FINAL PRODUCT
THESIS x MULBERRY

VALÉRIE VAN DE VOORT
500651859, 28.05.2015
AMSTERDAM FASHION INSTITUTE
This product is the result of research conducted in the last semester of my bachelor studies at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute, where I have explored the luxury fashion retail environment. For Mulberry - the luxury fashion company where I currently work for - I will implemented the results of the thesis and give an advice for their general retail system and store layout of their London flagship store.

As one can read in my final thesis I have made a distinction between personalization and helpfulness, and in this booklet I will address the company advice in the same sub-categories.
As stated in my final thesis, helpfulness is an important factor of customer focus. As a consequence of the research conducted, several changes can be made concerning retail routines in Mulberry stores in order to improve this factor. Helpfulness will in return result in customer loyalty that leads to an increase in turnover. Mulberry has a strong focus on training and educating their retail staff and this is something that the company should continue doing. The current areas of training of Mulberry are merchandise, collection, brand and leather. However, besides this range of guidance, focus can and should also be brought towards the course of culture. As of now there are stores who receive training in regards to this subject – as the outlet store in Roermond, Netherlands – however this is given by an external company - arranged by the outlet itself - and explains why not every store receives this education.

It is important for every team to have the ability to gain knowledge in regards to this subject, as retail environments get more and more cross cultural. This is why I would suggest for Mulberry to implement the cultural booklets that were described and explained in my final thesis. In this way, retail staff can find out facts and habits of a country and its citizens, from which Mulberry often welcomes custmers. Also, after training is given these booklets should be made available for staff to recap while e.g. having a break. The selection of booklets will expand equal to the increase of different cultures in the store.

For Mulberry, creating these documents or booklets can be done with the help of their own staff when asking for feedback and information about one’s culture. Visuals that support these can be provided by travelling managers or merchandisers, or simply by employing a professional who will be made responsible for the creation of such booklets. Mulberry has as of this moment stores in a widespread of countries, which at the same time represent the origins of most of their customers. Simply by linking cultures and using the assets which the company has now, this advice can be put into action.
Additionally, sales assistants should be working towards building their own clientele database, as research has shown that customers attach value to – besides the brand – sales assistants. Currently, only floor and store managers at Mulberry have their own business cards. However, the company should make general business cards available per store on which sales staff can write their own name and give it to a customer when necessary. In this way the customers will get to know the staff on a more personal level, which leads to customer loyalty as explained in the thesis.

As an addition to the current uniform standards, a ‘mini Lily’ (small bag of Mulberry red., image 3) would be a valuable. In this small leather good retail personnel will be able to carry their own individual business cards.
In order to incorporate sales assistants in expanding the Mulberry network, a computer system should be made available in which customers can be tracked worldwide. It should be possible for a whole team to log in with a store code and password, after which they can select categories of figures that they are interested in. For example, do they want to see where the customers of this week or this year come from, and if so, do they want to identify customers from all product categories or just the ones that buy bags? It is in this system where one can select a region of interest, and track down customers that have bought something specific or bought in a specific period of time. This system does not only make it easier for personnel to communicate with their customers, it also gives an overview of the clientele of the store one is working in. In return, this information can be used to estimate the customer’s needs; it will become visible which nationalities are visiting when, what they buy, and who they were helped by.
At the moment there is only a cash desk system at Mulberry in which client accounts are linked to their purchases. However, a clear overview of the clients per store is not available yet and can be made available either as part of the current system or introduced as a new program.

Concerning the Mulberry store on Bond Street and other flagship stores of Mulberry, an aspect that is currently missing - but throughout the conducted research is mentioned - is that beverages should be offered to clients. As of now, these beverages are on occasion offered and mostly consist of the selection; tea coffee or water. However, when conducting research for the thesis, noticeable was that competing luxury fashion brands offer a bigger selection of beverages, and address one sales assistant to walk around with a tray full of drinks.

Additionally, Mulberry could here include inspirational variations by means of their heritage and ‘Britishness’, e.g. by offering beverages that are normally included in an English afternoon tea (image 5). Think about mini scones or small pieces of Victoria sponge, wrapped in a way that no hands will get dirty or with napkins. Even if the ‘afternoon tea’ can only be offered once in a while in a selection of shops, these are the small but unique retail ideas that will make Mulberry stand out for its excellent in store experience. This will in return eventually result as well in customer loyalty and an increase of sales, as stated from in the thesis concluded from the conducted research.
PERSONALIZATION

In order to create a personalized customer store concept, the interior and layout of the flagship store will have to be adapted. Currently, the store is divided towards product categories; there is a specific clothes section and shoe section, the small leather goods are visible more in the front and the bags are shown all around. The places where customers could sit down and relax are linked to these products, as this is only possible in the shoe section and nearby the fitting rooms (image 4). Rather than focusing on product categories, I have proposed in my thesis to focus on the personalization of retail space. With this luxury brands should find their own way of adapting their retail environment according to clientele visiting that store without loosing the brands’ perception. For Mulberry’s Bond Street flagship, this results in some adjustments. The changes that have been made are made according the customer profile descriptions of Gemma Batt, Floor Manager of Mulberry Bond Street. One can find these profiles in the appendix of my thesis.

