Market Research

Bethany Robertson

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Pt. 1: Customer

Customer Profile

The Perfect Customer
Basic info:

Name: Addie Taylor

Age: 27

Gender: Female

Occupation: Content Creation Manager

Income: $75,000

Location: Boston, MA

Live in: An apartment with friends

Marriage status: in a relationship, but not married

Bio:

Addie is a fun loving woman. Outside of work, she loves watching movies, playing games, and going out to the mall with friends. Her hobbies include painting, playing the guitar, and reading fantasy novels. Addie's favorite meal is a Mediterranean salad paired with homemade garlic bread.

Addie is politically active, as she consistently speaks out for inclusion and sustainable practices in our political systems. The issue she is most concerned with is the environment, and she does everything she can to preserve natural resources. She likes to shop sustainably with clothing made from natural and recycled materials, purchasing organic foods, and purchasing items second hand.

Feminine, whimsical, and unique is how Addie would describe her style. She likes to wear dresses and matching sets. Additionally, she loves clothing that can be adapted to suit her needs or mood at the moment. Her favorite jacket is a midi length oversized trench coat that can be sinched in at the waist with a belt and has a detachable faux fur lining. Her favorite places to shop include Nordstrom, Rent the Runway, and The Real Real.

Customer Demographics

Age and Gender Presentation
Overall:

My customers is aged 23-33. They present as female, with their gender being either female or non-binary.

Research:

The older portion of my market (27-33) is part of the Millennial generation, whereas the younger part of my market (23-26) is part of Gen Z. While the two groups generally have their differences, they share many values and traits. For example, both groups cite that they feel most happy when they are making "a social impact" (Stahl, 2023). Additionally, when asked what adds meaning to their lives, both Gen Z and Millennials on average shared family and occupation in their top 3 answers (Clancy, 2021). Furthermore, Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to be active in voicing their concerns about climate change (Nadeem, 2021).

The differences between Gen Z and Millennials are important to note. Gen Z tends to value authenticity, self-expression, and relatability, whereas Millennials tend to value polished and aspirational aesthetics (FWO Team, 2023). Additionally, Gen Z tends to spend more on experiences, whereas Millennials spend more on luxury items (McKinsey, 2023). Gen Z is more likely to shop online and engage with brands that have a strong social media presence than Millennials, as Gen Z is known for being digitally native (Brito, 2023). These differences are important to consider in marketing and designing my collection.

Profession & Income
Overall:

The occupations of my customers are marketing and social media, particularly in the entertainment, fine arts, and fashion sectors. The salary of this sector is about $60-75,000 on average, although they may be living in households where the income is higher.

Research:

Because Gen Z and Millennials are technologically advanced and feel their worth in the workspace comes from making an impact, they are most likely to search for and obtain jobs in the marketing and social media sectors (Stahl, 2023). These jobs, especially in a management position, are the most likely place where Gen Z and Millennials can make an impact using their skills and passions. On average, the incomes of these positions make a median of $75,000 and $55,000 (Stahl, 2023). The younger of this sector may also operate on a side job, as 1 in 3 Gen Z individuals report turning their hobbies into a side hustle (Stahl, 2023). Furthermore, many of these consumers may live with a partner or with roommates as a way to save money on living expenses.

Additional Information
My customer is likely to live in the Northeastern United States in urban (sometimes suburban) areas. Being 23-33, they are in the young career stage in their life. Most of these customers are either in a relationship or single. A few of the older customers are married or engaged. My customer does not have children.

Customer Psychographics

Lifestyle and Social Status

Overview:

My customers spend time at work, then on leisure activities. For this customer, the common leisure activities are:

- Spending time with friends and family
    - Nights out, movie nights, game nights, clubs
- Hobbies
    - Art (fine arts such as painting, drawing, etc.), music (making it and/or enjoying it) and reading.
- Traveling
    - Both in and out of the USA
- Watching media
    - Most common sources are YouTube and Netflix (fantasy or drama movies)
- Social media
    - Scrolling through favorite creators, seeing friends' posts, and posting.

