

An investigation into the impact of the extended marketing mix on  
consumer behaviour for American Eagle Outfitters.

**To what extent is American Eagle Outfitters successful at using the  
extended marketing mix to influence consumer behaviour?**

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## Introduction

American Eagle Outfitters is an American clothing retailers, founded in 1977, that produces fashion for primarily college students of both genders. It is commonly recognised as one of the largest retailers in the US, and now has more than 1000 stores worldwide.

This extended research paper is going to analyse the success of American Eagle Outfitter's utilisation of the extended marketing mix, in creating a highly profitable store environment, and the possible alterations that could be made, in order to maximise the stores profitability and influence on consumers' purchasing habits. This will all be used with the aim of answering the question **to what extent is American Eagle Outfitters successful at using the extended marketing mix to influence consumer behaviour?**

This paper will consider the 3 P's of the extended marketing mix, and its applications in American Eagle stores, and the understanding of behavioural economics and the possible manipulation of this. Also, the effects of specific considerations on the stakeholders of the business will be identified.

The consumer behaviour of purchasing is the main consideration of this paper, more specifically the manipulation of this behaviour. As the ability to manipulate consumer purchasing habits, can be utilised by store owners, to maximise their profits.

Consumer's buying habits are constantly manipulated by the psychological marketing techniques. External psychologically manipulating factors include: guerilla marketing, which is defined as 'a marketing tactic in which a company uses surprise and/or

unconventional interactions in order to promote a product or service' (*What is guerrilla marketing.*), and marketing psychology, through the science of persuasion (*Psychology in advertising.*). These are techniques used by corporations, in order to instigate the initial attraction of possible consumers, through the common desires of the consumer-driven mindset. However, this research paper will focus on the factors covered in the later-occurring instances, including less obvious influences in the customer's interaction with the store environment.

This topic is interesting as an understanding of the marketing mix can lead to beneficial structuring of store environments, and more practical applications of this knowledge in marketing, which can positively reflect in the purchasing activity of customers.

### **Methodology**

This investigation will use secondary research to develop the points made, and multiple analytical tools, including SWOT analysis to explore the use previously identified research question, a stakeholder analysis in order to assess the effect of good utilisation of the extended marketing mix on the many stakeholders of a company, and a financial statement analysis to determine the success of the companies use of the extended marketing mix, and whether American Eagle Outfitters could more favourably use the marketing mix and thus improve their profitability.

### **SWOT Analysis**

To explain the importance of utilising the extended marketing mix factors in the planning of the store environment, a SWOT analysis

will be used to evaluate the use of in-store environment to maximise profits. A SWOT analysis is a decision making tool that allows businesses to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an idea (Hoang, Paul). The use of a SWOT analysis will allow the company to address the different aspects of the decision that can have both a positive and negative affect. This is a good technique for American Eagle to use, as it will allow them to decide whether marketing mix will benefit their operations and profitability.

Table 1: SWOT analysis for use of the extended marketing mix

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allows the business to cater to what the consumers desire</li> <li>- Produces more revenue</li> <li>- A well developed store layout can create a more preferred environment for the customers, than competitor businesses (Bhasin, Hitesh, et al)</li> <li>- Well developed environments that cater to the customers, can build up a larger customer base and customer loyalty (The Relationship Between Marketing Mix And Customer Loyalty In Hijab Industry: The Mediating Effect Of Customer Satisfaction)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very time consuming to undergo the research required to generate the best environment (The Marketing Planning Processes)</li> <li>- May not be the most cost effective method of laying out the store, when it requires lots of change to the space</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brings more opportunities to maximise profits, through the most revenue-generating environments (Trivikram, Sujatha)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possibility of competition mirroring successful environments</li> </ul>

The above SWOT shows that the use of the extended marketing mix successfully can help a business become more profitable, through their ability to understand the wants and needs of their customers, and thus reflecting this into the customer’s experiences in their stories. The catering of the store experience to the desires of the customers can benefit the company in making brand loyalty, as a good customer experience can prompt that customer to return. Having a strongly

thought out store environment can benefit and include multiple stakeholders of a company, including: management, employees, competition, and customers. In order to identify the best atmosphere for a store, the marketing team for a company must consider the target market, and their desired experience when shopping. They must undergo extensive amounts of market research to identify the individual traits that are best looked upon by customers. The management of a store should follow the directions of the market research's discoveries, about the ideal store environment factors. This benefits them as they can ensure a profitable environment which will reflect highly on their management skills. This SWOT analysis is a good reference for what should be investigated and followed through into the structure of the store. The competition of a company will most likely be affected by the consideration of environment, as a better developed environment may be the deciding factor for a customer, as to the shop that they frequent the most, which would be a problem for the competition of a store with the ideal retail environment. Customers of a company are directly affected by the environment, as they get to experience that environment, and it is thus the deciding factor as to whether or not they are comfortable.

