‘GARDEN OF EVE’ - A RETAIL CONCEPT FOR VIRGIN TO ENTER THE DUTCH DENIM MARKET

by Rebecca Herrlich
INTRODUCTION

This abbreviated Process Book guides the reader through research, decision-making and actualisation during my five-months-long graduation phase. In a chronological order, it shows the steps I took towards my final product, giving an insight into the basis and reasons for the choices I made as well as into the big ideas that guided me during the process.

Through the book I want to demonstrate my ability to apply the competencies I have obtained at AMFI in order to create a strong graduation project. The end product, a new retail concept which brings together my analytical and creative skills, shall prove that after four years of International Fashion and Branding studies I am ready to enter the working world.

Declaration: The final products (Virgin Denim Brand Book and Concept Book) are my own work.
WHY A STRATEGIC RETAIL CONCEPT?
AFTER LOOKING AT MY STRENGTHS I KNEW THE FINAL PROJECT SHOULD COMBINE RESEARCH, CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING.
INTERESTING CASE IN BRANDING

UK-based • daring • unconventional • service-oriented • brand extensions in various fields

Virgin to enter the fashion market; Branson launching range of contemporary clothes for urban lifestyles

Virgin reveals in '40 years of disruption'

Virgin to enter the fashion market; Branson launching range of contemporary clothes for urban lifestyles

Branson pulls clothes line as sales flop

RICHARD BRANSON'S FAILS: 14 Virgin Companies That Went Bust

Virgin flies high with brand extensions

Virgin America triumphant

Virgin Ware set to open flagship underwear store

Virgin to shift focus from clothes to cosmetics

Founder Richard Branson, adventurer, hedonist and unconventional entrepreneur, is in the DNA of the brand.

Their clothing brand in the UK failed because of a difficult climate and because of targeting the wrong people.
VIRGIN IS SUCCESSFUL IN MARKETS WHERE THEY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE THROUGH EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE, EASE AND FUN.
CONCLUSIONS

Virgin seems to be a good brand to work with for my graduation project because
• they have a strong identity
• they are an interesting, controversial case in (anti-)branding
• there is much information to be found on them
• they used to have a fashion sub-brand which failed years ago
• they are always open to enter new markets

Virgin is known
• for taking on the big boys (competitors)
  • for entering blocked markets
• because of defying all rules of branding
  • as being daring and unconventional
• because of founder Richard Branson
• for their extraordinary service and focus on improving people’s lives

‘Some 80% of your life is spent working. You want to have fun at home; why shouldn’t you have fun at work?’

Richard Branson, founder of Virgin

Especially the Virgin Atlantic airline is known around the world, incorporating the brand values fun, innovation, service and value for money.
WHAT FASHION FIELD?

IDEA: DENIM

G-Star Raw
Diesel
Pepe Jeans
Wrangler
Lee
Hilfiger Denim
Lucky Brand
Mustang
Replay
Guess
SIMILARITIES

VIRGIN & DENIM

- rebellious, nonconformist
- unconventional
- background in youth culture
- background in music
- democratic
- challenging
- associated with fun and freedom
- innovative
- active
- denim is a crowded market (which Virgin appreciates)

Jean represent democracy in fashion.

Giorgio Armani
CONCLUSION

The denim market is the right field to focus on because (of)

• similarities with the core and history of Virgin
  • potential to focus on service
• innovative and democratic fashion field
• leaves room for experimentation and improvement
• at first sight many denim brands are doing the same (heritage, roughness, masculinity)
  • denim has never been out of fashion

VIRGIN COULD ADD SERVICE, EASE AND FUN!

BENEFIT: REVITALISE VIRGIN’S POPULARITY IN THE NETHERLANDS
idea: bringing some details back in the layout of the Brand and Concept Book; leather patch on the cover, stitches, studs, denim blue and used look of jeans in the layout
WHAT MARKET?

IDEA: THE NETHERLANDS

democratic country • people love their denim • open-minded • trendsetters • competition

Made in Holland: Luxury Jeans

DUTCH DENIM
Differentiation Through Innovation

Amsterdam jeans capital

First official Jean School opens in Amsterdam

A Denim Capital?

