flair, combining vibrant colors with surrealistic accents that push the boundaries of conventional fashion design [6]. GM's commitment to fusing art and fashion is further underscored by its collaborations with notable brands such as Huawei and acclaimed artists, positioning the brand at the intersection of technology, art, and fashion. These collaborations not only highlight GM's commitment to innovation but also reinforce its role as a creative leader in the industry. Innovation lies at the heart of GM's brand philosophy, and this focus has been critical in propelling the brand forward in an increasingly saturated market. By continually pushing creative boundaries, GM not only fulfills consumer aspirations for novel and cutting-edge designs but also cultivates a sense of exclusivity and desirability. The brand's personalized approach to eyewear, combined with its seamless integration of art, technology, and design, creates emotional connections with consumers. This emotional engagement is central to GM's success, as it taps into consumers' desires for self-expression and individuality through fashion.

The strategic alliance between innovation and design fuels GM's growth, offering consumers immersive and emotionally resonant experiences. The brand's forward-thinking philosophy and dedication to staying relevant in a fast-changing fashion landscape ensure that it remains a leader in the industry [15]. GM's unique ability to evolve while maintaining its core design principles ensures its long-term success and prominence, not only as an eyewear brand but as a cultural innovator in the fashion world.

3.3. Digital Marketing and Social Media Presence

In today's digital age, the role of social media in brand development is paramount. Social media platforms have become indispensable tools for businesses seeking to connect with their target

audiences, build brand awareness, foster engagement, and ultimately drive growth. For GM, social media has been a key factor in its ability to cultivate a global brand presence, engage with consumers in real-time, and enhance its market penetration through strategic content and influencer partnerships.

Social media offers numerous advantages for brand development, including increased visibility, real-time consumer engagement, access to market insights, and the ability to implement cost-effective marketing campaigns [8]. Additionally, it provides a platform for storytelling, where brands like GM can communicate their unique design philosophy, values, and vision to a broad audience. By leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, GM is able to showcase its latest products, store designs, and collaborations, capturing the attention of a global consumer base. One of GM's most effective strategies has been its ability to foster a vibrant and engaged community among its followers. Through regular updates, behind-the-scenes content, and sneak peeks of upcoming collections, GM has cultivated a sense of exclusivity and anticipation among its audience. This interactive approach not only strengthens brand loyalty but also positions GM as a trendsetter in the eyewear industry, keeping consumers engaged with fresh and innovative content. Strategic collaborations with influencers and celebrities have also played a critical role in bolstering GM's brand recognition. High-profile partnerships with figures like Jennie from Blackpink and Kanye West have amplified the brand's visibility, particularly among younger, fashion-conscious consumers. These collaborations have allowed GM to tap into the vast fan bases of these influencers, enhancing the brand's credibility and positioning it as a premium, fashion-forward label. By aligning itself with influential personalities, GM not only drives sales but also reinforces its image as a brand that resonates with those seeking unique and cutting-edge designs.

GM's use of digital marketing extends beyond traditional product promotion; it also provides valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences. Social media analytics enable the brand to track engagement metrics, identify trends, and adapt its marketing strategies in real time. This data-driven approach allows GM to fine-tune its messaging and offerings, ensuring that its products and campaigns remain relevant and aligned with consumer expectations. Moreover, the rise of e-commerce and social shopping has further expanded GM's reach. By integrating shopping features directly into social media platforms, GM enables consumers to seamlessly purchase products without leaving the app, enhancing the convenience and immediacy of the shopping experience. This approach not only drives sales but also capitalizes on the growing trend of digital-first shopping, particularly among younger consumers.

In conclusion, GM's strategic use of social media and digital marketing has been instrumental in its global success. By leveraging the power of social media platforms, fostering meaningful engagement with its audience, and collaborating with influential figures, GM has effectively navigated the digital landscape to build a strong and recognizable brand. As the digital space continues to evolve, GM's ability to adapt and innovate in its digital marketing efforts will remain crucial to its ongoing growth and market leadership.