In this study into the impact of the different aspects of the extended marketing mix on customers, (*Mucaï, Gitau Paul, Erick Kithinji Mbaeh, and Aden Issack Noor*) use of the extended marketing mix was linked to higher rates of customer satisfaction. Through the anticipation of customers wants and needs, the firms were able to fully satisfy these through the many aspects of the extended marketing mix. This links to the strengths that the extended marketing mix allows the



business to cater to customer's desires, thus increasing customer satisfaction. In addition, it has been established that through analysis of the cost-value matrix, a well developed extended marketing mix strategy can raise both revenue and profits (*Roberto, Dr. Ned*). This identifies that the extended marketing mix can raise revenue and minimize costs, as it can identify all aspects that will satisfy the wants and needs of the market, and develop the premise for a well structured and cost minimizing operation, that reflects positively on customer behaviour. Thus, identifying that the strengths and opportunities of using the extended marketing mix to influence customer behaviour, prevail over the negatives.

#### Extended marketing mix

The extended marketing mix covers 3 P's, or aspects of marketing that should be considered to best satisfy the customer's wants and needs. It includes consideration of people, physical evidence, and process. The aspects of the extended marketing mix that will be primarily focused on throughout this research paper, is the physical evidence, and people. As is outlined in the SWOT analysis, this concept can be highly beneficial for the profitability of a company.

#### Physical evidence

The physical evidence of the store are the elements of the store environment that the customers interact with. Some relevant topics that can be considered when investigating the optimum physical layout of a store are impulse buying, nudge theory and retail atmospherics.

The layout of a store can be strategically organised in order to further prompt customers to buy more. The idea of impulse buying plays a large role in this too, as the specific placement of certain items

in certain areas can produce the impulse to buy more products. For example, in the Bonifacio High Street branch of American Eagle Outfitters, to try something on, you must travel through the store to the opposite end from the entrance. This means that you see all of the merchandise on offer, when going to try on the item you have chosen. This creates impulse, as the customer may see something they didn't plan on trying on, but upon seeing it, have the desire to purchase it, thus, encouraging the consumer to buy more. Such impulses may leave the customer with feelings of cognitive dissonance, however the additional revenue would be beneficial for the company (*The buying impulse*).

#### Nudge theory

Nudge theory (*Thaler, and Cass*) is a concept that investigates the idea that you can understand and control influences on human behaviour. Nudge theory enables the analysis and reconstruction of influences that can have an effect on people's decision making and ways of thinking. It states that there are external influences on human behaviour that can be controlled, in order to change the behavioural outcome of said person, it is in some ways, a form of environmental manipulation and thus fits within the concept of physical evidence. It is commonly used as a form of behavioural economics. It encompasses the idea of choice architects, which are 'anyone who influences the choices that you make' (*Thaler, UChicago*). In the case of a retail store, like American Eagle Outfitters, the choice architects are the marketing team, as they are the people responsible with influencing the decisions of the customers. The nudge concept can have a positive effect on consumer behaviour, as it was developed as an ethical



approach that doesn't exploit the customers, and simply provides them with an easy choice. In American Eagle's case, nudge is used in order to improve the company's profitability and influence their customers to purchase more.

