

**Written Rebrand Report:**

**J.Crew**

FASH 380: Fashion Branding

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December 5th, 2022

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## **Executive Summary**

J.Crew was founded on craftsmanship, heritage, and affordable luxury pieces. The brand has dedicated themselves to create products that resemble the luxury, expensive look without the expensive cost. However, the company has significantly lost consumers over the past decade and sales have rapidly declined, resulting in J.Crew file for bankruptcy in 2020 amidst the pandemic. The company was unable to keep up with the evolving fashion industry that has immensely changed over the past few years and J.Crew fell out of touch with the new reality of innovation and sustainability. With a new branding strategy, the brand can immerse themselves to be on the same level as companies like Ralph Lauren and Burberry, establishing luxury exclusivity while allowing current innovations to undertake. Implementing luxury brand strategies to engage loyal consumers and connect with younger target markets will be the main way to rebrand the company into a successful force in the fashion industry. A new standard of sustainability will be met by only using eco-friendly and sustainable fabrics and textiles to reinstate the mission statement of quality pieces and step into the zeitgeist of sustainability and innovation. To engage consumers, adding sub brands and a refresh on J.Crew Factory pieces will align with different customer segmentations and install a needed hedonic value. These strategies allow consumers to reimagine the company as a high-end luxury brand with the same aura of craftsmanship and heritage, but adding in the element of inclusivity with an extended offering of size ranges and diversified target markets.

### **I. Who is the Brand?**

## **Industry Overview**

Due to COVID-19, the fashion industry has seen an entirety of changes within retail and e-commerce experiences. Online shopping has grown immensely in the past few years due to the pandemic, and in-store shopping has declined rapidly. In the past decade, fashion brands have dedicated themselves to create products that promote inclusivity, sustainability, and innovation. However, J.Crew did not include these same ideals that transformed the century's vision of the fashion industry. They began to be stuck in heritage craftsmanship and family-friendly styles that no longer aligned with this decade's trends or ideals. They were unable to adapt with the changing times, thus losing several loyal consumers. Therefore, J.Crew announced bankruptcy in May of 2020. 2022-2023 fashion weeks featured a plethora of academic, American-prep styles of fashion. From Louis Vuitton, Lacoste, and Ralph Lauren, the re-emerging scholarly look has made its way back into a demanded trend. J.Crew founded its style on this preppy trend of the 80's, so this comeback trend would be a way for J.Crew to gain attention from younger target markets and submerge fully into these academia styles. Due to this, Ralph Lauren is also gaining traction and a greater audience than ever before. This brand is a key competitor for similar consumers of the J.Crew Brand. The brand carries similar price points, however Ralph Lauren has less of mass market appeal and more exclusivity than J.Crew. Zara and Gap are two competitors that could be put on the same scale as J.Crew, as they appeal to the same target market of consumers who look for classic pieces while being affordable.

## **Brand Narrative/Story**

J.Crew was founded on designs that represent fashion forward looks, but speak to the money-conscious consumer. They have modeled their company to represent a luxury brand, without the elevated pricing and exclusivity of most higher-end companies. J.Crew was known for their luxury look before the digital world emerged into society. They drive their audience through magazines and catalogs that represent the hit 80's and 90's American Preppy fashion. These catalogs opened their target market to different demographics and household incomes, and showcased heritage and craftsmanship within a new

price range. Essentially, J.Crew was designed to sell styles that appealed to luxury, loyalists consumers from brands like Ralph Lauren and Burberry, without the strict positioning of a luxury priced brand.

### **Brand Archetype**

J.Crew currently represents the Craftsman archetype because they coincide with timeless and creative products, representing a strong sense of fulfillment without risks. During the beginning stages of the brand's popularity, they would have been considered the Creator archetype due to their inventive way to appeal to a different demographic of luxury consumers, however within the past 20 years they strive on being a brand with loyal consumers who follow classic designs and a strong brand promise. J.Crew is a brand people are aware of and have followed for years, however they have only been seen as a supportive and steady fashion follower.