4. Challenges and Opportunities in GM'S Development

4.1. Challenges in Maintaining Brand Uniqueness and Innovation

As GM expands its global presence, the risk of brand dilution becomes increasingly significant. Rapid international expansion often requires adjustments to meet the needs of diverse markets and consumer preferences, which can potentially compromise the brand's core values and aesthetic identity. To mitigate this risk, GM must rigorously adhere to its foundational brand philosophy while simultaneously adapting to local cultures and market trends. Achieving this delicate balance demands comprehensive market research and strategic planning, ensuring that each new store or product line not only resonates with local consumers but also reinforces the GM's distinct identity.

Innovation is at the heart of GM, yet balancing the push for creative boundaries with maintaining brand consistency poses a significant challenge. The brand's continued success relies heavily on its ability to deliver fresh and exciting experiences while preserving its core values and aesthetic coherence[10]. To navigate this challenge, GM must have a well-defined vision for its brand identity, ensuring that all design, marketing, and retail initiatives align with this vision. This calls for a strong internal culture that promotes creativity while updating strict adherence to brand guidelines, , fostering both innovation and consistency.

The global eyewear market is becoming increasingly saturated, with new competitors entering the market regularly. Preserving GM's unique positioning in this competitive landscape is a formidable challenge. To remain competitive, GM must continuously innovate and distinguish itself from rivals through the development of new product lines, the exploration of unconventional marketing strategies, and the enhancement of customer experiences that set the brand apart. Additionally, staying attuned to emerging trends and evolving consumer preferences is crucial to ensuring that GM's offerings remain relevant and desirable in a rapidly changing market.

4.2. Opportunities for Future Growth and Brand Evolution

GM's growth strategy is anchored in two core pillars: product diversification and market expansion, both underpinned by technological innovation designed to enhance the customer experiences. Through product diversification, GM aims to broaden its market appeal by introducing a wider range of offerings, including novel eyewear styles, complementary accessories, and adjacent product lines. This approach allows the brand to reach a more diverse audience, catering to varying consumer preferences and needs while maintaining its distinctive brand identity.

Concurrently, GM focus on penetrating untapped markets, particularly in emerging economies, where there is significant potential for growth. Leveraging its avant-garde brand identity and retail expertise, GM seeks to establish a robust global presence in these market. This strategic expansion is not only expected to increase GM's market share but also to strengthen its leadership position in the highly competitive and globalized eyewear industry. By tailoring its offerings to the unique preferences of consumers in these regions, GM is poised to capture new customer segments and build long-term loyalty.

Central to GM's growth trajectory is its commitment to technological innovation. The brand is integrating cutting-edge technologies, such as smart glasses, AR try-on features, VR showrooms, and AI-driven personalization tools, to create immersive and interactive retail experiences. These advancements allow GM to redefine industry standards and set itself apart from competitors, providing customers with unique, technologically enhanced shopping experiences. This ongoing focus on innovation ensures that GM remains a visionary leader, capable of maintaining its competitive edge in a rapidly evolving market. By seamlessly blending technological innovation with product diversification and market expansion, GM is positioned to lead the future of the eyewear industry.

5. Strategic Recommendations for GM'S Development

Based on the challenges and opportunities identified, several strategic recommendations are put forward, focusing on reinforcing brand identity through localized adaptation, fostering a culture of sustainable innovation, and enhancing the customer experience through technological integration. These strategies are essential for GM to sustain its competitive advantage and maintain leadership in the global eyewear market.

As GM expands its global footprint, balancing the preservation of its unique brand identity with the need to address local consumer preferences becomes critical. To mitigate the risk of brand dilution,

GM should pursue a strategy of localized adaptation, ensuring that its core brand philosophy remains intact while customizing product offerings and marketing approaches to reflect regional tastes and cultural nuances. This strategy is essential in navigating the diverse consumer landscapes of global markets, especially in regions where consumer behaviors and preferences differ significantly from GM's established markets. Rigorous market research and an in-depth understanding of local consumer behavior are required to ensure that each store and product line resonates with regional consumers while maintaining GM's distinctive avant-garde aesthetic and core values. By doing so, GM can foster stronger connections with local markets without compromising its global identity.

