

FREE PEOPLE BRAND AUDIT

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## FREE PEOPLE BRAND AUDIT

### **Brand History and Overview**

In West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania during the 1970's a young man named Dick Hayne opened his first store and called it Free People. Free People was a brand for the locals that lived there that wanted a little more freedom in the clothes they wear. As the store became popular and he opened up a new store he changed the store's name to Urban Outfitters. Overtime Dicks wife Meg Hayne, came on board to help with Urbans Outfitters private label.

Demand was overwhelming for them so they decided to create a Wholesale line. After some time, Dick decided to separate his line from the business since it was doing so well. After separating his wholesale line, Dick started trying out new names like Bulldog, Ecote, Cooperative, Anthropologie, and then in 1984 they decided to go back to their roots and Free People was born.

In 2001 Free People rebranded to cater to a new audience which is “a 26-year-old girl, smart, creative, confident and comfortable in all aspects of her being, free and adventurous, sweet too tough to tomboy to romantic. A girl who likes to keep busy and push life to its limits, with traveling and hanging out and everything in between.”

Free People has four wholesale showrooms in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and London. They also have their line in 1,400 specialty stores worldwide.

Free People is part of URBN, a portfolio of global consumer brands.

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### **Brand Inventory**

Free People's visual brand elements strongly mirror their intangible qualities of freedom and being carefree. Their main logo was created by hand and is a simple, flowing handwritten font that reads as very casual and easy on the eye. Their packaging is also a reflection of these values, in addition to being much more environmentally friendly than most of their competitors. All Free People packaging is reusable and biodegradable, and their goal is to eliminate all single-use packaging from the company as a whole. The stores also often let customers take their pick from differently patterned reusable bags to use to carry their purchases home, which is a unique and appreciated idea (fpcarrie).

The pricing strategy utilized by Free People is to gear their products towards high end markets in order to reflect the high quality products they produce. Because environmentally friendly packaging and processes are still more expensive than their traditional counterparts, this is also a factor when it comes to costs the company incurs thus reflecting in their prices. Another element consumers pay for when buying products from Free People is the elevated consumer experience, which is unique to their brand.

In terms of communications, Free People is on their A-game. They are active daily/regularly on a large number of platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and Google+ where they have acquired a more than healthy following. In addition to being present on those platforms, the brand is also active on Pinterest, Youtube, Vimeo and Periscope, although they are less involved on these (FreePeople)

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Another effective partnership program that Free People has taken advantage of, along with a growing number of other companies, is an ambassador program. This means that Free People consumers can apply and be selected to model and post FP products on their own platforms in exchange for a discount for themselves and a discount code for their followers. This is a great way to spread awareness through word-of-mouth for no cost aside from the monetary loss from discounted products.

The essence of Free People's strategy has stayed true to its core values over time, although there have been some minor adjustments through the years. The biggest change has likely been the slight shift from the image of a junior's clothing brand to more of an "older" young woman offering more mature looks rather than gearing only towards teens as they had previously.