### **Brand Promise**

The J.Crew consumer expects classic designs that never go out of style, at affordable price points. The first line of their mission statement states, "We make timeless clothes that last a lifetime...then pair them with of-the-moment styles season after season." This line from their mission statement captures the value the brand offers to the masses. J. Crew is known to have an assortment of basics, which are always in season. Regardless of the time of year, J. Crew promises to have simplistic styles that every wardrobe needs. J. Crew caters to families given their assortment of men, women, and children styles. This is something that the J. Crew customer has learned to expect when engaging with the brand. Overall, the brand promises consistency.

### **Key Brand Assets**

J.Crew is known for the mission statement, "quality is our highest priority." For years, the brand has strived to implement ways to showcase luxury style quality in all statement pieces offered. The current wordmark of the J.Crew logo is in the font, Goudy Oldstyle, an old style serif. Before 2010, the "J" in the J.Crew logo was drawn to disrupt the baseline of the text, however it was recently altered to

keep a strict font line in capital letters. The logo can also be seen in a cursive style font on the website, however the brand is specifically known for their serif style font. The color associated with the J.Crew logo has always been in black and white, thus hinting at the classic appeal of the styles offered. The brand name “J.Crew” was made in 1983 to compete with “polo” competitor Ralph Lauren. “Crew” coincided with the preppy style offered by both competing brands. J.Crew Factory is a secondary logo that follows the same black and white theme of the brand’s colors. This represents the lower-cost outlet expansion of the company. In previous years, the brand did not carry a tagline or follow a specific message in addition to their mission statement. However, in 2021, the brand released a new campaign with star Tracee Ellis Ross, with the tagline “make a scene.”

### **Key Brand Touchpoints**

J. Crew’s current target market is focused on middle aged, educated affluent individuals at the median age of 32. The company is most prevalent and retains the most engagement on their Instagram platform with 2.4 million followers. Understandably, Instagram would serve as their primary platform for target market engagement with Instagram’s total average audience being 34 and younger. The organization retains customers through rewards and loyalty programs. Allowing target customers to gain more benefits from the store and access to level up their shopping experience.

### **Key Product Offerings**

J Crew emphasizes how they put a twist on classics. They state that they are experts in cashmere, coats, blazers, and pants. J. Crew is set apart from other brands in this aspect, because they collaborate with other brands to expand their creativity. Another important offering is that they use eco-friendly fabrics to support their factory workers. They recognize that they have a responsibility to the planet and humanity, and want to create clothes in an eco-friendly way. J.Crew is known for being classic, natural, and sophisticated. This is because their garments have

always appealed to people who value staple, and versatile pieces, over fads. J.Crew states they “believe in looking like a million bucks, but not spending it.” This is where the sophisticated archetype comes into play. J Crew is for people who are looking to make their wardrobe more subtle and sophisticated.

VI. Who is the Customer?

### **Demographic Overview**

J. Crew has an assortment of product offerings due to the fact the brand caters to men, women, and children. Though their customers vary in age, their ideal client is an American middle-aged woman who balances work and home life. She either has a corporate level job or works for her own company. This woman is married with a family and falls between the ages of 30-60. They are able to make J.Crew a one-stop shop for their spouse, children, and themselves. They fall on the middle-income scale, able to comfortably afford most things, but not able to afford luxury brands.

### **Psychographic Overview**

The current target customer of the brand revolves around low wealth and high status. J.Crew remains strong on their stance to sell products that deliver high quality without the expensive cost. This attracts a consumer that is looking to flaunt their high social status, without having a high discretionary income. Along with this, the customer would be considered a “pretender” within the consumer segmentation model. They do not necessarily flaunt brands and labels, but rather pretend to mimic these luxury style pieces through brands like J.Crew. Daily activities of the target customer are very family-focused and the consumer enjoys J.Crew because of their wide range of options and price ranges. The consumer’s lifestyle revolves around busy work and life balance, so finding pieces that adhere to both are key when shopping. They have a strong attitude towards money where they would prefer saving rather than spending, but still partake in more expensive excursions from time to time. They would be

considered an extroverted, middle-class individual and with many close friends that carry the same opinions in politics and social issues as they do.

