

VISTA Product Development Report for Warby Parker

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Abstract: This report presents a proposal for Warby Parker's new product, Vision Integrated Smart Technology Aids (VISTA) glasses. The purpose of VISTA is to integrate advanced technology into eyewear, catering to the growing demand for tech-oriented, functional, and stylish eyewear in the U.S. market. The report discusses the strategic alignment of VISTA with Warby Parker's brand identity and mission, analyzing both the environmental and company-level factors influencing the eyewear industry. A detailed feasibility analysis is provided, covering market, technical, and financial aspects, followed by a product development and launch plan. VISTA is envisioned as a key product to enhance the company's market share, brand image, and differentiation in the competitive eyewear industry, ultimately contributing to increased revenue and potential scalability.

Keywords: Warby Parker; VISTA; Eyewear; Smart glasses; Product development; Market feasibility; Innovation; Technology integration; Brand image; U.S. eyewear market.

1. Introduction

Enclosed in this report is a proposal for the introduction of an innovative product, the Vision Integrated Smart Technology Aids (VISTA) glasses, which are designed to enhance the company's market presence, bolster its digital-savvy outlook, and meet evolving consumer needs and expectations in the U.S. Eyewear market. Its objective is to justify the strategic value and alignment of this product to the company's mission to revolutionize the eyewear industry, as well as explore its feasibility.

Dubbed "the Netflix of eyewear," Warby Parker took the U.S. eyewear market by storm through an ingenious offer of sending customers five pairs of frames to try on at the company's cost, before they settled on their purchase (Emory Libraries, 2024) [1]. This integration of technology into the eyewear retail business underscores the company's endeavor to feature technology into its products and services. Warby Parker's mission is simple: "to inspire and impact the world with vision, purpose, and style" (Warby Parker, n.d.) [2]. The rapidly evolving medical technological space, complemented by artificial intelligence as well as augmented reality offers the company an opportune moment to work in the furtherance of this mission. Thus, VISTA glasses represent a novel opportunity to bolster Warby Parker's reputation as a tech-savvy disruptive innovator, while increasing its market share.

Undoubtedly, the eyewear industry is under significant transformation marked by new technologies, trends towards personalization, and increased customer convenience trends. One of the company's competitors, Ray Ban, recently introduced Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses that have gained decent traction (Meta, 2023) [3]. Evidently, customers increasingly seek glasses, not only for medical reason but also to complement their fashion sense and digital lifestyle. This industry development behooves Warby Parker to diversify its product offerings. VISTA offers Warby Parker the chance to take advantage of its expanding retail infrastructure and leverage its technological expertise in the eyewear market (Earnest Analytics, 2024) [4]. This report outlines the strategic importance of this product, presents a proposed development and launch plan, and projects its potential outcomes on the company's long-term growth and success.

2. Environmental and Company Analysis

2.1. Environmental Analysis

Warby Parker operates in the Optometrists industry in the U.S. primarily because it offers eye care consultations and exams, prescription lenses, eyewear frames retail, and sunglasses retail. In this industry, products and services are broken into five primary categories, whose revenues have been published by IBISWorld as follows: Sales of prescription eyewear (7.8bn), Providing eye exams (\$5.9bn), Sales of contact lenses (\$3.6bn), Providing miscellaneous eyecare services (\$2.3bn), and Providing medical eye care (\$1.5bn) (Brockner, 2024, p.9) [5]. It is worth noting that in the larger eye care industry, there is more revenue to be made in the sales of prescription eyewear than in all other product and service categories.