Kingpins: 'Amsterdam is THE denim capital'
EXPERT INTERVIEWS

‘JEANS FIT THE DUTCH MENTALITY. IT’S A DOWN-TO-EARTH FABRIC AND EVERYONE CAN WEAR IT.’
Mariette Hoitink, founder of HTNK

‘WE ARE GOING BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL FEELING OF BEING HELPED IN A STORE.’
Rudy Ross, Tenue de Nîmes

‘PEOPLE SOMETIMES GET FRUSTRATED ABOUT THE SIZE SYSTEM.’
Kirsten Thyra, Cheap Monday

‘IF AS A JEANS BRAND YOU WORK IN AMSTERDAM, YOU WILL WORK ANYWHERE.’
Clinton James, Denham
Amsterdam is the city to launch the new Virgin brand because

- it is the denim capital of Europe
- there are many jeans lovers and experts
  - there is a high demand in jeans
- denim fits the lifestyle of Dutch people
- the market is crowded (which Virgin likes)
- the Netherlands have a background in trade and practical design
- Amsterdam = creative hub and perfect testbed for new (jeans) brands because it is a strong indicator for Europe-wide trends
  - there is a big airport closeby
- rising demand in economy (as opposed to premium) jeans

OPPORTUNITY IN THE MID-MARKET WITH A DEMOCRATIC APPROACH
WHO TO TARGET?

democratic approach (25-55 years) • fashion mainstream • open to new brands • positive • sociable

IDEA: WOMEN

‘WOMEN ARE LIKE CATS. THEY GO TO WHOEVER OFFERS THEM A DELICIOUS MEAL.’

Clinton James, Denham
STREET SURVEYS & ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

‘I WISHED THERE WAS A COHERENT SYSTEM IN SIZES.’

‘SOMETIMES I AM NOT HAPPY WITH THE SERVICE. I HAVE THE FEELING THE ASSISTANTS ALWAYS SAY THAT IT LOOKS NICE.’

‘APPROPRIATE GUIDANCE IS MISSING IN MANY DENIM STORES.’

‘IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND A GOOD FIT IF YOU DON’T HAVE SIZE ZERO.’

‘SHOP ASSISTANTS SHOULD BE HONEST.’

‘I WOULD LOVE TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRODUCTS.’

‘YOU CAN GET GOOD JEANS FOR 70 EURO. WHY SHOULD YOU SPEND 100 THEN?’

‘THE IDEAL BRAND SHOULD OFFER A WIDE RANGE OF SIZES.’

‘A GOOD SALES ASSISTANT KNOWS THE RIGHT SIZE ONLY BY LOOKING AT THE CUSTOMER.’

‘GOOD STAFF KNOW THEIR BRAND AND PRODUCTS BY HEART.’

‘FITTING ROOMS SHOULD BE LARGE AND CLEAN.’
VISUALISATION
MAIN INSIGHTS

For these women, shopping for jeans is related to stress.

Their biggest frustration is finding an affordable, contemporary pair of jeans with a good fit.

WHY WOMEN

They are a better fit with the brand because they are open to new brands when shopping for jeans - as opposed to the more loyal men that often stick to their favourite label. Also women are more concerned with the perfect jeans fit and with concealing their problematic areas.
WHAT STRATEGIC RETAIL CONCEPT WILL HELP TO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH THE VIRGIN BRAND ON THE DUTCH DENIM MARKET?
BRAND REQUIREMENTS

• The new jeans brand needs to incorporate the Virgin values: service, fun, innovation, value for money.

• It needs to be democratic, approachable (mid-market) & informative and inspirational.

• The brand focuses on women as they are more open to new jeans brands and therefore the better fit.

• Virgin’s strength is service. This should be the emphasis of the new sub-brand too and happen on various levels (great staff + retail technology).

  • Service = happens before the purchase

• The label should make shopping for jeans simpler and less frustrating.

• The brand needs to be different from other jeans brands - because Virgin always goes against the mainstream and breaks rules (unconventional and controversial in a way to still suit the target group).
STRATEGY

The new brand needs to

• incorporate the brand’s values
  • be recognisable as Virgin
  • be all about service
• be democratic (in sizes and age)
  • appeal to women aged 25-55
• cater women with different body shapes
• be very different from other jeans brands
  • combine online and offline
• make shopping for jeans less stressful
POSITIONING

democratic (target group)

fashion-forward

fun-loving

low price

high price

exclusive

serious

classic

80 Euros
‘ONLINESS’ STATEMENT

Virgin Denim is the only mid-market denim brand with a democratic approach that simplifies the experience of buying jeans through their extraordinary service.

