

Columbia, Parsons students contribute ideas for Maclaren China retail expansion

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Pictured, from left, are Adaobi Kanu, Vannesa Liao, Tanvi Chaturvedi, and Aarushi Agarwal

Students from Columbia Business School and Parsons the New School For Design presented the marketing plan they created while working with British stroller maker Maclaren for its expansion into China, with new stores in Shanghai.

The students worked on the China-specific retail strategy for Maclaren during a semester-long interdisciplinary course titled "The Design and Marketing of Luxury Goods." The team looked at trends among Chinese consumers, and mapped out a floor plan for a new retail store that would accommodate both digital and physical methods for customers to experience the brand.

"Our task this semester has been to create a brand experience that integrates digital and cultural elements in order to successfully introduce Maclaren as a heritage, luxury international brand in the Chinese market," said Adaobi Kanu, a Columbia student who worked on the Maclaren marketing team.

Other team members included Tanvi Chaturvedi, Vannesa Liao and Manola Soler from [Columbia Business School](#) ^[1] and Aarushi Agarwal, Su Jin Jeon, Judy Lee and Shahrouz Varshabi from [Parsons the New School For Design](#) ^[2].

Emerging market

The team looked at the heritage of the Maclaren brand, particularly the brand's founder, an aeronautics engineer. This influence gave Maclaren its traits of style, safety, innovation, durability, travel convenience and engineering expertise.



Maclaren BMW buggy

The students conducted research, including a focus group interview with 10 Chinese consumers who are either parents now, or are within the age group that would be purchasing strollers in the near future. The respondents said they conduct their research for strollers both online and in-store, as well as getting input from friends and family members, and that they look for brands that are internationally recognized.

Through its research, the group identified four trends in luxury shopping in China: product safety and quality, brand loyalty

and heritage, products tailored to Chinese taste and the importance of the store experience.

From there, the team mapped out the consumer's purchase journey and how to promote Maclaren through the process. This meant making Maclaren the top brand in search results as consumers research strollers, and giving consumers an excellent experience through customer service and post-purchase follow ups.

"One interesting finding to our research was that in China, there's a growing concept of prenatal spas, where women three months before delivery stay in that spa, plus three months after delivery," Ms. Chaturvedi said.

"That is the perfect time for a brand like Maclaren to generate awareness about their product and reach out to that customer," she said.

Because Chinese consumers conduct their research online, the group redesigned the Maclaren Web site for mobile optimization, so that potential customers could use the mobile site on a tablet or phone and then find the nearest store.

Retail strategy

The store design created by the team incorporates three experiential elements important to the Chinese consumer. Because of the growing amount of online research before purchase, digital touch points were included.

The group also included the Maclaren value proposition of quality and sustainability, as well as showing Maclaren as an international brand that savvy parents use globally.

The first thing the consumer sees when she enters the store is the back wall, which is painted Maclaren red, with a large brand logo.

As consumers walk into the store, there are two entry points on either side. To the left is a glass box containing all of the pieces necessary to create a Maclaren stroller.

To the right side of the store is a digital research kiosk, which is designed to look like a London phone booth. The store itself will only display select strollers, so this display gives consumers the ability to look at the entire line of products.



Maclaren showroom in Cologne, Germany

To emphasize the brand's heritage and international appeal, the group envisioned a large metal glider hanging from the ceiling.

The strollers themselves would be situated in the middle of the store, with two testing areas, so parents can see how a Maclaren stroller handles on different types of ground, and prove Maclaren's durability, strength and functionality.

One of the benefits of a Maclaren stroller that the team pinpointed is its ability to be folded in five seconds.

To illustrate this, the team incorporated interactivity and gaming with an iPad app that first shows a Maclaren stroller being folded in five seconds, and then starts a timer so users can take a stroller on the sales floor and try it for themselves.

Along with the adult experience, the students also incorporated elements to keep children entertained, including a play area at the back of the store, with embedded iPads and low bookcases. There is also a product display at children's eye level, allowing them to also engage with the brand.

Driving home the point that Maclaren is an internationally used brand, the group created a "magic mirror" digital display in the store. When not in use, the mirror would show the image of a mom walking with a stroller, with the backdrop behind her changing to show cities around the world.

Consumers could choose to interact with the mirror to create a digital postcard, taking a photo and then choosing from a selection of backgrounds and stationery, writing a message and then sending the message anywhere in the world.

"We think this element is important because it allows you to communicate with people outside the store, and enhances the international element further," Ms. Soler said.

"This is also a product category where people need input from family members who may not be in the store," she said.

"By enabling them to communicate with them, we are trying to drive purchase into the store rather than bringing it online at a later date."

Final Take

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URLs in this post:

[1] Columbia Business School: <http://www8.gsb.columbia.edu/>

[2] Parsons the New School For Design: <http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/>

[3] Image: <https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.luxurydaily.com%2Fcolumbia-parsons-students-contribute-ideas-for-maclaren-china-retail-expansion%2F&t=Columbia%2C+Parsons+students+contribute+ideas+for+Maclaren+China+retail+expansion>

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