Visible in image 6 is the contemporary layout of Mulberry’s Bond Street flagship, divided in spaces for products. In the ideal layout in regards to the research conducted, product categories would be mixed and spread out more, as in this way the customer gets familiar with the whole collection and thus the brand. Conducted research shows that customers also attach value to the brands due to positive experiences. When a regular customer would visit the store, staff should in the future be able to offer this person the choice to sit down while being assisted. When a customer needs assistance with trying an item one can always address a sales assistant, which still an important provider of the luxury experience as discussed in ‘helpfulness’.
Another advised adjustment concerns the placement of fitting rooms. Instead of having them all together in the back part of the store, they should be divided and placed in multiple private spaces, with each one or two fitting rooms. Right now all customers who would like to try something on would have to go to the back of the store, which leads to a crowded area if there are more candidates. The customers who come in regular and/or decided to spend a long time in the flagship store can in the future sit and make use of ‘their own’ fitting room. There will also separate fitting rooms for people who don’t have that much time, and rather hop in and out of the store quite quick. As Gemma Batt from Bond Street has pointed out, the flagship store has both customers that take their time and customers who do not take hours to decide which makes both options a requirement.
Currently the wall on the right hand side of the store used is full of inequalities and cut out corners as can be seen on image 6. In the new store design there will be straight walls on both sides, so the cut outs can be used as extra storage space for the most popular styles sold on a daily or weekly basis. It will give the store a more contemporary aesthetic, which goes well with the strategy of Mulberry and gives an appealing symmetrical vision for the eye. Instead of having typical straight walls in the store or attributes such as the current round-shaped ‘fencing’ as section dividers (image 7), advised will be to include curved walls that will serve as guides for customers. In this way the store can still be divided into sections of ‘stories to be told’, but will more gradually flow into one other.

What Gemma Batt stated about the Mulberry flagship store is that it does not only serve as a place for clients to buy, but also to get service and be updated on the collection without buying. The first part of the store can serve as an area in which the browsing customers can become familiar with the newest styles, ‘the contemporary and brand story’; the new collection or current selection. The whole store should be an inspirational space, with references to the heritage as well as current collection of Mulberry. Currently Mulberry focusses mainly on the changing attributes in the window display, as one can read in my thesis the usage of changeable merchandise systems is recommended. Mulberry can implement this in using attributes and inspirational pieces in the first part of the store, as customers should still be inspired when walking in the store. Right now, the shop windows are the focus of inspiration creating amazing constructions, but the motivation of inspiring a customer who is in the actual store seems to be lots. The inspiration in the shop window should not end here, but rather continue inside the store. Regular updates on changing the divisions more drastically is advisable.
At present, Mulberry makes usage of display cases that show four levels of products (image 8). These display cases are apart from the updated luxurious design, quite traditional. I am posing for display tables rather than whole boxes, in which a maximum of two levels of products are shown, both for the convenience of clients as sales-assistants. Instead of customers having to bend over forward to see what Mulberry has to offer, they should be able to get an overview while standing straight. Also this will improve the experience and communication. And everything that improves the experience eventually leads to an increase in turnover. The topside of the updated display tables can from now on be used to show customers items from the display shelves throughout the store as well. Below the second shelve of items displayed in these tables I would suggest to place secured drawers, where in each drawer there is a portable cash dispenser and if necessary a tax refund machine.

As I am posing for Mulberry’s flagship store to no longer hold a traditional cash desk. The customers are with this adjustment able to secure the settlement on the location in store where they were serviced. It makes it all easier for the customer to get the desired luxury product, and spaces will be made available in the drawer and storage closets in the wall.

Last but not least an architectural system should be thought of in order to change the store layout every now and then, as argued in my thesis. For example, finding a way to make the curving wall on the left hand side of the store moveable, so the front space of the store can be made bigger or smaller. This will result in drastically different dynamics of the flagship store every now and then, which leads to customers returning to see what is happening at the moment.
This report was an advice that combined both the results from my final thesis as personal research conducted as a sales assistant of Mulberry. Overall implementing this advice will lead to customers having more reasons to visit the Mulberry flagship store and Mulberry customers being better serviced regardless of their cultural background. All the adjustments mentioned are posed with the goal to improve the customer experience and indirectly loyalty towards the brand. Focussing towards personalization of retail space in which stores are customized in relation to their customers is unique and inspirational, and results in more devoted customers for the company. As mentioned in my thesis, it is this devotion that will eventually lead to an increase of sales.
IMAGES
IMAGES FRONT PAGE
LEFT

RIGHT
Mulberry store entrance Berlin, Germany. Hasselblad [online photograph] [http://posted.thelabelfinder.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/] [retrieved 18.05.2015]

IMAGE 1

IMAGE 2
Mulberry Bond Street store interior. London, England [online photograph] [http://www.thetrendboutique.co.uk/files/images/News/Mulberry50NewBondStreet_cash_desk.jpg] [retrieved 25.04.2015]

IMAGE 3

IMAGE 4

IMAGE 5
English afternoon tea. [online photograph] [http://www.clivedenhouse.co.uk/wmslib/Cliveden/Aft-Tea-NEW-5.jpg,] [retrieved 20.05.2015]

IMAGE 6
Mulberry Bond Street layout. Image adjusted by author in Photoshop [constructed image] [http://www.architecturenewsplus.com/cdn/images/o/n/m/8/nm8y85g.jpg,] [retrieved 18.05.2015]

IMAGE 7
Mulberry circle ‘fencing’ in store. Bond Street, London England. [photograph] [http://www.designzens.com/sites/default/files/field/image/Mulberry%20Bond%20St%20follie.jpg] [retrieved 05.05.2015]

IMAGE 8
Mulberry glass display cases. Mulberry Bond Street London, England [photograph] [http://www.fashionwindows.net/images/2010/12/] [retrieved 05.05.2015]

IMAGE 9
Mulberry carrier bags/gift wrapping. [online photograph] [http://uk.glam.com/files/2013/12/mulberry.jpg,] [retrieved 11.05.2015]

IMAGE BACK SIDE
Mulberry carrier bag, inside. [photograph] [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-ns4jTY_k798/VT2L0IRZS5I/AAAAAAAALZI/IMn7M-OMn8o/s1600/DSC_0796.JPG,] [retrieved 24.05.2015]
THANK YOU!
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