### **Key Values**

Multifaceted, higher-end clothing retailer for casual and workwear. Target customers are looking for timeless pieces made out of quality textiles at an affordable price. Creating a competitive advantage in regards to similarly branded stores. Allowing for better access to more affordable high-end attire. J.Crew's mission statement is "quality is our highest priority." From design, to production, to service, J Crew holds a high standard for their brand's image in every aspect, giving a more well-rounded brand experience.

### **Brand Persona**

Brand persona requires the alignment of brand identity with brand image. The brand identity connects directly to the brand's archetype; the craftsman. Their identity is creating timeless and unique pieces, which fulfill the consumer's expectations for a brand promise. The brand image refers to what the market reflects back to the brand managers as a perception of the brand. The way the image is reflected back to the brand is classic, sophisticated, and clean. All of these elements come together to create a refined brand persona. Refined refers to someone who has good taste and mannerisms. This is a great way to describe J Crew because they specialize in sophisticated, but creative pieces that emphasize consumers' timeless taste. Our target consumer is someone like Sarah, a well-educated, businesswoman who grew up in the suburbs near a city. Sarah enjoys hosting dinner parties for the holidays in her home that looks like it came straight out of a West Elm catalog. She is always dressed head to toe in her finest garments. Sarah enjoys dressing up, but has no shame in wearing cozy outfits over uncomfortable ones, she's a cozy-chic kind of person. She finds accessories a necessary part of completing her look and will never step

foot outside the house without them on. When she is lounging, she often goes straight for matching sets which are a staple. Sarah believes in investing in quality, over quantity. That is why she shops at J-Crew for all her essentials. She also drives a Mercedes Benz, which complements the persona of the brands she shops at. She would define herself as refined because that is the exact persona she is investing her money into.

### **Customer Segmentation**

J. Crew provides products for numerous generations. It is very important that the brand understands current events and how each of its segmented customers will react. Having a strong understanding of a brand's segmented customers will also allow the brand to clearly see which is being underserved and find potential untapped market segments.

A customer segment of J.Crew that attracts the most customers would be middle-aged women. Women tend to be in charge of their family's shopping habits; therefore, this segment has the most buying power and influence, due to the fact they heavily influence the other segments. This segment must be paid special attention to in order to raise profits continually. Since a lot of focus is on this segment, the brand is losing younger markets and potential customers in their early twenties.

### **Untapped Market Segments**

Fashion innovators and designers have recently recreated the "preppy" look of fashion with classic styles like trousers, sweater vests, and button-ups which are prime offerings of J.Crew's signature appearance. Academia became a new trend to follow for the year and younger demographics are heavily tapped into this idea which could potentially align J.Crew with a new customer segment. The younger, early 20's, fashion followers would be a prime example of an untapped market segment that would drive J.Crew sales and expand ideas for new product launches to fit the needs and desires of this new group.

VII. What is the New Brand Strategy?

**Key Objectives**

The key objectives include increasing brand loyalty with a focus on individual quality pieces that are buildable. JCrew will also discontinue its customer loyalty program as we are aiming for the luxury market. Rather than making these pieces more obtainable, we want to give the brand a more authentic and unique feeling of owning individualistic luxury pieces. Repair an outdated image with luxury fashion at an affordable price. By rebranding the overall J. Crew image to a more modernized simplistic feel, alluding to the brand's newfound luxury market. Expand target market from 30 plus to 20's through 40's. By expanding the target market to a much larger demographic, J Crew will quickly increase their market gaining more customer loyalty and overall brand awareness.

**Brand Narrative/Story**

J.Crew was founded on designs that represent fashion-forward looks, but this is something that got lost throughout the years. When modern customers think of J.Crew, they consider them a fashion innovator because they have been conditioned to only see J.Crew as a good place to shop for basics. Innovation is what the brand is missing. The lack of innovation is one of the reasons the brand is on the decline. It is important the brand stays true to its craftsmanship heritage, while the brand enters this new era. The brand must seamlessly blend these two opposite concepts of staying true to its roots and thinking outside of the box to reach new territory.

With the comeback of preppy fashions with a new modern twist, it is the perfect time for J. Crew to rebrand to reach a younger, trendy audience. With the modern take on the preppy trends, the brand is able to intertwine what they are known for, classic styles. The new J.Crew will be known for having hot new styles and traditional basics, which are both needed to create the overall preppy look.