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## Brand Exploratory

### Brand Resonance Pyramid



Resonance: Community and Engagement

Judgements: Quality, Price

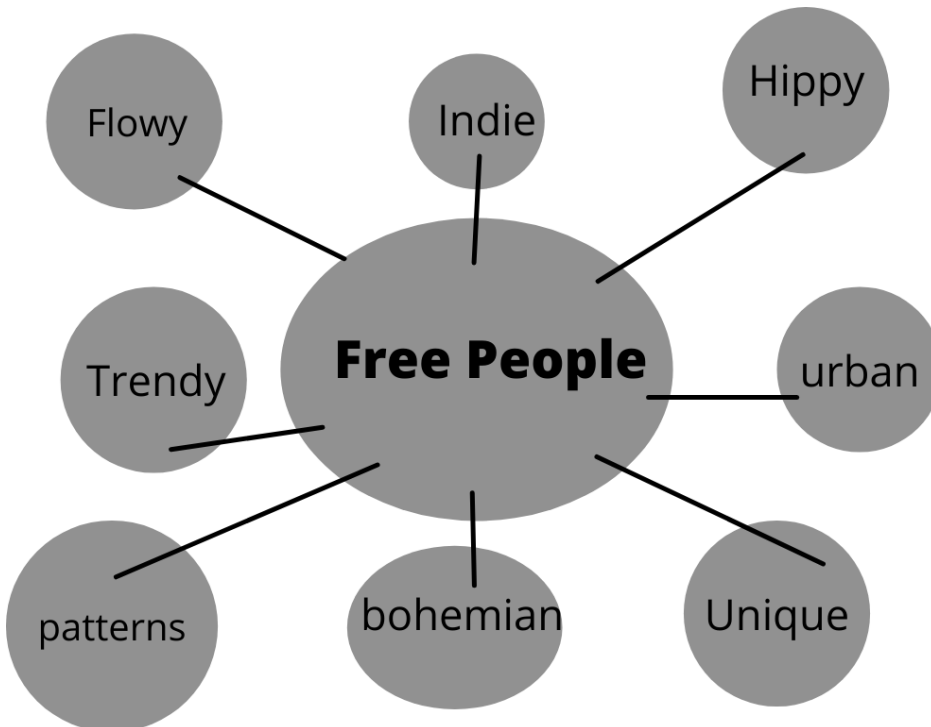
Feelings: Warmth, Fun, Free, Gypsy Soul

Performance: Style, Secondary Features

Imagery: Free, Adventurous, Feminine, Comfortable, Bohemian

Salience: Great variety, Eco-Friendly

### Mind Map

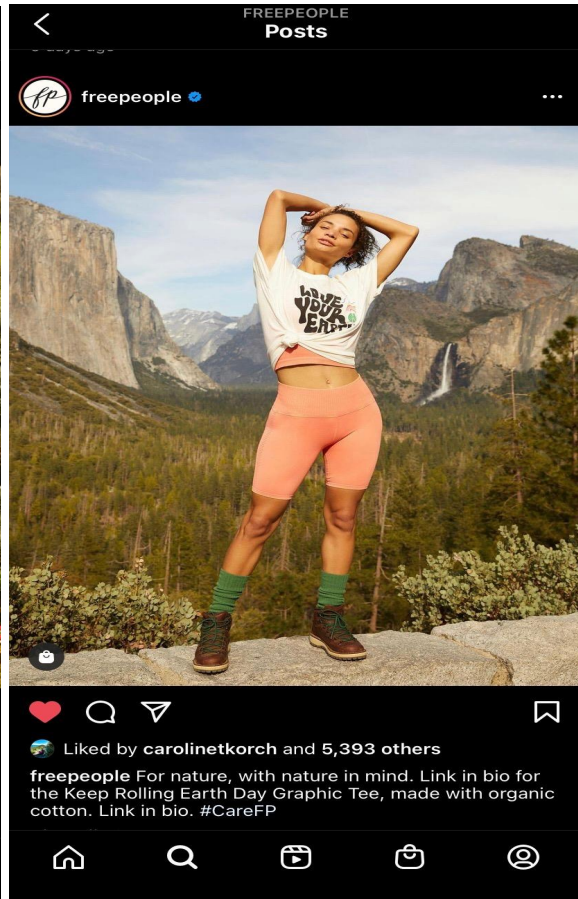
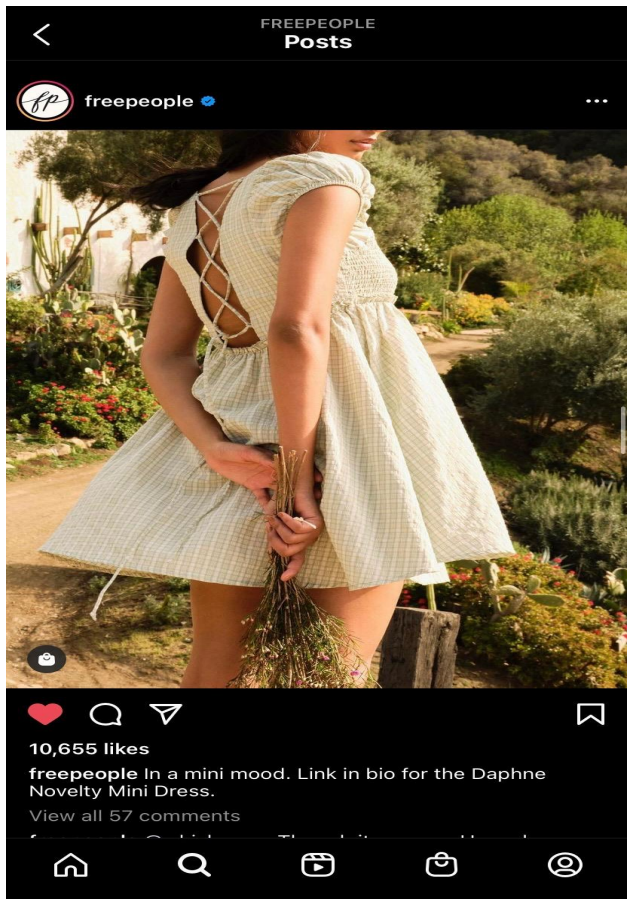




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## Digital Marketing Review

Free People is on multiple Social Media Platforms including Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Snapchat. On Instagram they have 3.7 million followers and they have a very aesthetically appealing Instagram theme. Free Peoples social media image aligns with the company's information. All the Instagram models they use are very racially diverse meaning they have models of every race photographed in Free Peoples clothing.



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### **Competitive Analysis**

#### *Overview*

Most young women in the United States, and now even in the United Kingdom, have shopped at or at least heard of Free People. It has been one of the top brands of its kind for quite a long stretch of time now, and has even let go of its junior image a little bit in order to open up room to grow into a more mature look while broadening their market.

#### *Points-of-Parity*

When thinking of Free People's points-of-parity, the idea refers to those "must-have" elements that any brand must have in order to be a direct competitor to another company (in this case, Free People). From a basic standpoint, this company is in the category of both high-end and high-quality brands, which means one of their major points-of-parity is that other companies must also be high-end, high-quality brands in order to compete directly. Some of the top competing companies that also fall the most closely into this category are Urban Outfitters, Modcloth, Lulu's, Wildfox and Gypsy (Owler, 2020). Another element that all of the above companies also have is a target market of mostly younger women like Free People, however Free People has made efforts to expand that into more mature fashion as well.

#### *Points-of-Difference*

In reference to business or a company, points-of-difference are those elements and reasons that make a company stand out from competitors and are the reason that a customer should choose one brand instead of another. Free People specifically embodies the values of creativity, self-expression, and you guessed it, freedom. They support a unique style of life and fashion that not all fashion brands do, as well as offer an amazing in-store experience with music, good vibes and like-minded women and girls. They also have created these different style

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“portfolios” or collections of clothing that are grouped by style. This is incredibly beneficial and strategic because no matter what your style might be, you can easily find all the clothing geared towards your preferences right at your fingertips. There have been few to none brands I have come across that have utilized this same feature.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that Free People stay on it’s course and follow their brand goals. They are striving to be sustainable and eco-friendly and we think that those goals are positives for the company. We also recommend them maybe collaborating with another line preferably a luxury brand.

### **References**



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