The industry outlook for businesses in the eyewear and eye care industries is very promising from an entrepreneurial perspective. Notably, there is low level of concentration of service providers in the industry structure. This low level of concentration can be viewed as an opportunity, especially considering that the U.S. features an aging population that will increase prescription rates for presbyopia. At the present, "nearly three-quarters of the adult US population uses corrective eyewear," which drives the demand for service providers and creates the stability of an assured market (Brockner, 2024) [5]. Secondly, the level of innovation is categorized as moderate, meaning that there is substantial room for improvement. Although regulations and policy can be considered high, they nonetheless depict a steady trend, which points to their stability and offers a relief to service providers. Finally, the level of competition in the industry is moderate, but signs show that competition is on the increase. For this reason, there is a need for Warby Parker to devise products and services that increase its competitive advantage and bolster its relevance in this mature industry.

2.2. Company Analysis

At the company level, a SWOT analysis reveals that Warby Parker fares as follows:

2.2.1. Strengths

Warby Parker enjoys brand credibility as an affordably priced provider of stylish eyewear, paving way to introduce innovations. Secondly, the company is understood as a disruptor in the industry, especially with its initial home try-on technology and the recent virtual try-on platform. The proof of concepts pertaining to technology increases consumer confidence in future technology-related product releases. Additionally, the company has created an omnichannel presence in a digital-savvy society, helping it reach markets in both worlds (“Warby Parker’s SWOT analysis”, 2024) [6]. For online consumers, its distribution prowess facilitates hassle-free ordering and delivery. On the other hand, traditional brick-and-mortar store consumers enjoy eye-to-eye services in the hundreds of physical outlets across the US, which the company plans to increase (The Wise Marketer, 2024). Thus, from an infrastructure standpoint, the company is well-equipped to develop and release a new product. Finally, the company enjoys a strong base of loyal clientele that has seen its revenues grow over the last decade. An innovation has a high likelihood of reception by loyal customers who have enjoyed high-quality and innovative products from the company.

2.2.2. Weaknesses

Warby Parker has limited geographical coverage, with its primary market being the North American market. This might impact the company if a product fails to have a good reception in the home market (The Strategy Story, 2023) [7]. The company is also limited by its affordable pricing strategy, as its profit margins are relatively low compared to premium competitors’ prices. Additionally, since its disruption in the online eyewear retail space, the eyewear market has seen considerable saturation. In fact, numerous reports show that there is no dominant player in the market, making it an uphill task to garner a substantial market share (“The Strategy Story”, 2023) [7]. Finally, while its brand’s credibility is decent due to previous customer interactions, its brand perception might hinder the company’s attraction of specific customer segments who might equate affordability with low quality.

2.2.3. Opportunities

Warby Parker has the opportunity to expand globally and cover more markets in the international space, consequently bolstering its revenue and number of customers. The company also has the opportunity of diversifying its product lines, and even coopting advanced technologies to improve its unique selling propositions (Brocker, 2024) [5]. Having excelled in the American market, Warby Parker has the opportunity to partner with celebrities and influencers to reach diverse customer segments and boost its brand perception in the process. Finally, market-facing product developments that respond to eye health challenges such as frequent use of digital screens or age-related vision issues will be excellent opportunities for the company’s long-term strategy (Business Research Insights, 2024) [8]. In this case, partnering with technology companies to create tech-oriented products might enable Warby Parker to take advantage of consumer trends while responding to its core mission of providing vision solutions.

2.2.4. Threats

Warby Parker faces threats from a constantly-shifting consumer preference in eyewear products. Eyewear products are no longer corrective accessories; today, they are fashion

accessories that curate personalities. The company must continuously read its customers’ needs and adjust. Furthermore, the eyewear market has portended substantial competition due to moderate barriers to entry (Brocker, 2024) [5]. Since the industry is considered mature, market saturation is imminent and growing a loyal customer base is relatively challenging. Finally, economic uncertainty threaten a reduction in consumer spending, especially considering that industry practice recommends eye check-ups after two years. This threat could impact Warby Parker’s sales.

2.3. The Justification for VISTA

The above scoping activity presents several rationale for VISTA glasses. Firstly, the new innovation product will complement and satisfy the market’s growing demand for technology-integrated wearables evident in the eyewear industry. Warby Parker must be cognizant of the plight of industry titans such as Nokia, who failed to innovate when consumer trends in their markets shifted. Consequently, Warby Parker should leverage this product that complements the market’s association of the company with technology.

