Comparative Shopping Report

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Team 7
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Introduction

In this competitive shopping report we will analyze three different stores at the discount, department, and specialty level. This analysis will look deeper into nine categories comparing the same product at each level. Out of this analysis we hope to gain insight to what is available in the market and where there are opportunities for growth in the market share. The item that will be focused on is the men’s polo shirts. The categories covered are service, presentation, depth of assortment, location of store, shopability, promotion, price, return policy, and the online web site. We expect the specialty store, Express, to have higher scores in service, presentation, and shopability. We are also expecting the department store, Macy’s, to have the best assortment, location, and website. The discount store, T.J. Maxx, to generally have the lower scores because the main focus is getting the lowest price for their target consumer. After this in depth analysis of different retailers we hope to gain insight to the actual comparison of three completely different businesses and business models as well as opportunity for growth within the market share for men’s polos.

Key Item

The item that our team choose to focus on for this comparative shopping report was a men’s polo. We aimed for a cotton or cotton blend polo for a dressier look as opposed to a sports-wear polo. The polo is an iconic style that serves as a staple garment in most men’s departments. Polo’s can be found at the department, specialty, and discount level with similar styles and cuts. It also is found most times of the year in stores across the country. We looked at all colors since the colors change with the seasons and not all three stores might have the same
selection of color due to discount might be receiving trends later than department and specialty stores.

**Overview of Stores**

The discount store that we chose was T.J. Maxx. T.J. Maxx is owned by TJX companies that have other discount stores including Marshals and HomeGoods. The first two T.J. Maxx stores opened in 1977 in Auburn and Worcester, Massachusetts (TJX History, 2016). They carry designer family clothing and home goods at a discounted price. T.J. Maxx brings designer clothing that is off season to the consumer who doesn’t want to pay the higher price. The brick-and-mortar stores are larger open stores broken up into departments of mostly hanging racks and t-stands. Some of the departments in T.J. Maxx are Women’s, Men’s, Junior’s, Kid’s, Infant’s, Shoes, Jewelry, Handbags, and Home. Since T.J. Maxx is a discount store it carries a multitude of designer brands that are popular in the demographic of the particular department. All of the items are tagged with their original retail price and have the current T.J. Maxx price to compare. They do a really good job of showing customers their savings on these tags and it really appeals to their wide range of target customers. They typically aim to be 20%-60% below department and specialty store prices (TJX History, 2016). With the store set up and discount prices T.J. Maxx aims to create a treasure hunt customer experience because that is what drives customers to return again and again.
For the specialty retailer, we decided to include Express. Express has developed into one of the largest specialty retail brands in the world and delivers smart, easy fashion. Express began as a clothing line owned by Limited Brands. The clothing line was originally just for women and remained that way for 20 years. In 2001, Express became a dual gender brand and not until 2007 did Express become a free-standing privately held company. Express went on to develop an online site in 2008 and two years later becomes a publicly-traded company on the New York Stock Exchange. Express now delivers affordable, quality apparel and accessories to the fashionable 20-30 year old. They aim to bring fashion that is formal, but can be worn out to your best weekend plans and believes in the strong individual style of their customers. Express currently has over 650 stores both nationally and internationally and has 35 years of experience in the industry. We chose Express for its convenient location and for the products it sells. We chose a Men’s dress polo for a single apparel item, and also knew that Express was well versed with semi-formal and formal attire, a category that this item fit into. Express became an option that couldn’t have been passed up.
The presentation score for T.J. Maxx was a 1/5. I gave the presentation a lower score because all of the polos that were hanging up didn’t look visually pleasing. There were many shirts falling off the hangers and on the floor underneath the rack. The only indicator that that particular location was for polos, was a small sign that faced in that read Men’s Polos. There are also no visual displays in T.J. Maxx that highlighted the available merchandise in the men’s department. The rack of polos is organized only by the sizing of the shirts, which made it difficult to locate multiples of the same shirt in different sizes. This presentation plays into the idea that T.J. Maxx is like a treasure hunt because it is not easy to find exactly what you are looking for quickly.
As retailers are now moving out of summer fashion, I did not expect that the dress polos in Express would be laid out in a very open spot as a main item in the store. I indeed found the arrangements of these polos to not be obvious. There were two displays, one on a few dark shelves underneath a display of men’s blazers, and the other in the back on a rolling rack stacked higher than the other. The polos were still arranged by size and color, so it was very easy to find
what I was looking for. Therefore, given the presentation is neat where the garments are placed, but the placement is still an inconvenience, the presentation factor earns a 3/5.
The presentation for Macy’s, we rate it as 4 out of 5. For each brand, they offer a single section for men’s polo. Customers can easily find polo once they go into Macy’s. For example, the polo for Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, they have their own display case for polo and
customers easily pull out any size, and color as their wish. However, the only one point that Macy’s loses is the neatness of the display booth. The sale assistances do not clean and organize polo immediately after customers try on or play with it. It looks a little bit mass. In addition, in discount section, Macy’s does not divide products into different categories, instead, Macy’s divide into different parts by brands. As the result, the polos in sales are scattered. Customers cannot find all pos in sales in one single clothes hanger or booth.
The total score of presentation in three different stores is 8 out of 15 and the average is 2.67. It is surprising that presentation in specialty store (Express) gets lower score than its in Department store (Macy’s). It seems Macy’s has a better environment for shopping polo. Even though Express displays polo in a single section and single table, it is not visible once customers go into store. But in Macy’s, customers can easily see polo when they go into stores. T.J Maxx gets lowest score due to it does not organized well in store and make difficulties to customers to find certain size or color. In short, Macy’s has best presentation in polo for each brand. It is organized and neat. Customers would have the best shopping experiences for polo in these three types of stores.
The service received at T.J. Maxx is very limited. The only places you can find sales associates are behind the register, in the fitting room area, and sometimes behind the jewelry counter. There is also no initial greeting when you walk into the store. If you need help finding anything in the store you have to seek out the help and it can be difficult to find an associate who is not behind a counter. Also when seeking out help there is so many different products in the store the associates only know general areas where things are at in the store. They also aren’t as knowledgeable about the product mix available in store. Service isn’t a main focus of T.J. Maxx and it is very apparent when the only service you receive is at the cash register. At the register they also didn’t ask the generic questions like “Did you find everything okay”, or really speak to me in general. It was more of a transaction then a personal shopping experience.