The concept of nudge is commonly demonstrated in supermarkets and the structural layout of their produce. The organisation of aisles in a supermarket tend to be organised in correspondence to consumers approach to shopping. This can be seen in the article by Michael Moss (*Nudged to the Produce Aisle by a Look in the Mirror*) that looked at the ways that a supermarket could influence consumers to make healthier decisions and purchase more from the produce aisle. Simply by placing a green arrow on the floor, that pointed left towards the produce aisle, the researcher was able to influence consumers to follow the path towards the healthy produce. This example of a nudge is showing a change in the common instincts of retail behaviour, as it is commonly found that people invariably turn right when entering a store, as the larger population of the world are right-handed (*Scientific American*). Thus, changing the behaviour of consumers in order to influence better eating habits, is an ethical approach to choice architecture, and thus a strong example of how to use nudge theory. To reference this back to American Eagle, there are multiple factors that are demonstrated within their in store environment that creates a nudge. The company utilises this strategy, as demonstrated through their many items classed within the impulse category (accessories, gifts, beauty) strategically placed next to the cash register, which can be seen as a beneficial marketing strategy, as 5 out of 6 Americans admit to impulse buying (*Kossmann, Sienna*). As

well as the placement of all fitting rooms on opposite ends of the store from the entrance, forcing the customers to pass all merchandise to try an item.

Some possible factors that can be used to create a nudge to behaviour are called retail atmospherics. These are the physical features of a store environment and the effects that they have on customers. They can be used to develop the ideal store environment for the customers. Possible aspects to be considered, when looking at retail atmospherics, include music, colours, layout, and displays to name a few. The atmospherics of a store can be manipulated to respond to the wants and needs of the desired demographic of a store, and can help integrate a good idea of the type of brand that the company is selling.

Starting with sight, the colours of which the customers are exposed to when shopping can bring up certain emotions and reactions. In fact, the colour of a product can count for up to 85% of the reasoning why it was bought (*Psychology of Colour*). For example, should the store environment include a large amount of Orange, which is said to be a relatively comforting colour, then the customer would tend to feel happy and more relaxed in the shopping environment. Thus meaning that the customer will tend to spend more time in the store. Also meaning that they would tend to buy more, as they are around the items for longer, and trust the store more. This will prompt more sales and customer loyalty, as a customer relates a feeling of comfort to the store. This relates to the SWOT point that the store owners would be catering the environment to what suits the wants and needs of the customers. Should a store owner decide to have very

overpowering, dark colours, the customer would feel more threatened, meaning that they would feel less comfortable spending their money in the store. From the observations conducted within American Eagle stores (*Appendix B*), the colour palette that is consistently used throughout their stores includes warmer hues like brown and tan, incorporated with whites. Warmer hues tend to create a welcoming environment which can cause customers to feel more at home within a store, thus spending more time in the store. This is seen to be an effective use of the extended marketing mix for American Eagle, as longer time spent in store by customers, will mean more opportunities for sales. As identified in the SWOT analysis, it may be very time consuming and costly to completely change the

The final sensory factor affecting the in-store atmosphere would be the sounds. Music is most commonly played in shops, as without music, the store atmosphere would be less comfortable, and more bare. Not only does music fill out the silence, but it also can influence what you buy. Were someone to be influenced to happy, upbeat music, they would be more likely to buy brightly coloured items. Also, if someone were to be exposed to music of a certain culture, they would be more likely to purchase something of that culture (*How Music Influences Consumers' Purchasing Decisions*). Therefore, it can be understood that not only does music improve the mood of the customers, but it can also influence specifically what they buy. This relates to the SWOT point of catering to the customer's wants and needs, as the store will play music that they have identified to be something that their market enjoys. The research into the influence background music on shopping behaviour (*Areni and Kim*) can further

support this idea. Their research looked at the behaviour of people purchasing wine, with different genres of background music, including classical and top-charts. The background music was seen to influence the amount of money that customers spent on wine, with classical music leading them to spend more money than with other genres. This is believed to be due to the fact that classical music related the customers to the feelings of wealth, which led to them spending more. Thus, showing the effects of musical atmospherics on consumers spending habits. As pop music is playing on the music station for American Eagle, this can be largely related to their target market, and the products that they are aiming to sell. Which follows the idea of pop music being in fashion, and popular. This negates the SWOT point of this not being very cost effective, as changing the music played is not a very substantial change and is not costly.