This customer falls into the middle/upper middle class range, as they have extra money to spend on leisure activities and fashion.

Research:

Despite spending many hours working, my customer has a strong social life. According to a Pew Research survey, the vast majority of people aged 18-29 value spending time with their friends and family (Clancy, 2021). This same survey noted that people aged 30-49 value spending time with family. Thus, my customer is most likely to prioritize spending time with their family and friends.

The top hobbies of my consumers are based on a survey from YPulse. The survey notes that the top hobbies of females aged 13-39 (in order) are fine arts, music, reading, crafting, and watching TV/Netflix (YPulse, 2021). This aligns with Gen Z and Millennial's DIY and entrepreneurial spirit, as well as their concerns for self-care (McKinsey, 2023). A portion of my consumer is likely to travel. Over half of all Gen Z reports being frequent travelers (Brito, 2023). The older portion of my consumer is more likely to travel, as Millennials travel more than any other generation (Pitrelli, 2023).

Values and Beliefs

Overview:

My customer values sustainability, making an impact, inclusivity, diversity, and community. From a political standpoint, my customer is most likely to be left leaning as either a leftist, democrat, or liberal.

Research:

I chose the age range of 23-33 for my target market because they are the most likely group to look for sustainable fashions. Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than any other generation to shop sustainably (Manley, 2023). Additionally, nearly 60% of all sustainability seekers are women under the age of 35 (Albella, 2022). Furthermore, one study cites that 88% of Millennials

and Gen Z prefer to shop sustainable brands (Manley, 2023). Over two-thirds of all sustainable consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products (Salfino, 2022). These factors combined make this customer perfect for my collection.

According to a study from McKinsey, Gen Z and Millennials care most about inclusivity, diversity, the environment, and the community (McKinsey, 2023). This customer segment holds progressive ideals and value political activism. Gen Z and Millennials are very politically active, as they stand out the most in climate change activism (Nadeem, 2021). Additionally, Gen Z and Millennials are known for wanting to make an impact in all the work that they do (Stahl, 2023).

Fashion
Overview:

My customer likes fashions that are vintage or vintage inspired, classy, feminine, and trendy. They adopt trends but put their own spin on the trends to make them unique and personal to them. This customer likes high-quality fashions that can be worn for many seasons to come. This customer likes to shop at Nordstrom, Net-a-Porte, Rent the Runway, and The Real Real. Some of this customer's favorite brands include LoveShackFancy, Ulla Johnson, Erdem (to watch rather than wear), and Reformation (for basic/casual items). They see clothing as a way to express identity and build self-confidence.

My customers spend about 30% of their discretionary income on clothing. This customer comes in all shapes and sizes, as they value the inclusive sizing my collection will offer due to having difficulties finding clothing that fits their body and style. The average price point they are willing to spend on a dress is $250 USD.

Research:

Several sources that I read cited Gen Z and Millennials' love for thrifting. These sources include, but are not limited to, "Gen Z and the Age of Realism" by the Business of Fashion, "Y2K Fashion has Taken Over. And Gen Z is Loving it" by the AP, "Gen Z Fashion Trends: A Guide for Millennials" by FWO, "What is Gen Z" by McKinsey & Company, and "Exploring the Perceptions and Motivations of Gen Z and Millennials Toward Sustainable Clothing" by the Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal. Thus, it comes as no surprise that my customer is heavily influenced by vintage styles. Gen Z and Millennial fashion trends are influenced by nostalgic revivals, including the 90's, 80's, and 70's boho (FWO Team, 2023).