Innovation is central to GM's growth, but the brand must go beyond technological advancement and integrate sustainability into its innovation processes to remain competitive in the long term. As consumer demand for environmentally responsible products grows, GM has the opportunity to lead the market by prioritizing sustainable innovation. This includes exploring eco-friendly materials, adopting sustainable production methods, and reducing environmental impact throughout its product lifecycle [11]. By integrating sustainability into its core operations, GM can meet the rising expectations of eco-conscious consumers and enhance its brand reputation. Furthermore, positioning itself as a pioneer in combining cutting-edge technology with ethical design practices will allow GM to differentiate itself in an increasingly crowded market, where sustainability is becoming a key competitive differentiator. This dual focus on innovation and sustainability will not only strengthen GM's market positioning but also future-proof the brand in the face of evolving regulatory and consumer pressures.

To remain at the forefront of the eyewear industry's rapid evolution, GM must continuously enhance the customer experience through the integration of advanced technologies. The deployment of AR try-on features, VR showrooms, and AI-driven personalization tools presents a significant opportunity for GM to create immersive, interactive, and highly personalized shopping experiences. These technologies enable GM to differentiate itself from competitors by offering consumers a unique and engaging retail experience. Moreover, they serve as powerful tools for gathering consumer data and insights, which can be used to refine product offerings and optimize customer engagement in real time. The continuous advancement of these technological capabilities will not only elevate customer satisfaction but also build long-term loyalty, ensuring that GM remains competitive in an increasingly tech-driven retail environment.

In conclusion, by reinforcing brand identity through localized adaptation, integrating sustainability into its innovation strategy, and leveraging advanced technologies to enhance customer experiences, GM is well-positioned to retain its leadership in the global eyewear market. These strategies will ensure that the brand remains relevant, innovative, and competitive while meeting the changing needs of consumers in an evolving marketplace.

6. Conclusion

This article explores the rise of Gentle Monster from a brand development perspective, emphasizing its unique market positioning, innovative designs strategies, and effective marketing approaches. Key findings highlight GM's success in catering to Asian consumers through tailored eyewear designs, its focus on design innovation and excellence to construct a strong brand identity, and the impact of consumer perception and brand identity on its market position. The study underscores the significance of strategic market expansion, digital marketing, experiential retail, and visual branding in GM's growth. Challenges include maintaining brand uniqueness and in a competitive landscape, while opportunities exist in product diversification, untapped markets, and technological integration.

Using case methodology, this study identifies several key factors contributing to GM's success. The first is that GM's commitment to delivering high-end visual experiences and innovative retail experiences has set it apart from competitors. Its theatrical store designs and immersive retail

experiences foster strong emotional connections with consumers. Additionally, the brand's integration of art and technology in its product offerings, along with its personalized store strategy, has further solidified its brand identity and consumer appeal. Lastly, the brand's ability to maintain a consistent brand identity amid rapid expansion and increasing competition underscores demonstrates its resilience and determination to stay at the forefront of the fashion industry.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Notably, the research does not sufficiently account for the role of consumer psychology in brand development, thus underrepresenting the critical influence of consumer behavior and perceptions in the analysis of the brand's success. Future research could further investigate the role of consumer psychology in shaping brand loyalty and emotional connections within the fashion industry. For instance, studies could explore how consumers perceive and respond to GM's brand development strategies, such as its immersive retail experiences and artistic product designs. Additionally, lack of comparison between other brands promote a comparative analysis of other emerging brands in the eyewear and fashion industries could offer insights into the similarities and differences in their brand development strategies. Furthermore, researchers could examine the impact of technology and digital media on brand building and marketing strategies in the post-pandemic era, offering a deeper understanding of how technological advancements continue to shape the industry.

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