### People

In-store interactions between the staff and the customer can also have a large effect on how the buying experience goes (*Employee and Customer interaction*). One reason for this, is that the employees of a company are the face of that brand that they are selling, without a positive brand image, the customers won't wish to spend money. The customer's make judgements on the company based on their interaction with employees (*Impacts of Marketing Mix and Customer Perception on Brand Loyalty*). This is why the employee based brand equity (*employee-based brand equity*) should be a strong concern of the management of a company. In order to assure the best possible attitude towards creating a strong brand image to customers. In addition, people wish to have good interactions when shopping, and



often need assistance, which they expect to receive without a doubt. This means that good training of employees is essential, as a good experience and knowledge of their brand, will allow employees to understand how to interact with the customers, and provide the best shopping experience. As identified in *Appendix B*, the in-store interaction is flawed in American Eagle. This has impacted the customer response (*Appendix A*) which is highly problematic. To further this, a main concern in the aspect of American Eagle's attempts to better their employee's customer interactions, there should be consideration of training methods to achieve this. Effective employee training in customer service can not only increase customer satisfaction, but increase profits, employee satisfaction, sales, and confidence.

### **Financial analysis**

As previously identified, the success of a company can be based on its profitability. Thus, in order to conclude on the success of American Eagle's use of the extended marketing mix, the financial accounts of American Eagle, from the last fiscal year, will be compared to that of another company which offers similar stock at similar prices, to that of American Eagle. This store will later be compared in terms of the atmospheres of the two stores. This is in order to understand the effects of different store atmospheres on consumers spending habits and to provide a clear example of the differing effects of the store atmospheres. The other company that will be investigated is Old navy.

Both stores have the same target market: Young adult, females.



**Old Navy = Young Women**



### *Old Navy's Consumer in the US*

the target market for the accessories also range from tweens to adults. A.E. concept is to simply sell the latest design in clothing usually season coordinated and earn revenue from kids all the way to adults.

### *American Eagle Outfitters Marketing Plan*

To show that these stores offer similar merchandise at similar price points, below are shown two very similar products, from both stores, which are seen to be closely priced.



AEO SOFT & SEXY TERRY HOODIE  
\$34.95

Figure 1: American Eagle hoodie  
(AE Popover Hoodie, Heather Gray)



Relaxed Full-Zip Fleece  
Hoodie for Women  
\$29.94

Figure 2: Old Navy hoodie  
(Shop By Department)

*Both are simple hoodies within the range of \$29-\$35.*

Due to the fact that both offer similar stock, it is justified to compare the atmospheres of these stores, as the in-store environment vastly differs in both stores, but the merchandise being sold is similar. This means that the main factors which would affect the revenue made in the stores, would be the store environment, and the brand image. The only aspect that will be investigated is the effect of the different in-store environments.

The use of financial accounts analysis involves assessing the financial statements of a company to see where the company can make more beneficial economic decisions, which is a good way to analyse a business' success, in comparison to others in its market

(How to Measure Business Success). In this case, the financial analysis will be used as a way of comparison, as this will enable an understanding of the financial performance of the two companies. A comparison of their sales revenue in the last year will help to understand the preferred environment, as the customer will more likely spend more in a preferred environment, and thus that company will have higher revenue from that fiscal year.

Table 2: Gap Inc. | Old Navy. EMarketer Retail

Generated on December 3, 2017 at 6:11 AM (UTC)						
Gap Inc.						
Revenues & Sales - Old Navy						
Latest Fiscal Year						
Metric	TTM	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Total revenues (MM)	6977	6799	6664	6614	6257	6112
Total revenue growth	0.040101371	0.020258103	0.007559722	0.057056097	0.023723822	0.077194219
Retail store sales (MM)	5683	5651	5563	5580	5362	5364
Retail store sales growth	0.017182746	0.015818803	-0.003046595	0.040656471	-0.000372856	0.065131056
Ecommerce sales (MM)	1276	1133	1090	1029	895	748
Ecommerce sales growth	0.151624549	0.039449541	0.059280855	0.14972067	0.196524064	0.172413793
Ecommerce sales % of total revenue	0.182886627	0.166642153	0.163565426	0.155579075	0.143039795	0.122382199
Franchise revenues (MM)	15	15	11	5	0	0
Franchise revenue growth	0.363636364	0.363636364	1.2			
Source: company reports; eMarketer calculations						
Notes: Ecommerce sales by region and by brand for 2013 & 2014 estimated by eMarketer						
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Table 3: American Eagle Outfitters | Revenues & Sales.