When I first arrived to the store, I couldn’t see the polos immediately. This was slightly inconvenient for it is in fact a very small store. I had to spend a minute or two scoping out the
store before coming across what I was searching for. During all of this time, I never heard from an employee or even saw one. I pulled out a few of the polos and was going to ask a question about any possible promotions going on in the store, but there was no one around again. I even spent a while longer after examining the polos to look around the store, all without ever being asked how I was doing. For the fact there was no service at all, I gave this area a 1/5.

Macy’s gets 3 out of 5 in service. The service in Macy’s supposes to be good. However, it surprises us since no one come and serve customers actively in Macy’s in College Mall. It is not difficult to find sales assistants in floor and they are knowledgeable about each brand and a single clothing. The only thing for service is customers will not receive greet when they come into Macy’s.

The total score for service is 5 out of 15 and average score is 1.67. The service in each store is lower than what we expect. Even in Macy’s, there is no initial greeting for customers. The sales assistants are walking around and chatting with each other in store. Even they saw us walk in, they did not have any connection with us. The only good thing is sales assistants in Macy’s is trained and knowledgeable. They know exactly information about polo for each brand. For specialty and discount store, they get same score and both of them are not good for service in physical store. It is not easy to find sales assistants in both store and in T.J. Maxx, the sales assistants even don’t know information about polo.
The depth of assortment at T.J. Maxx can be hit or miss. This is the reason why it received a score of two out of five. They have a large product assortment, but if you find something in one size and want it in a larger or smaller size it can be difficult to locate. The blue polo shirt that we originally found first that was closest to our ideal description was only in size small. We found one other one in size small but had to search through the T-stands in order to try and locate another. In the end there was only the blue polo in size small. The garments being mixed up also makes it really difficult to find anything due to the organization of the store. Although there was only one that specific blue polo they still had a lot of other options in all sizes. They had an entire side of one rack just dedicated to polos and within each size a decent amount of different polos. It was just inconvenient if you needed a bigger or smaller size because they might not have any more in those sizes.