As a pioneer in online eyewear retail, Warby Parker already enjoys goodwill from customers in the market. A plausible assumption is that these customers will be receptive to a new tech-oriented product and will reward Warby Parker for diversifying into smart glasses. Note that, by partnering with technology companies to develop VISTA, the company will hedge associated risks from technology and also substantially reduce costs emanating from research and development.

2.4. What Does VISTA Build on for Warby Parker?

The VISTA smart prescription glasses build on several of the company’s key assets, resources, and capabilities. First, the product builds on a history of technological innovation, ranging from home try-ons to virtual try-ons (Emory Libraries, 2024) [1]. This innovation is an extension of previous milestones. Second, the product builds on Warby Parker’s identity and brand positioning as a disruptor in the eyewear industry. VISTA will be a testament of the brand’s consistency. Third, the smart prescription glasses elevates the company’s status as a sustainable organization with a broad appeal to a broad consumer segment. Notably, the conceptualization of the product is focused on minimal waste in the environment, and optimal benefits for the consumer. Overall, the product will position Warby Parker as a leader in both eyewear and the rapidly evolving smart wearables market.

3. Product Development and Launch Plans

3.1. VISTA Product Overview

VISTA smart prescription glasses are innovative and trendy eyewear that pack a pair of autonomous adaptive lenses that adjust their focus and the amount of light passing to the eye based on the user’s environment and activity. These glasses will be primarily designed for individuals with multiple vision needs such as presbyopia, photophobia, myopia, and hyperopia. The main solution they present for these individuals is eliminating the need for multiple pairs of glasses, bifocals, and progressive glasses. Further, they will be designed to cater to the needs of individuals with anisometropia. Its features will include:

Light Guard technology: Automatically dims or brightens

the lens to allow comfortable amount of light to pass to the user's eyes. This technology will make the eyewear suitable for use as sunglasses, anti-glare, and blue-block glasses, assisting the user to adjust to multiple light conditions.

Focus Sense technology: This technology will comprise a sensor that tracks the user's eye movement and automatically adjusts the lenses' focus to meet their power and allow them to see clearly. Considering that this technology will be coupled to a microprocessor, individuals with differing eye powers can adjust the settings of each lens separately, such that the autofocus applies the precise correction required for each eye.

VISTA Companion App: This feature will track the usage patterns, battery consumption, and facilitate maintenance activities on the glasses.

3.2. Feasibility Analysis

Market Feasibility: Research shows that integration of technological advancements is poised to drive market growth in the eyewear market as consumers look for glasses that are more than vision correction devices. "Blue light filtering, in particular, has gained immense traction due to increased screen time, addressing concerns about digital eye strain" (Business Research Insights, 2024) [8].

Technical Feasibility: Several emerging technologies such as Liquid Crystal portend promise in adaptive lenses (Doron, Shalev, & Yadin, 2023) [9]. Inroads into transition lenses research shows potential in fine-tuning lenses' behavior in diverse lighting conditions, and focused research on these findings can potentially generate useful products (Buch, Sonoda, & Cannon, 2022) [10]. Also, development in miniature sensors, microcontrollers, and microprocessors portend the viability of compact and comfortable glasses.

Financial Feasibility: Pricing strategies that align with Warby Parker's focus on affordability call for a fine balance between the price and profitability. An entry price range of \$400 to \$700 will be appropriate, and subject to elaborate marketing communication on the benefits of VISTA glasses – e.g. no need for numerous subsequent purchases.

In sum, a rudimentary feasibility analysis shows that the product is feasible for exploration. Ultimate feasibility is subject to actualizing on the product's prototype.

