



Brand Strategy and Ideas for Gap Clothing

By Geeta Sundaram



www.peripateticperch.com

Brand Strategy and Campaign Ideas for Gap Clothing

Background

- Gap Clothing is an established fashion apparel brand from the US that started operations in 1969 in San Francisco, California
- Gap actually started out as a store in San Francisco that sold Levis jeans, music albums and cassettes according to the [company's website](#)
- Since then, it has grown into a readymade apparel brand and retailer whose parent company Gap Inc. had [consolidated](#) annual net revenue of US\$ 15.36 billion with net profits of US\$ 816 million in 2025 and net sales of [US\\$ 796 million](#), growing 10%, for the first quarter of fiscal 2026
- Gap Inc is the company behind apparel brands Gap, Old Navy and Banana Republic, and Gap alone sells in many countries worldwide
- In the past couple of decades, Gap has been facing stiff competition from fast-fashion brands such as H&M, Zara, Uniqlo as well as other brands such as Benetton and J Crew that speak to the same customer
- In the past decade or more, Gap has been facing greater competition from J Crew in the US and from media reports it appears that the problem was the kind of merchandise, implying that Gap needed to catch up with customers' tastes and preferences

Although Gap Clothing is doing better now, it does need to position itself distinctly from competing brands. Gap also seems to be facing the issue confronting most fashion brands: is Gap an apparel maker or a retailer? I believe the former is what Gap should focus on and therefore it needs to improve designs and quality of fashion merchandise

Gap also must stand for something differentiated from competition.

Competition

I think Gap ought to focus on J Crew and Benetton as its primary competition, as these brands occupy the higher end of the smart casual wear market. Outside of the US, Gap might also face competition from apparel brands such as Marks & Spencer that provide high quality, value for money clothing.

- Primary competition: J Crew, Benetton and Marks & Spencer
- In denim wear - including denim jeans – which is an important part of Gap's merchandise, Gap would primarily be competing with Levis along with other denim brands

- Secondary competition would comprise all fast-fashion brands including H&M, Zara and Uniqlo.

It would be better if Gap focused more on primary competition from J Crew and Benetton as well as Levis for denims, as these would help Gap maintain a premium image in terms of quality of clothing as well as profitability.

Target audience

The core target audience for Gap Clothing would be men and women in their 30s and 40s who are particular about feeling relaxed and comfortable in their every day wear. They prioritise this over the latest fashion trends and styles.

This doesn't mean that they are willing to compromise on style. In fact, they would probably choose classic and timeless styles, as well as fabrics that breathe well, drape well, and are also sustainable. In short, they are not flamboyant dressers.

Since they are also busy, working professionals who travel frequently, they would prefer their casual clothing to also be comfortable and stylish in an understated way. They are not close followers of the latest fashion trends, nor slaves to them, and would prefer to look and feel their relaxed and stylish best at all times.

Current perception of Gap Clothing

Gap is a premium quality brand of casual wear from America that is known for simple designs, comfortable styles and high-quality fabrics.

Desired perception of Gap Clothing

Gap is a premium brand of casual wear from California that reflects the future of fashion. Relaxed and stylish, Gap garments are fashioned from quality fabrics, including new sustainable fabrics.

New brand positioning for Gap Clothing

Gap Clothing has been defining California Cool for over 60 years

Brand benefit of Gap Clothing

Only Gap Clothing keeps you looking relaxed and stylish in garments fashioned from fine, sustainable fabrics

Tone and manner

- Relaxed and easy-going
- Californian and west-coast in spirit

- Forward-looking and optimistic

Implications for Gap Clothing's fashion merchandise

Adopting this new brand strategy for Gap Clothing would mean that the company would have to rethink some of their product designs and merchandise. Gap is already perceived as premium casual clothing, and the company needs to build on it. In addition, owning the Californian spirit and imagery more strongly has several advantages for Gap and could also influence the kind of clothing styles.