Although the space in which the polos were placed in the store was fairly small, there was still a substantial collection of sizes, styles, and colors to choose from. The two racks used for
polos both had different qualities and materials in the fabric, so there was another option to choose from. The fact that all of the polos were among just two racks made it very easy compare styles and prices. The only complaint was that some different colors and styles were buried and made it hard for a customer to look through them. With all of this in mind, the depth of assortment of polos in Express gets a rating of ¾.

Macy’s gets 5 out 5 for depth of assortment since there are many different kinds of options for polo in Macy’s. All most each brand in men’s section offers polo. For all polos, customers can easily find different sizes and colors on booth in each brand. For the Macy’s in College Mall, customers can find many different kinds of polo in discount section when they get off the elevator. The polo in sale have a lot of color, but the sizes for each polo are not perfect storage.

The total score of depth of assortment in these three different types of stores is 11 out of 15 and the average is 3.67. Compare to other parts, discount, specialty and department store get high scores in depth of assortment. Discount store of T.J. Maxx receives lowest score due to we could not find each size for a polo. Macy’s and Express have a pretty good score in depth of assortment. Polo is fully prepared in specialty and department store. Even though customers may not be able to find too much help from sales assistants, they could find their size and color easily by themselves. As the result, if customers are looking for extreme sizes or have specific requirements for sizing, Macy’s and Express are better to visit; otherwise customers can shop in T.J. Maxx since it offers lowest prices.
Location of Store

T.J. Maxx

Express

Macy's
T.J. Maxx’s location is in a strip mall off of a main road here in Bloomington. There is a lot of other amenities close to this location that draw a lot of traffic by the store. There are a couple of close restaurants like Olive Garden, Texas Roadhouse, Golden Corral, and Cheddar’s that are pretty well known to many people that live in or out of town. The stores in the strip mall next to T.J. Maxx are Hhgreg, PetSmart, and Michael’s. All of these stores are not in direct competition with T.J. Maxx, so they are not in direct competition with anyone close by. There is also a few hotels along the other side of the road that are well known names in the United States for traveling. In addition have a large parking lot where you can always find a spot. The reason that this location is a four is because it is not close to the mall in Bloomington. The mall is on the other side of town and a lot of people go there to shop at the stores inside or close to the mall. The mall also is very close to campus and provides easy bus services to get there. The other bad thing about his location is the difficulty to see the store from the road. There are a lot of trees that block the sign on the store. You can see a large strip mall but the sign is hidden behind a larger tree. Despite a few draw backs this is a really good location due to its close proximity to other stores and dinning.
The Express in Bloomington is conveniently located in the College Mall. With access to many shops and different shopping opportunities, the location is about as good as it could be. The Express is right in the middle of Macy’s and Target, so the store is easily accessible as well. The mall also is of easy access to college students, both underclassmen and upperclassmen. For these reasons and the convenience of the store the location deserves a 5/5.

The Macy’s receives 5 out of 5 in Bloomington area since it locates in College Mall where is the shopping center for nearby residents and students in Indiana University Bloomington. As the result, there is huge human traffic during schooling season. Students like to go out shopping and have a fun in mall during weekend. Outside of shopping mall, there is a large parking lot and there are many different kinds of restaurants around. College Mall offers many products and services, such as mini golf, massage and so on. Customers can spend all day in Macy’s and College Mall.
The overall score for the location of each store was a 14 out of 15 with an average of 4.7. This score was really high and we anticipated a higher score because two of the stores were in a great location in a high traffic mall. The mall has easy access from multiple entrances and Macy’s has its own doors that are right by a parking lot. Although T.J. Maxx is across town it still is near other shopping and dining. It also is in a strip mall connected to other stores that are very well known to many different customers. Overall the location of these stores in Bloomington, Indiana is really convenient for their customers.