**Brand Archetype**

The future brand archetype of J.Crew goes back to their original promise of reimagining things with meaning and value. This ties directly into the Creator and Craftsman archetype that J.Crew once used to align with in the early stages of the brand. They are reimagining timeless and classic pieces that represent the foundations of a luxury brand and high-quality, eco-friendly fabrics and textiles. They have regained the role of a fashion leader and are designing quality products that are in high demand for an array of sizes and different styles. Combining visions of the past and future, they are taking control of the zeitgeist of the era and using innovation and new ideals to create a brand that does not tie into conformist values.

**Brand Promise**

J.Crew's original brand promise was to create pieces that are quality and timeless, without the costly price. This promise should be realigned to heavily enforce the idea of eco-friendly and sustainable pieces that are ideal for every lifestyle and person. With this, the exclusivity of the brand will begin to tap into more luxury branding techniques, making the price points higher and leading the trends through obsolescence. The previous brand promise aligned with heritage techniques to make products that are staples from J.Crew. This idea will be strengthened to offer signature pieces offered in plus sizes and other styles for adaptable wear, taking inspiration from previous craftsmanship of the brand.

**Key Brand Assets**

The main key asset is to improve brand experience and rebuild the brand community. With clearly defined core values and branding for J. Crew, the organization will better be able to stick to one centralized message creating consistency and loyalty between customers and the brand. The coastal casual linen mood of the updated line supports the brand's initiative integrating a chic, simple style with casual comfortability in a less subtle and more definitive way; strongly emphasizing the overall brand narrative which is iconic in itself. As for marketing elements, the brand's image would be completely refurbished. We decided to build on the once

outdated and borderline bland branding style, keeping the simplistic vision and adding a chic and luxury flair. The iconic facile logo for J. Crew would stay consistent with a more modernized font. We plan to keep neutral colors and simplistic styles that are buildable pieces, further exemplifying the brand's mission of quality structural pieces.

### **Key Brand Touchpoints**

The brand can tap into high touch digital clienting to improve the relationships with its consumers. Those pillars include the brand experience, exclusivity, engagement, and emotional branding, I believe J Crew could achieve all of these through digital media. They can create the brand experience by immersing things like free champagne in the stores on holidays, or even having small, free items you can get if you spend a certain amount of money in-store. This is similar to what Sephora does at checkout with their beauty insider points. This would be a great option to encourage consumers to rack up points and continue spending money. For the engagement aspect of the digital clienting, J Crew could do quizzes on their mobile app that would assign certain garments to the consumer. Rather than having the quiz be a simplistic one that each brand has, they could spice it up by bringing personality elements into it. This could be similar to how Spotify wrapped had 5 different personalities for their listeners, and assigned their listeners a personality. This is a fun way to spice up the app and also increase emotional connections. If the consumer feels that they relate to what the app is telling them, that increases the emotional connection. This engagement idea also intertwines with the emotional branding side of digital clienting. Lastly, for the exclusivity pillar, J Crew could work with local businesses to create exclusive items, and also help promote their businesses. For example, they could commission local artists to create stickers, agenda's, calendars, etc for the J Crew stores. Each state could have a different artist, which would increase the exclusivity and encourage consumers to collect all the different items.

**Key Brand Offerings**

The brand will be creating more “statement” pieces to properly appeal to a younger, trendy audience. The brand will be known for both trendy fashions and needed basics. The brand will continue to be an expert in cashmere, coats, blazers, and pants; however, these styles will be revamped and taken to the next level. This will attract a new customer base, people who are seen as fashion innovators. This is an important aspect if the brand wants to be seen as fashion-forward again. The brand will be doing more extensions like sub-brands. An example of this would be to add a handbag line. This is a way to expand J.Crew Factory engagement.

The brand will continue to sell to multiple different segments: men, women, and children. The brand will further expand its product assortments by adding more inclusive sizing. Along with adding more inclusive sizing, J.Crew’s key products will all be ethically sourced in regard to materials and processes, which is necessary to be considered an eco-friendly brand.

Appendix A:

*J. Crew*

J. CREW

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