

American apparel – 1



Brand Positioning American Apparel itself wants to be seen as a stylish, no-factory, domestically made brand, inferring from its headline “ Fashionable Basics. Sweatshop Free. Made in USA. ” The company also wants to be seen as a socially and environmentally conscious brand that sells high quality knitwear with a simple design aesthetic. American Apparel will continue to target a large, diverse market of young urbanites that see themselves as unique instead of as part of a generic, mainstream fashion culture.

By highlighting a diverse offering of classic fashion pieces in a variety of unique colours, cuts and styles, American Apparel offers a fashionable alternative to the same-old department store look. Additionally, it also wants to be perceived as a versatile and stylish brand for everyone everyday, that anyone can attain the American Apparel look of ingenuousness. 5 Examples of the Brand’s Visual Expression Products

American Apparel is famous for producing basic, solid-colour cotton knitwear such as t-shirts and underwear, but lately has expanded—to include leggings, leotards, tank tops, vintage clothing, dresses, pants, denim, nail polish, bedding and accessories for men, women, children, babies and pets in various prints and colours. Their garments have no logos or ornamentation, not a single flourish or bauble. Distinction comes from an array of colours that now includes fluorescents and from slim to sexy cuts that attract young buyers and allow the humble cotton garments to serve as something greater—core elements of a fashion wardrobe.

American Apparel prides itself in covering a large number of products and styles, from basic t-shirts to deep v-neck dresses. The large coverage demands visual distinction, to make the consumer’s choice easy, all while

upholding the company's brand positioning. American Apparel's products would definitely be firstly described as products with a design aesthetic that is artless. Still, the brand has found ways to appeal to style conscious consumers without sacrificing its core ethical brand equity.

In fact, they have actually strengthened their message of "social consciousness" while attracting new consumers. The brand, without deviating too far from its casual and classic offerings, tries to push to be more edgy or chic in other products while still remaining definitive. In this way, American Apparel can constantly introduce new styles and new collections to add to their ever-expanding product line. These visually appealing offers, in turn, help communicate that the company is willing to adapt to trends and keep up with modern styles, while sustaining its spontaneous and nifty touch.

The entire collection of products shows the brand's capability in following fashion trends as well as adapting styles for the common man. Most importantly, since their launch, their style has remained consistent, ensuring that American Apparel's products will visually reflect to the brand image, adding to brand credibility and enforcing the brand position. In an effort to display the company's social consciousness, American Apparel embarked on two particular movements, Legalize Gay and Legalize LA.

Utilizing their position as a mass producer of apparel and accessories, as a platform for change, the company shows an awareness of social problems. American Apparel uses their products to express their beliefs. Legalize Gay is a movement launched by American Apparel to demonstrate their encouragement for equality in sexuality, without gender discrimination.

Developing their product line, American Apparel produced several t-shirts, tank-tops and underwear with the slogans ' GAY O. K. ' and ' Legalize Gay''.

Visually, what this communicates is two-pronged—it shows that American Apparel is socially responsible and is willing to commit to and endorse the movement, painting the company in a positive light and also shows an ability to push the company's agenda and being very vocal about where they stand; and also, it tells the consumers that they understand the hardships that follow gay people and offers them a voice, through their products, for the consumers to use and to endorse the movement. Imagery

The visual direction of American Apparel products is widely recognizable and prominently known for depicting a soft, sexual implication. These suggestive images and videos can be viewed through its advertising campaigns, product shots and product slideshow series. To further elaborate the point, various shots of American Apparel models subtly reveal their private parts in its product shots on the e-commerce site, americanapparel. net. Also, these models are seen getting into sexually suggestive poses.

Due to its provocative and raw nature of representing these models, the brand's bold approach in its visual form has allowed them to create a certain signature for themselves and distinguish itself, in terms of identity, from the rest in a highly saturated and competitive retail market today. At the same time, the world-renowned retailer takes pride in its concept of Natural Beauty and encourages its target audiences to be comfortable in their natural skin and state. The company's brand appearance keeps up to that aesthetic with its models' make-up being kept to a bare minimum as well as disapproving the use of air-brushing.

In addition, these featured models on the website are either amateurs in the modeling industry or ordinary people scouted from the streets and American Apparel stores. Models are not chosen to be flawless or picture-perfect, but are rather chosen for looking pretty and “ real. ” The American Apparel model epitomizes a realistic standard for beauty that the consumer could realistically attain or would see on a daily basis. This creates a certain kind of approval to its target audience worldwide that it’s fine to ‘ be yourself’.