**Shopability**

![Shopability Chart]

The shopability in T.J. Maxx is a two out of five because it can become a little hectic in the store. For the most part it is easy to reach all of the clothing because it is on hangers that at a height everyone could reach. The shopability becomes challenging when the racks are too full. The rack with the polos was really full and difficult to move around. Hangers had to be moved to the other bar just to move the polos around to see them while hanging. The other factor that
challenged the shopability was the fact that nothing was together because garments are organized by the size. The overall look of the store isn’t that visually appealing because there is just so many things everywhere.

The inside of express is fairly organized, but much of the back of the store is tightly organized. While looking for the polos, I felt a little enclosed. Also, there are multiple shelves where the clothing is not well lit, or where it is hard to search through. That only describes part of the store though. The majority of the store is well organized and is displayed very well. The polos were one of the few items that were not given enough space. The whole of the store is
fairly attractive, but because of the few areas of poor lighting and tight spaces, this area receives a 3½.

We give shopability 5 out 5 for Macy’s. There are many brands in men's section in Macy’s, and almost all of the men’s brands offer polos. As our observation, customers can easily pull out products from booths and hangers. This allows customers can easily view and pull different sizes and colors. The store was very well organized and this was surprising for such a large store. The shopability was also really good in the specialty brands sections. You could tell more thought went into the overall execution of displaying the garments.

Overall the score for shopability was 10 out of 15 with an overall average of 3.33. The shopability in each store was very different because they are focus on different things when it comes to creating the customer experience. T.J. Maxx scored the lowest in this category because they focus on having a larger selection on the sales floor and not a lot on appearance. The specialty store was the most surprising because they usually have a stronger focus on making the shopability better by not having as many items as a Macy’s or T.J. Maxx. Macy’s had a really nice shopability experience when we were there. All of the polos specifically were easy to see and select from. Overall the shopability was on average just above the median of the rating scale.
T.J. Maxx doesn’t run many promotions in stores. They are already a discount retailer so they don’t mark down items that often or run sales. The only time they will put up any additional signage is for seasonal and clearance. They also don’t spend that much time on marketing in their stores either. This is due to providing the lowest costs for their customers by not having expensive promotions to improve the overall look of the stores. They don’t have much signage except the basic signage to let customers know where things are at. They just started doing mannequins in the women’s trends departments, but there were no marketing or mannequins in the men’s department. This is why T.J. Maxx received a score of one out of five in promotions.

In the front of the store there were notifications of there being sales, but there were no explicit details on the products for sale. There also wasn’t a single sign in the store to let the customer know where the polos were. Most of the store is well displayed so it would have been nice to see a sign displaying the areas with polos, which was a less kindly displayed area. Therefore, the promotion aspect of Express gets a ⅔.
Once customers go into Macy’s, the first thing they see will be a big sales section. There are a lot of brands that offer polo in sale. And in the first page of online website, it lists different discounts for each products, not only men’s wear. In addition, being a membership in Macy’s would get 20% off. Other than sales section, each brand will have their own promotions that will be posted in front of products. Macy’s also provided a program which calls “Thanks for Sharing”. Customers can find detail information in cashier’s desks since they have poster paper there.

Overall for promotions the score was 8 out of 15 and the average score is 2.67. This is what we figured would be the average because the stores we choose don’t typically do lot of promotions except Macy’s. Macy’s promotions are very good and they always have sales going on and big signage in their stores. They also do a really good job with their rewards system they have in place to keep a consistent channel of communication of these promotions. At T.J. Maxx they don’t have any promotions at all except for the occasional window cling that changes every season. In the men’s department they didn’t have any mannequins displaying clothes either. Lastly at Express they had some promotion of signage but it wasn’t helpful to the customer or relevant to men’s polos specifically. Overall Macy’s did a really good job with promoting their sales and polos.
Price

The price for the blue polo was $34.99. I thought this price was a really good deal for a polo shirt that was originally $55.00. The textile used in the garment was 100% cotton so it was really good quality by a trusted brand. The color was also very versatile, a royal blue color is common in men’s shirts that probably will not go out of style between seasons. This was one of the most expensive polos out of the selection because it was a name brand with 100% cotton. The markdown on this particular shirt was 36% and that falls within T.J. Maxx’s target range. The tags also list the original price and the T.J. Maxx below it. This really highlights the good deals that the customer is getting and encourages the treasure hunt mentality. T.J. Maxx consistently creates the treasure hunt for their customers in all aspects of the shopping experience and the price is what makes it worth it to the customer.