Generated on December 3, 2017 at 6:12 AM (UTC)						
American Eagle Outfitters						
Revenues & Sales						
Latest Fiscal Year						
Metric	TTM	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Total revenues (MM)	3644.248	3609.865	3521.848	3282.867	3305.802	3475.802
Total revenue growth	0.013160741	0.024991709	0.072796431	-0.006937802	-0.048909575	0.114015894
Retail store sales (MM)	2765.183233	2805.821758	2861.848	2732.867	2776.602	3009.102
Retail store sales growth	-0.045036252	-0.019576945	0.047196223	-0.015751267	-0.077265576	0.095906605
Ecommerce sales (MM)	879.064767	804.0432415	660	550	529.2	466.7
Ecommerce sales growth	0.253442714	0.218247336	0.2	0.039304611	0.133919006	0.246860807
Ecommerce sales % of total revenue	0.241219798	0.222734989	0.187401614	0.167536486	0.160082183	0.13427117
Source: company reports; eMarketer calculations						
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The information found for both businesses was on the same website (*Emarketer*), in order to ensure no bias or possible reliability problems. Through looking at the total revenues of both companies, it can be seen that Old Navy (*Table 2*) had almost double the revenue of American Eagle Outfitters (*Table 3*), with \$6.8billion of revenue to American Eagle's \$3.6billion. This can be inferred into the context of the extended marketing mix to understand that the marketing team of Old Navy has a better understanding and application of the different factors of the extended marketing mix. Thus, with reference to the SWOT analysis (*Table 1*), American Eagle have earned less revenue than Old Navy, as they haven't done so. This can be understood that Old Navy have provided their customers with a better shopping experience. Thus the use of a comparison of the environments within both stores can be used to develop a more effective use of the extended marketing mix for American Eagle. Which can prompt less customers to spend money within their store, and lead to less brand loyalty (*Table 1*). This is supported by the Observation of customers and sales in American Eagle and Old Navy (*Appendix C*), which shows the clear difference in number of customers and sales for both stores, showing Old Navy as the more popular choice. This was looked at along with the comparison of the in store atmospherics for both stores (*Appendix B*). As the financial analysis has shown, Old Navy is operating in a more profitable manner, and thus the atmospherics defined (*Appendix B*) for Old Navy should be considered a more successful use of the extended marketing mix to influence consumer behaviour. Thus can be considered the preferred atmosphere for consumers (*Appendix A*). To relate this back to the SWOT analysis

(Table 1) it is seen that Old navy have successfully used the extended marketing mix to their advantage of being able to cater their stores to the desires of their customers, as commented on by a customer who stated 'I always know that I'm going to enjoy shopping here' (Appendix A), showing that their stories are consistently successful at providing a good experience to their customers.

## **Conclusion**

### American Eagle's next step

Based off of all research investigated, both primary and secondary, it can be concluded that American Eagle's use of the extended marketing mix in less of an effective way, and thus below is an evaluation of some possible solutions to American Eagle's problem of inadequate use of the two steps of the extended marketing mix previously identified.

### **Physical evidence**

The aspects of the in-store environments of American Eagle's stores should be modified (*Brick and Mortar Store: How Should Be The Environment?*). As identified in this article, the store should have popular charts music playing at a volume that the customers can hear comfortably, whilst still being able to communicate with others. The room should be open so the customers can see all the items on sale and not feel cramped at any point. It is best for all different types of products to be placed in their own sections.

### **People**

There should be a stronger focus on a more efficient service structure (*Principles of good customer service*). Despite being friendly,

the interaction within the store should revolve more around ensuring that the customer is satisfied with the products and that all of their questions are answered promptly. As well as an aim to establish a good customer relationship.

### Conclusion

Throughout this extended research paper, the different aspects of the extended marketing mix that can be used to help answer the question, **to what extent is American Eagle Outfitters successful at using the extended marketing mix to influence consumer behaviour?**, has been answered.

Based on the answer to the question and the analysis of the effects of store layout on purchasing behaviour, it can be concluded that there is a structure which can generate higher profits. Discluding other factors, a store can use this extended discussion and the analysis, to help understand the most profitable layouts and overall environment. This structure is not utilised by American Eagle, and thus they are not successfully using the extended marketing mix points.