3.3. VISTA Product Development Plan

The proposed development plan for VISTA will utilize the test-and-learn approach. With the VISTA glasses being largely medical prescription devices, there is a need for numerous and rigorous tests that must pass the FDA approval before final launch. Thus, the product must be iteratively tested, both by consumers and eye care professionals to ensure that it is safe and appropriate for medical use. Overall, the product will go through three primary development stages, namely, prototyping, patenting and regulatory approval, and production scaling.

In the prototyping stage, the product will be further divided into three iterative milestones: Light Guard, Focus Sense, and Integration phases. In each of these milestones, the company will partner with different technology and manufacturing firms to develop the lenses features, followed by a mini-test on a small pilot population of users with multiple corrective needs. Here, Warby Parker can prioritize its customers and offer them an opportunity to test the products in their different phases, which will guarantee quick response. The aim of these distinct phases is to ensure inexpensive but rapid prototyping

that will yield testable models quickly for the alpha testers. A 70% approval rate by alpha testers will invite a diverse pool of beta testers for reliable feedback. In addition, splitting the prototyping can allow for the two phases to happen concurrently. Notably, the first two phases will result in a complete aspect of the product. The final phase will focus on combining the two products realized before into a holistic and functional pair of VISTA glasses.

The patenting and regulatory approval stage will enable the company secure the intellectual property rights to its technology alongside the FDA approval and certifications necessary for medical devices. Finally, production scaling will entail partnerships and collaborations with manufacturers who will be willing to specialize in the technology once the product is launched. This phase will also include a soft-launch to determine product adoption rate, establish demand, and plan for large scale production.

3.4. VISTA Launch Plan

The VISTA launch plan will focus on a primary audience comprising tech-savvy consumers with multiple corrective eye problems. It will also focus on professionals that require adaptive vision for different tasks in their work, as well as aging customer segments with presbyopia needs.

Two launch phases are recommended: a soft launch spotting a limited edition flagship batch across major stores to build anticipation, and a full-scale launch across omnichannel distribution networks.

Depending on the R&D budget, soft-launch can target a specific number of pairs at a discounted pricing rate to attract early adopters, generate buzz, and obtain feedback. Full scale launch can feature commensurate pricing but offered with financing plan to ease the upfront cost of the product and invite more adopters.

Over time, collaborations with celebrities and professionals will be critical, especially other optometrists that can offer referrals.

The launch phase should feature technical personnel to assist customers in adopting the new product and troubleshooting any errors.

4. Expected Outcome

If the introduction of VISTA glasses succeeds, Warby Parker can expect the following:

Growth in Brand Image: Warby Parker's brand image and reputation as a customer-centric and technology-oriented company will be enhanced.

Growth in Market Share: The company will consolidate a significant number of customers who use multiple prescription lenses or who experience problems with their current eyewear solutions, thus increasing its market share both nationally and internationally with additional expansion plans.

Differentiation: Warby Parker will differentiate itself from competitors that adopted its online sales and direct-to-consumer business model, creating a competitive edge by standing out from traditional eyewear brands and the recent tech-oriented brands such as Ray-Ban Meta: Warby Parker will tend to fashion, technology, and medical functionalities of eyewear consumers.

Increased Revenue: Different streams of income will emerge from the product – premium sales of VISTA glasses, sales of accessories such as charging cases, and replacement of components. All these amount to increased revenue.

Potential Scalability: Successful development and launch in the U.S. creates chances for scaling the product and expanding into new markets.

5. Conclusion

The development and launch of VISTA glasses present significant opportunities for Warby Parker to capitalize on emerging trends in the eyewear and technology sectors. By aligning the product with the company's core mission of offering stylish, affordable eyewear and integrating advanced technologies, VISTA is expected to strengthen Warby Parker's brand as a technology-driven disruptor. The product's unique features—ranging from adaptive lenses to the VISTA Companion App—address critical consumer needs, such as multi-corrective eyewear and personalized experiences. With a well-structured development plan and market-focused launch strategy, VISTA has the potential to increase Warby Parker's market share, generate new revenue streams, and position the company for international growth.

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