Express is known to be of higher quality, so I expected that there would be a slightly higher price. Their products are made of almost entirely cotton as well, so that has an impact on the price. There were two different styles of dress polos in the store. The $50 polo was slightly higher quality and had a much more comfortable feel to it. The $40 polo was a little more rough but was still of good quality. For the slightly high price of the polos, but the overall quality, the price aspect receives a \( \frac{3}{5} \).

We looked a lot of prices for polos. There is a big range for it since the prices is from $9(lowest) to $100+. In the sales section, the average of price is around $20 U.S. dollars and in the brand's' booths the average price is about $50 U.S. dollars. It is not surprised that Macy’s have a huge difference in price since they have high-end products and mid-range brands. We don’t sure how to judge the price for grade. If it is based on quality, compare to price, Macy’s will get high grade. But if it only focus on expensive or cheap, the Macy’s may get lower grade
than those in T.J. Maxx. After all, almost everyone can afford the prices in Macy’s since they can be either cheap in sales section or expansive in high-end brands. In addition, Macy’s provides amazing Price Match Policy and Price Adjustment Policy which help customers to have best shopping experiences in Macy’s and build a good reputation for company. Customers can also find detail information online or physical stores.

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brands. In addition, Macy’s provides amazing Price Match Policy and Price Adjustment Policy which help customers to have best shopping experiences in Macy’s and build a good reputation for company. Customers can also find detail information online or physical stores.
The return policy was posted in a large sign right by the cash register. This made it really easy to see all of the policies in place and to let customers know, so no one can argue with not knowing the policy. The policy for returns is 30 days which is pretty typical for a retailer especially at the discount level. It doesn’t state anything specifically about needing tags or a receipt for the return transaction, so that makes the assumption that you don’t need either for a return. If you don’t have you receipt you have to have a valid driver’s license as well. Overall this return policy rated at a three because it’s not the most convenient policy and the 30 day return window is pretty short, especially if it is a gift or for a holiday. The other reason we gave the return policy a three is because online they only offer free returns in store and not to ship back. We think that with how large e-commerce is becoming free returns has become part of the online shopping normal. The free returns in store slightly makes up for that, but for the consumer who doesn’t live near a store or has to take the time out of their day, it really becomes an inconvenience. Overall the policy is pretty good, but we could see where this could create some
The Express return policy really stands out for they allow a very large 90-day window for a return to be made. If a receipt is brought to the store with the product in the time frame, all of the money spent at the original purchase will be returned. Express even will attempt to get you your full purchase amount back without a receipt. This may seriously entice buyers and make them feel much more comfortable with the original purchase. Even after the possibility of not
locating your original purchase, they will still allow an exchange to be made. This takes all of the risk out of buying their products and again really helps them to stand out. For all of the benefits the Express return policy has, it clearly deserves a 5/5.

In the physical stores and online website, Macy’s states its return policy clearly. And customers can find poster of return policy in the cashier decks. For each situation with receipts or not, Macy’s would try its best to help customers either refund money or give store credits. Also, Macy’s has a completed plan for check return policy. Customers are given store credits if they provided a check as payment. In the website, we find a statement for return policy in Macy’s-Customer service.(“You can return your purchase to a Macy's Backstage store within 30 days of the purchase. Just be sure to bring your receipt with the item(s) you would like to return for a full refund in the original form of payment. Returned merchandise must be: un-worn.”) As the result, we give Macy’s 5 out 5 in return policy. But how does Macy’s apply return policy in the real world, we are not sure about that.
for your information

Macy’s Price Match Policy
If you see a lower price on an identical item at any other local store within 14 days, we will match that price (unless it is a Club Store where you pay dues to shop or an outlet store). While this price match policy applies to almost all products we sell, we will not match prices on fees, closeouts, special order merchandise or on fine retailers other than macy’s.com.