Overall, their profitability reflects a poor organisational structure, and thus shows need for improvement in order to become a more competitive member of the fashion retail market.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview with customers

American Eagle Outfitters	Old Navy
<p>Q: What is it about this store that you like?</p> <p>A: I like the clothes that are sold in here and I think that the quality is quite good.</p> <p>Q: How do you feel about the atmosphere in the store?</p> <p>A: I like it a lot. I think it's a nice place to shop, and I feel comfortable when shopping. I like the overall experience inside</p>	<p>Q: What is it about this store that you like?</p> <p>A: I think that the prices here are very good and I like a lot of the clothes they make and feel that I can always find something I like, and I can always expect good service and friendly staff.</p> <p>Q: How do you feel about the atmosphere in the store?</p> <p>A: I think that it's very bright and open, which I like, because I don't feel overwhelmed when shopping, and I like that I always know that I'm going to enjoy shopping here.</p>

### Appendix B: In-store atmospheric observations

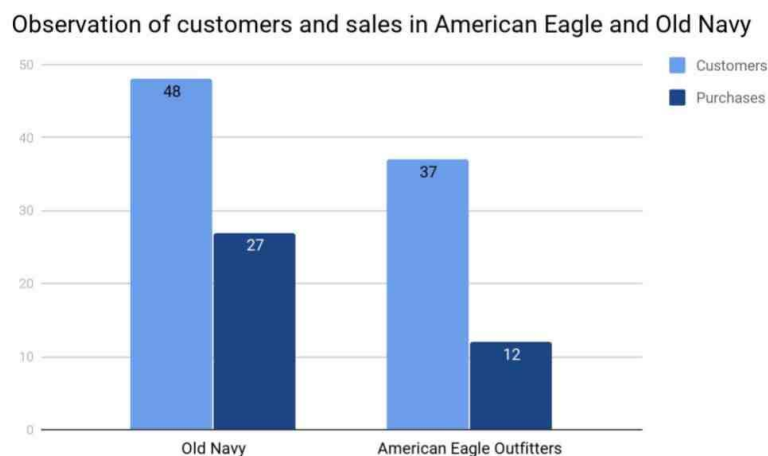
Factor	American Eagle Outfitters	Old Navy
<b>Scent</b>	There was an outstanding smell of wood and a slight floral smell in certain places in-store.	The most obvious scent in the Old Navy store was quite clinical and sterile (smelled of cleaning materials).

<b>Sight</b>	The colour scheme in the store's decoration was very natural with browns and nude colours, along with white walls. The floors and the walls were wood. There were televisions in-store, advertising the products.	The downstairs of the store was very big and open, so you could see all around you which helped navigate around. The look inside the store was quite industrial, with slate floors and pipes on the ceiling.
<b>Sound</b>	In the store, there was popular hip hop music playing at quite a quiet volume.	The music being played here was similar to that of American Eagle Outfitters. The volume was louder than American Eagle's, but not uncomfortable.
<b>Employee-customer interaction</b>	There were lots of members of staff, however the service was quite slow and there wasn't an efficient system of service. The many people standing behind the cashier made the process slower, as there were many distractions.	There were a large number of staff in the store and I was greeted by a great 'hello' upon entering. The staff were very warm and made sure I had everything I needed.
<b>Temperature</b>	Even before entering the store I could feel the cool air conditioning contrasting the Manila heat. However, I did feel a little bit too cold once entered and did put on a jacket.	Similar to American Eagle Outfitters, I could feel the air conditioning before entering. However, once entering the store I found the temperature to be comfortable.

<p><b>Overall layout</b></p>	<p>The men's section is located up a flight of stairs upon entering. The different items of clothing were split up into some sections (eg. jeans, tshirts, delicates). The cashier and changing rooms are located on the opposing side of the store to the entrance.</p>	<p>The men's section was again upstairs and the women's and children's downstairs. The different items were very well structured in multiple different sections (trousers, shirts, maternity). Again, the cashier and changing rooms were on opposite sides of the store to the door.</p>
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This observation was conducted, at a time deemed the busiest time for shopping in the week as ascertained through the employees of each, in both stores and notes were taken on the number of sales in-store over two hours and the number of shoppers entered the store within this time.

*Appendix C: Observation of customers and sales in American Eagle and Old Navy, results*



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