VIRGIN DENIM IS

WHAT the only democratic jeans brand on the mid-market
HOW that simplifies the experience of buying jeans through their extraordinary and personal service
WHO for women between 25-55 years with different body shapes who are part of the fashion mainstream
WHERE living in the Netherlands
WHY who desperately look for an affordable pair with the (almost) perfect fit
WHEN in an era of standard sizes and a lack of good service.

USP:
SIMPLIFYING THE SHOPPING FOR JEANS THROUGH A WIDE RANGE OF FITS AND SIZES COMBINED WITH HYPER-PERSONALISED SERVICE.
VISION: EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE MAKES FOR AN EASY LIFE.

MISSION: WE TAKE THE STRESS OUT OF SHOPPING FOR YOUR NEW FAVOURITE PAIR OF JEANS.
02 NEW BRAND

HOW TO VISUALISE?

LOOK & FEEL

light-hearted • fun • aspirational • positive • friendly • clean • fresh • feminine • organic • inspired by the visual identity of Virgin Atlantic
FINAL SELECTION

GRAPHIC IDENTITY
FONTs
light • feminine • simple • smooth

HEADER
GOTHAM ROUNDED LIGHT
ABCDEFghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

COPY
GILL SANS LIGHT
ABCDEFghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

BRAND COLOURS

gentle rose
5 / 20 / 0 / 0

de Nîmes
100 / 85 / 40 / 40

radiant orchid
40 / 50 / 0 / 0

innocent blue
15 / 2 / 0 / 0

blooming pink
0 / 90 / 20 / 0

wispy white
0 / 5 / 5 / 0

enticing purple
25 / 100 / 30 / 20

smooth leather
0 / 26 / 46 / 0
LOGO

light • feminine • subtle denim feel • ‘Virgin’ logo incorporated • surprising in colour

IN SHORT

The graphic identity needs to be feminine, light, fresh, simple and positive. Female shapes and colours are the base of the visual style to give it a soft and friendly appeal.

The look and feel should be aspirational yet approachable (to prevent it from having a high fashion feel).

Challenge: It needs to work for women with a wide age range.
WHAT PRODUCTS?

wide range of fits • democratic (cover broad age range) • contemporary yet basic
DENIM COLOURS

pure white  blue glass  enticing purple
paradise peach  antiquated green

T-SHIRT COLOURS
03 RETAIL CONCEPT

OVERALL IDEA
MINDMAPS

‘service stations’ where staff can be called

online profile with your data and size

mannequins communicate with tablets/phones

extraordinary service
well-trained staff = specialists

information and inspiration

in-store body scan

smart hangtags with extra information

body shapes as navigation tools / assortment arranged accordingly + fun approach to woman’s body = fruit comparison

store like a futuristic Garden of Eden

controversial topic (daring to play with) - fits Virgin’s rebellious character

symbolism: religion (‘Virgin’ and ‘Garden of Eden’); seduction (forbidden fruit); shopping = seduction

woman = modern Eve

name works for a wide age range

feminine, sexy, daring; very Virgin + appeals to target group (every woman wants to be attractive)

positive/joy/perfect life

paradise = the ideal world (over the top, fits Virgin’s creation of dream worlds)

• Make sure that the shapes = fruits idea is Virgin (surprising, fun, sexy) and not too dull!

• Garden of Eve as denim paradise that indicates immediately: no matter the body shape, every woman can find the perfect jeans + get great service + enjoy shopping

• Religious reference: suits Virgin’s rebellious character

Garden of Eve Concept

many shapes and forms, many sizes and materials / abundance + variety

harmony

• Idea: Garden of Eden (later renamed into Garden of Eve) as base of the Retail Concept
IDEA: THE VIRGIN DENIM RETAIL CONCEPT IS INSPIRED BY THE IMAGE OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN WITH ITS VARIOUS SHAPES, LIGHTNESS AND PARADISAL FEEL.
Often women’s bodies are compared to fruits because of their shapes. Usually this is done in a very literal, often not too flattering way and regularly used by women’s magazines etc.