My customer is known for adapting trends to fit their personal style. Gen Z in particular is known for this, as they often adapt trends to suit their own styles rather than follow the trends exactly (Schneider, 2022). Furthermore, 89% of Gen Z and Millennials say fashion is important for boosting confidence while 82% of them say fashion is important to establishing their identity (Schneider, 2022). Gen Z and Millennials tend to spend money on fashion, and both either already purchase from luxury brands or aspire to purchase from luxury brands (Schneider, 2022).

LoveShackFancy has a particular influence on my younger customers. The brand is seen as a luxury symbol to many in Gen Z, and it reflects their interest in vintage and nostalgia (Lieber, 2021). Furthermore, the brand is accessible, as the price points are not too high for

young consumers to afford. The brand reflects the aesthetic my customer loves at the price point they view as an attainable luxury.

Customer Interviews

Interview 1

Background information:

Name: Arch Crist

Age: 20

Lives in: suburban area, college dorm. Originally from Virginia. Current Stephens student.

Occupation: sewing, alterations

Interview:

Q: What is your dream job?

A: I would love to be a wardrobe person in the tv and theatre industry.

Q: Do you buy most of your clothing with your own income?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: How often do you purchase clothing for yourself?

A: Whenever I find something I like or need something.

Q: Where do you shop for clothing?

A: Thrift and consignment

Q: What are your top 3 to 5 favorite fashion brands?

A: Orchard corset, altered state, earthbound, and holly clothing.

Q: Who is your style icon?

A: Fantasy book characters are my style icons.

Q: How would you describe your style?

A: Witchy and walking casual renaissance.

Q: Are there specific colors you like to wear? If so, which ones?

A: Dark greens, browns, dark colors, and black.

Q: What prints do you like to wear?

A: Plaids, florals, and textural prints.

Q: What do you value most when shopping for clothing?

A: Sustainability, quality, feel of the fabric, and fit.

Q: Name your ideal price for a casual summer dress.

A: $35-$55 for a new dress sounds reasonable.

Q: What is something you wish you could change about the fashion industry?

A: That most of the fashion is made to be worn for a short period of time and not used for multiple years/seasons in the year.

Q: What do you struggle with most when clothes shopping?

A: Everything is too long on my limbs! I'm only 5ft tall.

Q: What is something you wish clothing stores would offer?

A: Cute clothing that fit my limbs or alterations in house that can make clothing fit my limbs for no additional cost.

Interview 2

Background information:

Name: Riley Braswell

Age: 21

Lives in: suburban area, sorority house with roommates.

Occupation: Lead Academic Coach for KU TPE, KU student, and social media marketing intern for Essense of Australia

Interview:

Q: What is your dream job?

Social media for a fashion company!!

Q: Do you buy most of your clothing with your own income?

A: Yes.

Q: How often do you purchase clothing for yourself?

A: About once every other week.

Q: Where do you shop for clothing?

A: Online! Sometimes the mall.

Q: What are your top 3 to 5 favorite fashion brands?

A: Revolve, Zara, ASOS, and Daily Drills.

Q: How would you describe your style?

A: Trendy, preppy, and girly.

Q: Are there specific colors you like to wear? If so, which ones?

A: Pink! I also like green, red, and white.

Q: What prints do you like to wear?

A: Stripes, polka-dots, and florals.

Q: *What do you value most when shopping for clothing?*

A: Price point, trendy styles, comfort, and fit.

Q: *Name your ideal price for a casual summer dress.*

A: $50.

Q: *What do you struggle with most when clothes shopping?*

A: Affordable prices for a larger wardrobe!

Q: *What is something you wish clothing stores would offer?*

A: Better price points and more options.

Interview 3

Background information:

Name: Kenedi Kelso

Age: 22

Lives in: suburban area, college house with roommates.

Occupation: Longhorn Steakhouse, Hy-Vee, student, and runs her own photography business.

Interview:

Q: *What is your dream job?*

A: Marketing manager/brand strategist for a major fashion company.

Q: *Do you buy most of your clothing with your own income?*

A: Yes.