Hence, American Apparel does not only sell its product, but at the same time, is selling the assurance and confidence that come with it. This brand strategy is the secret behind American Apparel’s success in the past two decades. Using a combination of natural beauty alongside a display of soft, sexual appeal in its advertising campaigns, American Apparel is reaching out and communicating to its target audience through its visual direction in a way that its competitors in the same industry would never dare attempt.

Moving on from traditional means to create an appeal to the products using professional models and giving its target audience the delusion that the products are as appealing as the models—American Apparel has recast these common perceptions and points of differentiation of the apparel market while leveraging existing brand equity at the same time. Advertising American Apparel is known for being provocative and controversial in their advertising campaigns, which is largely the inspiration of the company’s CEO, Dov Charney.

They employ daring and shocking tactics to elicit attention from the world. For example, using nudity as part of its advertising strategy. Although their advertisements receive many negative comments and lawsuits, the response

from the younger generation is entirely different. There are hardly any negative responses from youths, showing that American Apparel's branding strategy best suits its target market in portraying them as fresh and stylish to the young urbanites.

In the apparel industry, airbrushing is usually indispensable in polishing the whole look of its visual branding. American Apparel has been proudly commended for their honest and raw imagery by not using any airbrush techniques. By not doctoring or enhancing the physical appearances of their models, American Apparel has built a genuine brand image. People now see American Apparel as a brand that is authentic, constructing a better trust relationship with its consumers, which resonates their socially ethical stance.

Advertisements depicting the models posing in sexually suggestive ways in their raw and natural state strike a chord with the base of socially conscious consumers who are aware of the unrealistic standards of beauty, while attracting the demographic that have faith in the authenticity and possibility of beauty and sex, as opposed to the unachievable fantasies they are used to seeing. American Apparel has been masterful at distinguishing themselves in this manner, creating the image of a diverse and complex but powerful brand.

Slogans and Copywriting Ethical, politically active and risqué, American Apparel's slogans and copywriting come across as opinionated and edgy. With their main slogan being "Sweatshop Free. Made in USA", American Apparel has positioned themselves as a socially and environmentally conscious brand. This strategy works well for them as there is an increasing

number of ethical consumers and investors. It also provides a reason for people to pay a little more for their simple products.

Consumers would also be more willing to buy into the brand and their products, feeling that their little contribution in buying American Apparel's products would help make the world a more ethical one. "Legalize LA" is a campaign initiated by American Apparel that aims to recognise, celebrate and embrace the diversity of Los Angeles by creating awareness for the undocumented contribution of migrant workers, helping them to become legal residents of the United States.

This campaign centralises around the slogan "Legalize LA" that have been plastered over their famous cotton t-shirts. The term 'Legalize' when written across t-shirts and banners usually refers to the legalisation of marijuana, which gives the t-shirts its initial shock value. By using the popular 1970s typeface, Cooper Black, American Apparel was also able to keep to their sexy, raunchy brand image. The 1970s is seen as the time of 'sexual revolution' where people were less aware of the dangers from leading a promiscuous lifestyle.

Through this, American Apparel was able to garner free advertising through press reports for the brand while supporting their cause and was able to position themselves as an ethical organisation which reinforces their main slogan, "Sweatshop Free. Made in USA". Their racy and attention-grabbing advertisements with slogans hinting at sexual innuendos position them as provocative but expressive—it portrays them as people who reject the social norm and are not afraid of being who they are.

Controversial advertisements have gotten them into trouble and lawsuits numerous times but American Apparel's advertising strategy remains relentless. This is in tune with their opinionated stand on ethical and political issues and it portrays American Apparel as a company who stands up for what they believe in. Websites American Apparel's main e-commerce website is based in Downtown Los Angeles, United States. It has 11 other websites for people of countries outside of the United States to shop online, namely, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, United Kingdom, European Union, Switzerland, Japan, Korea, Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

When one visits the main American Apparel website, americanapparel.net, the first thing they would notice is the slideshow on the main page, presenting collections of images in any nature—they can be of models posing in sexually suggestive ways, of CEO Dov Charney in his earlier days, of Charney exercising or of a lady in Tokyo walking her dogs. The imagery is in no particular order and can be totally random, giving American Apparel a very casual and authentic tone of voice.

The spontaneous structure and visual approach of American Apparel's website sure links to itself desiring to be comprehended as a forthright and frank domestically made brand. The website is cleanly designed with a professional layout and system and its main typeface is Helvetica, which can be named the most universal typeface. It is organized, exceptionally easy to navigate and extremely informative. The design and character of it definitely reflects the main aesthetics of American Apparel's products—basic, simple and high quality, which are also the attributes of the whole American Apparel brand identity.