**IDEA: VIRGIN DENIM WORKS WITH THE FOUR MOST POPULAR BODY TYPES BUT USES THEM IN A SURPRISING, APPEALING AND MORE ABSTRACT WAY.**
PATTERNS AND NAMES

translating the shapes into recognisable patterns

close-up of denim fabric

close-up of seeds

close-up of a leaf

close-up of a tree

the names derive from women from the Old Testament to suit the Garden of Eden topic
HOW TO VISUALISE THE GARDEN OF EVE?
The Garden of Eve is a denim paradise where personal and virtual service go hand in hand. Four popular body types are used to navigate customers in the store and to thus make shopping easy and enjoyable. Women with different body types should immediately feel that here they can find their new favourite pair of jeans. With a clear focus on females, the modern Eves are praised and should feel admirable in the Virgin Denim store.

The body shapes are not used in a literal way (peer, apple etc.) but are translated into denim characters, recognisable through pattern and colour and their individual name which derive from women from the Old Testament.
04
STORE
REQUIREMENTS

light • fresh • inviting • service-oriented • aspirational yet accessible • democratic • friendly • innovative • feminine • natural • slightly futuristic • daylight feel • main inspiration: biblical Garden of Eden and the female body

The image of the Garden of Eden as well as the female body have inspired the Garden of Eve retail formula.
WOMEN’S BODIES, THE BIBLICAL GARDEN OF EDEN AND THE NATURAL FEEL OF JEANS IS THE MAIN INSPIRATION FOR THE VIRGIN DENIM STORE.

ARCHITECTURE

open • soft • organic • slightly futuristic • fluent • surprising
SHAPES
organic • modern • floating • feminine • fun

STORE COLOURS
friendly • light • feminine • pink tones & neutral colours • denim blue as contrast
MATERIALS
mix of natural and futuristic • interesting • inviting

LIGHTING
daylight feel • natural • flattering
VISUAL MERCHANDISING

accessible • light • clean

LOCATION
Kalverstraat 2-4, Amsterdam

Why this location?

Virgin Denim is a high street brand aiming at the fashion mainstream that search for fair-priced products. In Amsterdam they most likely go shopping on Kalverstraat.
CUSTOMER IS QUEEN

body scanner and tablet help finding the perfect jeans

spacious fitting rooms with different lighting options

dividing the assortment according to four different body shapes
idea: showing the journey of the customer through visualising the different zones in the store

04 STORE

DIFFERENT ZONES
VISUALS FOR THE ZONES
3D IMPRESSION

FIRST SKETCH

Elements that inspired the sketch:
- White wood for displays and furniture
- Subtly structured tiles for the floor in creamy white
- White MDF wood panels for the walls
- White curtain textiles for the changing rooms
- Washed denim look for the denim garden
- Washed denim & wave

Additional elements:
FINAL 3D IMPRESSIONS

main angle, 3D execution by Josh Dykgraaf

second angle, 3D execution by Josh Dykgraaf
05 FINAL PRESENTATION

COMPONENTS

- TITLE + MY NAME
- A3 RESEARCH QUESTION + BRAND ANALYSIS
- A3 BRAND VIRGIN DENIM
- A3 DENIM PINBOARD WITH IMAGES OF DIFFERENT WOMEN
- A3 CONCEPT GARDEN OF EVE
- A3 STORE IMPRESSION
- TAGS AND SEED PACKAGES
- A5 BRAND BOOK
- A5 CONCEPT BOOK
- A5 MINI PROCESS BOOK
**NEW SUB-BRAND STRATEGY**

Virgin Denim takes the stress out of shopping for jeans with a wide range of fits and sizes.

**GARDEN OF EVE RETAIL CONCEPT**

- Denim paradise: A denim paradise with a denim body type in which women with various body shapes smoothly find their new favorite pair of jeans.
- Shopping is simple and enjoyable.
- Celebrates women through feminine store design and outstanding service.
- Inspired by shapes, lightness, and atmosphere of the biblical Garden of Eden and the softness of the female body.

Virgin Denim works with four different body types.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

What strategic retail concept will help to successfully launch the Virgin brand on the Dutch denim market?

**TECHNICAL SKETCH**

- Denim stud holes: 0.5 cm
- Back of each frame requires a kunststof standard (+/- 100 mm)
- The material of this frame should be quite light so the frame will hold it.

Idea: light, structured white wood or similar material for frames; boards attached with studs to refer to the construction of jeans.
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