Q: *How often do you purchase clothing for yourself?*

A: Once every other week.

Q: *Where do you shop for clothing?*

A: Mostly online, sometimes at stores, and sometimes second-hand from someone else.

Q: *What are your top 3 to 5 favorite fashion brands?*

A: Urban Outfitters, Free People, and H&M.

Q: *Who is your style icon?*

A: Indy Blue is my style icon.

Q: *How would you describe your style?*

A: Trendy, urban, and bold.

Q: Are there specific colors you like to wear? If so, which ones?

A: White, black, and red.

Q: What prints do you like to wear?

A: Geometric and abstract prints.

Q: What do you value most when shopping for clothing?

A: Price point, trendy styles, comfort, and fit.

Q: Name your ideal price for a casual summer dress.

A: $35.

Q: What is something you wish you could change about the fashion industry?

A: I wish there were more trendy clothes that were size-inclusive, not just catering towards smaller sizes. I believe many of the most "trendy" clothing brands make clothes catered towards a very specific body type.

Q: What do you struggle with most when clothes shopping?

A: Finding items that fit both my bust and waist properly.

Q: What is something you wish clothing stores would offer?

A: More clothing that caters to varying body types.

Takeaways

All of these consumers have some traits or styles that are important to my customer, but these consumers are missing one or two traits that my customer has. The biggest of all is the issue of not having the budget to purchase within my price range. This makes sense, as these customers have not yet started their careers, so they do not have as much discretionary income. This means that I should consider the following actions:

1. Target a customer that is a few years older than these consumers and has started their career. This will allow them to have a larger budget for clothes.
2. Seek to offer a few items at a bit of a lower price point, so my products are more accessible to the portion of this market who is budget conscious.
3. Creating irresistible products that match the values of my consumer will be extremely important, especially given the price range I will be selling at.

I should note that interviewee 2 stood out a bit to me because of how different she was from what I expected. Her emphasis on pricing was surprising, as I know her to wear designer clothes. However, her interview did not reflect this at all. There are several possible factors for this, which aren't as relevant to me. What is relevant to me is her style, which in person matches the aesthetic of my customer (girly, whimsical, fashionable, etc.)—she just does not match the values of my customer, which was unexpected.

Interviewee 1 shares the values my consumer has: sustainability, quality, fit, and comfort (feel of fabric). She also matches the aesthetic, although the style is a bit more costume-like and

dark. Ignoring the price point issue, pieces in my collection have the potential to appeal to this customer, as well as my main customer, if designed correctly.

Interviewee 3 did not directly state any values that my customer holds, but knowing this person and after researching who she chose as her style icon, I can say that she shares important values with my customer. Her choice of Indy Blue as a style icon shows me that she values authenticity and sustainability (Indy Blue is known for resale, sustainable clothing, etc.). Paired with the fact that she actively shops second hand (and at Free People), I think she subconsciously values sustainability and quality. Though this interviewee does not match my price point and aesthetic 100% of the time, my collection does have the potential to catch her attention. She would not be my target market but could still be someone who would purchase from me given the right circumstances.

Both interviewees 1 and 3 reported issues with sizing. This reinforces the need for more inclusive sizing. To me, this feedback indicates that I am going in the right direction when looking to design inclusive styles for a variety of sizes/body types.

Pt. 2 Macrotrends

Environmental Trends
Overview:

Overall, there has been an increase in severe weather over the past few years. This year especially has been one of the worst years for severe weather, and the year isn't even over yet.

It is estimated that severe weather disasters have cost the US $39.7 Billion (Erdman, 2023). Most notably, tornadoes in the South, East, and Central parts of the United States caused nearly $7 billion in damage—and these events occurred just from mid-March to early April (Erdman, 2023). More severe weather is on the way, with this year's hurricane season being predicted to be particularly bad due to extremely warm ocean temperatures (Kozin, 2023). Hurricane Idalia was particularly bad, causing 330,000 people to go without power in Florida and Georgia, and flooding (Kozin, 2023).