- Gap must retain the relaxed and stylish look of their clothes, and ought to elevate the premium image with better and more sustainable fabrics as much as possible
- Gap ought to drop chunky sweatshirts with hoodie and big Gap branding from its merchandise
- Instead, Gap can and should pursue making a special line of clothing for top Californian universities such as Stanford and UC Berkeley; these can even have labels that say Gap for Stanford or Gap for UC Berkeley to suggest that these are made under exclusive arrangement with these institutions and are not available anywhere else
- The other Californian dimension that the Gap brand must explore are smart casuals for office, such as the kind Silicon Valley bosses already wear. Since Gap already makes crew neck T-shirts in short and full-sleeves, as well as polo-neck and turtle-neck shirts, they can supplement these with relaxed and stylish trouser and jacket ensembles
- Gap must continue to make classic white shirts in high-quality cotton and other fabrics, tailored and fitted garments, as well as choose a sober, muted colour palette (doesn't mean only pastels) as these factors would differentiate Gap from Benetton
- Gap must pioneer the use of more sustainable fabrics, including creating some of their own textiles, and they must explore the use of technology in garments, especially along the lines of climate control – these are all areas in which California leads and would help to further differentiate the Gap brand
- I think Gap should focus on only men's and women's clothing and avoid clothing for kids – this can be pursued by Old Navy and Banana Republic
- I don't think Gap has ever had a creative director or big-name fashion designer for their clothing range, though the company website mentioned that they have recently hired Zac Posen. Not

sure what a NYC-based designer of evening gowns and haute-couture would bring to west-coast casual wear and California cool.

Creative Idea

To relaunch Gap Clothing along the lines of the new strategy, I have also worked on an advertising campaign in print and TV.

The creative idea of this relaunch campaign is to dramatize the Californian connection of the Gap brand and its cool, relaxed and stylish clothing.

Gap Campaign Ideas

TV advert for Gap Clothing:

Film opens on a young couple entering a Gap clothing store together. They're walking through the aisles in the women's section, while the young woman browses clothes displayed on the stands.

She enters the trial room with her selection of garments to try on.

As she shuts the trial room door, her face changes expression to one of complete surprise and amazement.

We see that she is now in the heart of San Francisco on a lovely day. Music begins: an instrumental version of California Dreaming, like [this one](#) by George Benson that I found on YouTube.

Dissolve to vignettes of her time wandering around San Francisco.

From scenes around the Golden Gate Bridge, to streetcars in which she also travels, and a visit to the marina at Fisherman's Wharf, she seems to be enjoying herself, quite captivated by all that she sees. We see her in a different outfit each time, from the ones she chose to try on.

She exits from a street car in Frisco and we find her back in the Gap store, shutting the trial room door behind her.

Cut to her husband frantically pacing the floor while talking on his mobile.

She walks up to a full-length mirror nearby and looks at herself wearing one of the new outfits she has selected for herself.

We see her husband also in the mirror, looking visibly angry and upset.

The lady turns around and asks: How do I look?

Husband's expression changes to one of relief and surprise.

He enquires: What took you so long?

She coolly replies: Frisco

Husband in disbelief: What?!

Before he can go any further, his wife says: Now, the men's section, shall we?

She also slips a little something into his hands and walks ahead of him.

Surprise, surprise! Husband looks and sees a small souvenir from San Francisco – a miniature Golden Gate Bridge on a keychain.

The Gap logo appears on screen with the strapline.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

This TV advert idea can be extended through several executions for years. Adverts that follow can similarly feature vignettes of Californian life in Frisco and other cities that depict the forward-looking, cosmopolitan and cultural dimensions of California Cool.

Besides, the other ideas needn't always be set inside a Gap store. They could take place anywhere – in a wardrobe closet at home, while trying on a new Gap outfit received as present from someone, etc. The most important part of the idea that must be retained is that the person wearing or trying on a Gap outfit is transported to California. We need to stay with this idea and construct for some time, in order to establish the new brand positioning for Gap.