Macy’s Price Adjustment Policy
If our stores further reduce an item within 14 days of your purchase, we will refund the price difference when you present your original receipt.

Prices may differ between stores and macy’s.com.

Warranty Information
Warranties covering merchandise sold here are available in our Store Manager’s Office.

Macy’s Gift Cards
Terms and conditions apply to gift cards. If your gift card is lost, with proof of purchase we will issue a new card with the current balance on our records.
For checks you give us to pay for merchandise:
When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us to use information from your check to make a one-time electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your account. Process the payment as a check transaction, or use a bank draft.
For inquiries, please call 800-481-5873. When we use information from your check to make an EFT, funds may be withdrawn from your account as soon as the same day you make your payment. If your payment is returned unpaid, we authorize you to collect a service charge, via a one-time EFT or using a bank draft drawn on your account, of $20.

For checks you give us to pay your Macy’s credit card bill(s):
When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us to use information from your check to make a one-time electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your account. Process the payment as a check transaction, or use a bank draft.
For inquiries, please call 800-831-5873. When we use information from your check to make an EFT, funds may be withdrawn from your account as soon as the same day you make your payment.
COMPARATIVE SHOPPING REPORT

easy returns

All Macy's, we're not happy until you're happy.
So we will accept for exchange or return merchandise that does not completely satisfy you.

Here's how we'll process your return:

Have a receipt? Bring it back any time and receive a full refund in original form of payment, regardless of the original purchase date.

No receipt? We will gladly look up your purchase information with your account number, a Customer Return Label or Gift Registry number. If we're able to access your receipt, you will receive a refund to the original account or a store credit.

Without Proof of Purchase, we'll give you a store credit for the item's lowest selling price within the last 180 days.

*General Return Policies apply and are posted in select departments. Receipt information can be retained for up to 2 years following your purchase. Your name and address may be required for compliance with tax, security and marketing purposes unless we already have this information on file. Information on our Privacy Policy is available on macy.com.
The website for T.J. Maxx is very new to the company and has only been selling merchandise online for 3 years (Jalonick, 2013). Before they started selling merchandise online the website only served as a service to locate stores near you or display information like store hours and the customer service contact information. Since then they have added a lot more things to the site including many departments they feature in store as well. The new website overall was very well executed and is very easy to navigate and find what you are looking for. The reason that the site only received a three was because they didn’t have a large assortment online. This also follows true with their instore availability, but online they didn’t have as many options for polos online as I would have expected due to how many different types they keep instore. They also didn’t have free shipping available which would have made them competitive with other large online distributors. Although they offer in store returns for free they don’t offer free returns online. This could deter some shoppers that have never shopped at T.J. Maxx before from ordering online. Despite those two drawbacks the site was generally easy to navigate and find
what you were looking for. The last perk to the site was the addition of the “The Runway at Maxx” tab. This tab displayed high end luxury items in one place. This makes it easier on customers who are looking to luxury items to find them all in one place. Overall there website was pretty good but could have some changes to make it more competitive with the others.
The online site is actually very pleasant and easy to maneuver. The polo selection on the site was quite nice too. There is a total of 27 different styles to choose from, all with multiple different color choices. This beats out the in-store by quite a margin. The price is about the same, so there isn’t a big benefit in that aspect. The much large selection on the store is what sets it apart. Also the site allows you to make many side to side comparisons and gives you much more control on your decision. The online site deserves a perfect 5/5 since it is attractive and functional.

Macy’s has a professional shopping website. In the top, it has clear a menu and for each category, it offers specific details. Under “MEN”, there is a link for polo specifically. And customers can select colors, sizes and styles in left side once they go into polos. Since the website is highly organized and neat, Macy’s gets 5 out of 5.
Conclusion

In this comparative shopping report we learned how greatly a product can vary in three different stores. Each store has their own person strong suits and this is reflected into each product.
Bibliography