Impact:

Increased severe weather has drawn more attention to climate change, causing even Republicans to take note. According to the Pew Research Center, more Americans are seeing climate change as a problem, with 49% of Gen Z and Millennial Republicans see climate change as an immediate problem, which is nearly twice as much as their Baby Boomer and Gen X counterparts (Nadeem, 2023).

As concerns over climate change grow, more consumers than ever will be looking for sustainable solutions. For the fashion industry, this means more sustainable production practices will be necessary to maintaining their customers.

Political Trends
Overview:

Political unrest has been rising globally. In the US, partisanship has caused a chasm between parties, creating more tension than ever before. Such tension has caused political unrest, and fears of violence as the 2024 election looms.

While most people in the US do not support political violence, it was found that most people believe members of the opposing party support political violence (Riccardi, 2023). Threats against public officials online have grown increasingly common as political rhetoric has turned more violent. In August, a man in Utah was fatally shot by the FBI after threatening to assassinate the President Joe Biden (Riccardi, 2023). Since January 2021, 213 cases of political violence have been identified (Parker, 2023).

Impact:

Political and civil unrest have caused increased risk for businesses and made consumers feel more uneasy (Amed, 2022). Having a strong supply chain and durable business model will be key for withstanding the risks of operating in a politically unstable environment.

Consumer Trends

Overview:

Inflation has been rising while wages have had slower growth.

Since the pandemic, inflation has risen 17.5%, while wages have grown only a bit more than that (Raedle, 2023). Because of this, more consumers are becoming strategic with their spending. Consumers are seeking maximum value for their purchases, so they are becoming more calculated with their spending (NIQ, 2023). Even still, the USA economy has remained robust, with the gap between wages and inflation expected to close in 2024 (Raedle, 2023).

Impact:

This has created economic uncertainty, causing more weary customers. The luxury market is expected to remain strong, though (Amed, 2023). Versatility and creating product value will be key for maintaining customer loyalty.

Pt. 3 Fashion Trends

To research this section, I read several articles by WGSN. These included, but were not limited to, "Collection Review: Key Items – Women's Evening & Special Occasion Pre-Summer 24," "Material & Finish Forecast S/S 25," "Womenswear Forecast S/S 25: Common Connections," "Womenswear Forecast S/S 25: Restorative Realms," and "Core Item Update: Women's Dresses A/W 24/25." I also observed trends in day to day life and on social media channels. The top trends both me and my customer respond to are:

- Boudoir aesthetic: Innerwear as outerwear with a twist
    - Why my customer finds this appealing: it's feminine, detailed, and vintage looking
    - Why I like it: it shows off great construction and details
- Versatility: Includes matching sets and items that can be dressed up/down
    - Why my customer likes it: she can have a "larger" wardrobe by mixing and matching different pieces/elements—allowing her to still have fun while dressing for the day while not having to spend as much money on pieces.
    - Why I like it: it's practical, and a challenge.
- Quiet luxury: luxurious fabrics on minimalist looks
    - Why my customer likes it: she likes luxurious fabrics such as silk, so bringing those into her everyday closet while still being on trend is a huge bonus
    - Why I like it: challenging fabrics that are fun to design with
- Sheer fabrics: unlined bodices, sheer sleeves, and details
    - Why my customer likes it: the looks can be very flattering. They can also be very free flowing and cooler (temperature wise). It should be noted that my customer does not like full sheer dresses as much; she's more into sheer details. Full sheer dresses are not as flattering.
    - Why I like it: it shows off really nice construction and adds visual interest.
- Artisan details: embroidery, patchwork, and 3d applique
    - Why my customer likes it: the looks have more detail and look more elevated. This trend can also make looks feel more feminine, which is something my customer really likes.
    - Why I like it: I enjoy making these details!

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