Gap relaunch campaign in print:

Print advert #1:

Headline: Cut from the same California cloth

Copy:

The same desire to build something iconic that will stand the test of time. The same enduring sense of aesthetic and design that the world loves to wear, day in, day out.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

After all, it's the Californian spirit, to be early adopters, trend-setters and future- shapers.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #2:

Headline: The recognizable Frisco free spirit

Copy:

No matter how much times change, there are some pleasures that endure. The ease and freedom we experience, in well-designed garments that the world loves to wear.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

Unmistakably Frisco. To constantly seek the new, without giving up what works remarkably well.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #3:

Headline: Pioneering ideas that change the world

Copy:

From the home of breakthrough ideas and big tech, we've been fashioning the future of smart casual wear that has captured the imagination of the world.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

Don't take our word for it. The tech tycoons of California changed the rules of office-wear with clothing like ours.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #4:

Headline: Where East and West surprisingly meet

Copy:

San Francisco, the last frontier of the “Go West” men is where the influence of the East can be most felt. And worn, day in, day out.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

Beyond Frisco, to the rest of California, this cosmopolitan spirit informs our design aesthetic. As the world knows only too well.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #5

Headline: The Big Sur of big ideas for tomorrow

Copy:

Driving down the stunning coastline winding around The Big Sur is always the thrill of discovering something new. Like our sense of aesthetic and design that has shaped the future of casual wear.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

True to Californian form. Innovate, create and fashion new ideas for tomorrow.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #6:

Headline: Eclectic Frisco flavours everywhere

Copy:

There are so many flavours to Frisco life and it's this cosmopolitan spirit that we bring into our clothing as well. Sunrise to well after sundown, you can live in our clothing.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

After all, California is always inventing something new. With an optimism that is hard to beat.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #7:

Headline: Travels well beyond California's shores

Copy:

Great ideas have always flowed out of California as easily as we've accepted them from the rest of the world. Little wonder, Gap clothing is what the world loves to wear, day in, day out.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

California's inventive spirit, our sunshine state optimism and our smart, casual clothing are just a few things that travel well.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #8:

Headline: Sunshine state and the living is easy

Copy:

You don't have to visit the Napa Valley to know that the best things take time. It's the same with clothing that is designed with attention to effortless style and comfort.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

It's in the Californian spirit to look forward, imagine a better life and work hard at it. Living in Gap is easy.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert #9:

Headline: Think denim, the fabric of life

Copy:

Hard to believe that denim was born as workwear in California centuries ago. Well, today our denim garments are what the world loves to wear.

Gap clothing has always been fashioned from timeless, classic styles combined with a pioneering sense of the new. New fabrics, sustainably produced and hopefully soon, clothing embedded with technology.

Denim in our hands is transformed into comfortable and relaxed casual wear you can wear anywhere. It doesn't get more Californian than this.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Product Launch Campaign

In addition to the thematic brand campaign for Gap Clothing, there will be times when Gap has to launch a new season's collection or a new line of clothing. These also must be advertised at least in print and digital media.

I have created three adverts for separate collections just to illustrate how these can also fall under the same message and the same brand strategy for Gap Clothing.

Print advert for Gap Summer Collection for women:

Headline: Put summer in the shade, the way Californians do.

Subhead: Gap's 2026 Summer Collection for women, now in stores

Copy:

Shop for the latest in summer and holiday wear from Gap's new collection for 2026. Featuring breezy new styles in lightweight and summery fabrics and colours.

Enjoy the sun and the sand. Without feeling the heat.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert for Gap Autumn Collection for Men:

Headline: Californian warmth for your autumn wardrobe.

Subhead: Gap's 2026 Autumn Collection for men, now in stores

Copy:

Get ready for autumn and winter 2026 with a new collection from Gap for men. Featuring sweaters, scarves, trousers, jackets and coats in warm, heavyweight fabrics and colours.

Step out this autumn in style. Without feeling the chill.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Print advert for Gap Denim Collection

Headline: Make waves in Californian every day wear.

