

IN-STORE

Diane von Furstenberg turns commercial with Gap collaboration

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By KAYLA HUTZLER



High street apparel retailer Gap Inc. has partnered with Diane

von Furstenberg for a new kids and baby collection in an effort to further its reputation as an American fashion brand.

The collaboration will feature apparel and accessories in the designer's signature prints and bright colors at a Gap price point. The products will become available next year.

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“As part of the ongoing brainstorming process in the kids and baby design team, they discussed who'd they'd most like to do a collaboration with,” said Liz Nunan, a Gap global affairs spokeswoman in San Francisco.

“Diane von Furstenberg was an obvious choice because of her iconic status in American

fashion,” she said.

Gap Inc. is one of the nation's leading specialty apparel retailers with brands such as Banana Republic, Gap and Old Navy targeting different demographics and segments.

Diane von Furstenberg did not respond by press deadline.

Filling a gap

The **Diane von Furstenberg** line will begin appearing in Gap Kids and Baby retail stores in 30 different countries.

The line will also be available for online ordering and shipping to 75 different countries.

The partnership is just one of many designer collaborations that have been popping up in mass-retail stores in the past few years.

High-end designers Lanvin, Jimmy Choo, Sonia Rykiel and Karl Lagerfeld have produced lines with Swedish retailer H&M since 2009.

Proenza Schouler, Thakoon and Zac Posen all released lines through Target. Overall, Target has worked with 17 designers for apparel collections.

Designer collaborations are not a new thing for Gap either, having worked with Pierre Hardy and Keds in 2010.

Gap also partnered twice with Stella McCartney last year.



“We are excited to build on the success of that business and are constantly looking for ways to refresh and add emotional elements to our collections,” Ms. Nunan said.

While still in the early stages, the marketing for the new line will most likely include social media.

With the large mom-blogger audience on Twitter and Facebook, this will most likely be a successful route.

Not child's play

Designers often use collaborations as a way to widen their distribution and customer reach.

“Gap has an established distribution network for childrenswear that is clearly a notch above Target and Walmart,” said Rob Frankel, branding expert at branding consultancy Frankel and Anderson, Los Angeles.

“Diane von Furstenberg is obviously trying to commercialize her line and it makes sense for her,” he said.

The brand with the most to gain here is Diane von Furstenberg, because if her line does well she knows she can foray into kids apparel on her own, according to Mr. Frankel.

This proved true in the case of Stella McCartney.

After producing two high-selling collections for Gap, Stella McCartney launched her own kid's line through her namesake brand.

To increase the chances at success, Mr. Frankel advises that Diane von Furstenberg clearly make its name visible on every piece created for Gap to ensure that consumers know they are a DVF design.

“If this works and the line is successful, then this becomes a launching pad for Diane von Furstenberg,” Mr. Frankel said.

Final Take

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