Reinventing Retail for Gen Z: Stacy Doren’s Vision for Journeys

Welcome to this episode of the Marketing Vanguard podcast. Today, Jenny Rooney speaks with Stacy Doren, CMO of Journeys, who joined the company six months ago after 24 years at Levi’s.

Stacy discusses Journeys’ evolution from its 1986 founding as a mall-based footwear retailer focused on alternative/skate culture to its current transformation under new leadership, and explains how Journeys is reaching a broader teen market while maintaining its cultural relevance.

She shares insights on the resurgence of mall shopping among Gen Z, Journeys’ differentiating focus on female consumers, and the company’s shift from purely performance marketing to brand building with a new campaign launching for back-to-school season.

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Episode highlights:

[03:53] Expanding Consumer Segmentation – “This brand was really founded on a consumer that was alternative skate, emo, whatever you wanna call it, and that served us well for so many years. One of the interesting insights as we were thinking about where do we take this brand is teens don’t really wanna be put into a box anymore. They’re very fluid with their style choices, they’re trying on multiple versions of themselves.”

[05:57] Competitive Differentiation – When discussing what sets Journeys apart, Stacy emphasizes: “Nobody in the mall carries the broad range of products and brands that the teens want today like Journeys does. These 13 to 22 year olds are really the sweet spot for Journeys. They grew up online. They’re very comfortable. They’re native. They spend so much time online, but there’s been a ton of news lately about just

the resurgence of the mall and how Gen Z is making the mall cool again.”

[15:52] Brand Building and New Campaign – Stacy shares their marketing strategy shift: “Anomaly [has] really helped us define what we call the brand map: the positioning, the purpose, the beliefs, the tone of voice. It’s been a while since we did any true brand building.”

[18:42] Marketing Priorities and Tough Decisions – On prioritizing initiatives as a new CMO: “I felt like we needed to get the foundation right. Then we had to ask for the investment. We had to make recommendations for how we would spend the investment, and we’ll lean heavy into paid media initially. There were some difficult decisions that I had to make along the way as well. We were spending a considerable amount of money on a catalog that had been around for decades. It’s not that the catalog was bad, but at the end of the day, it’s an opportunity cost.”

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