Subhead: Gap's 2026 Denim Collection, now in stores

Copy:

Californians and the world love to live in denim. Gap unveils its latest 2026 collection of new designs in soft, lightweight denim, including denim with lycra. Featuring jeans, shorts, shirts, dresses, skirts and jackets in denim you wouldn't want to get out of.

Discover Californian every day wear. And go make waves in it.

Gap (logo)

California Cool since 1969

Use of media for Gap Clothing advertising

I am not familiar with Gap's advertising campaigns of the past, although I do recollect seeing a few print adverts decades ago in magazines like Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Harper's etc. These were mostly for their denim jeans, worn with white shirts and tops and featured young men and women. They were mostly pictorial with no text, and featured the Gap logo.

I suppose this is the case for most fashion brands, where they seem to think that just showing the product visually is adequate and there is no need to engage the consumer with any idea or text.

In that sense, this brand campaign for Gap that I have created is a departure from the norm. I have taken this approach precisely because of the relaunch strategy that I now recommend for Gap Clothing in order to differentiate it from competition. That of using its San Francisco origins and its Californian spirit to full advantage.

When it comes to media, therefore, I think there is a need for Gap to advertise in mainline international newspapers, whenever there is a new collection in stores, a sale, or festive shopping to announce. This is in addition to advertising the main brand campaign in international fashion and lifestyle magazines.

This particular brand campaign that I have created for Gap clothing ought to be advertised in mainline international newspapers in key markets, including the US, as well as in Vogue, Cosmo and Harper's.

The TV advert ought to be aired on main news channels, on sports channels and with streaming content that offers the right fit with Gap's target audience.

Use of digital media for Gap Clothing

I notice that [Gap](#) doesn't advertise on Twitter, sorry X, but shares posts about new designs, etc. Unfortunately, Gap still promotes its hoodie sweatshirts, and worse, they are running some awful thing called Gap Logo Remix! I am not sure what it is, but this is precisely the kind of thing that Gap shouldn't be encouraging.

I recommend that Gap use digital and social media to announce the latest apparel collections in stores, and online, and any sales promotions that might be running at the time.

In addition, a good use of digital media would be for Gap to share smart casual dressing ideas for specific seasons and purposes. For example, right now, Gap could share posts with tips on summer dressing, holiday and travel wear, leading right up to the back-to-school season in August/September.

These should all be communicated under the California Cool brand positioning of Gap, and ought to maintain consistency in message and tone and manner.

In addition, Gap Clothing ought to use social media platforms to announce any new stores or markets they might have opened, as well as tie-ups and

collaborations such as those with Stanford/UC Berkeley that I recommend, and any other that Gap might wish to pursue.

Note on Gap's Californian connections

To conclude, I would just like to touch upon the kinds of Californian connections that Gap ought to pursue, and the ones to avoid. Because these are all to do with imagery and the rub-off on the brand, Gap ought to be careful which ones to use.

Besides the ones that I have explored in the Gap brand campaign, of Californian landmarks, pioneering technology, futuristic ideas including environmental concern, cultural cosmopolitanism, and the good life offered by the wines of Napa Valley, there might be plenty of others.

However, you'll notice that I have studiously avoided the Hollywood connection. For many people, just the mention of California might conjure images of Hollywood. I chose to avoid it, because Hollywood strongly suggests glamour and this isn't something the Gap brand is about.

The Gap brand is about relaxed and effortless style. This could mean that Gap could still associate with the world of entertainment, just not with Hollywood glamour. A better association for Gap might be with music, if there are any particular musical genres or artists from California. Perhaps Gap could promote country music, including creating a new Western music genre akin to that from old Western films, but meant for today's world.

Another area Gap could explore in future is sports, which is a huge interest in America anyway. Here too, Gap should be careful in the kind of sports they choose to connect with and their Californian character.

This brand strategy and ideas document for Gap Clothing and the ideas it contains has been conceptualised and written by Geeta Sundaram, advertising professional and blogger at www.peripateticperch.com who can be reached at geetasundaram08@gmail.com and via <https://www.linkedin.com/in/geeta-sundaram-aka-wise-owl>

