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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate an apparel firm's job positions within the merchandising constituency, discover the organisation of teams within the merchandising constituency, and understand the cross-functional nature of the teams. A direct approach content analysis was conducted on the case study Gap Inc. to collect and analyse 476 job postings on their career website from February to August 2021. The findings illustrated how Gap Inc. organises its internal constituencies and merchandising constituency within a brand, division, job category, and department detailing job responsibilities and cross-functional partners. Further, the findings uncover product category teams that are the core of the merchandising constituency and are structured cross-functionally. This study contributes to the knowledge of the apparel firm, specifically the identification of the cross-functional product category teams.

1. Introduction

The global apparel supply chain relies on the relationships, communication, and inevitable dependency of supply chain members (Chen & Paulraj, 2004; Mentzer, 2000). Managing production, people, and relationships across the global apparel supply chain is vital for a successful supply chain (Chen & Paulraj, 2004). Supply chain management is the systematic and strategic coordination of supply chain members both within a firm and across the supply chain with the long-term goal of improving performance for the entire supply chain (Mentzer, 2000). The apparel firm is uniquely nonlinear and instead operates in a highly interactive matrix of complex decision-making (Kunz, 1995) within the hyper-dynamic textile and apparel (T&A) industry (Ha-Brookshire & Dyer, 2008). A behavioural view of the apparel firm, which considers job roles and functions as interactive and impactful decision-making, is the most realistic and accurate (Kunz, 1995). Therefore, an understanding of apparel firm job roles and responsibilities is vital for clothing and textiles (C&T) educators, researchers, and students.

Professionals working within the apparel firm need various skills and knowledge to not only develop an apparel product line but to be successful in the T&A industry (Jacobs & Karpova, 2019). Specifically, the group of professionals in an apparel firm that is responsible for the interactive decisions of an apparel line that satisfy the consumer's needs and wants was identified by Kunz (1995) as the merchandising constituency. As the

T&A industry has evolved, the professionals in the merchandising constituency have included more supply chain members whose job roles and functions are ever-changing (Frazier & Cheek, 2016; Ha-Brookshire, 2015; Muhammad & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Varley, 2014). As a C&T researcher and educator, there is a need to understand the job roles, skills and knowledge, along with the group dynamic of the merchandising constituency to ensure our information and practices keep up with the hyper-dynamic T&A industry.

Therefore, the study was guided by the following research objectives: (a) to determine the current job titles and responsibilities that Gap Inc. uses for employees that work within the merchandising constituency as defined by Kunz (1995) utilising the AMC framework (Jacobs & Karpova, 2019); (b) to discover how the different Gap Inc. job titles work together within the merchandising constituency; (c) to understand the potential cross-functional team nature within the merchandising constituency. The study's objectives were achieved by utilising a case study approach to develop a comprehensive understanding with logical sequencing connecting data to objectives and conclusions (Yin, 2009).

2. Literature review

2.1. Behavioural theory of the apparel firm

Kunz's (1995) behavioural theory of the apparel firm created a foundation for how clothing and textile (C&T) discipline scholars have investigated apparel

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firms. The theory was rooted in Cyert and March's (1963) behavioural theory of the firm developed in the area of business where business-related disciplines were divided into economics and behavioural. The economic stream of research was limited in including the human being. This is where behavioural theories of the firm provided a new perspective on business activities. Cyert and March (1963) established the behavioural theory of the firm to create a coalition of individuals who have common goals related to production, inventory, sales, market share, and profit. Further, Kunz (1995) posited that apparel firms can also be considered as a coalition of employees that share common goals and can be categorised further into five different internal constituencies or areas of specialisation; (a) executive management; (b) merchandising; (c) marketing; (d) operations; and (e) finance.

Kunz's theory has given an explanation of the apparel firm and spurred other researchers to continue to explore this area. Previous research utilising Kunz's behavioural theory of the apparel firm has investigated merchandising assortment (Kunz, 2009; Kunz & Rupe, 1999), quick response strategies (Lee, Kunz, Fiore, & Campbell, 2002), and purchase behaviour (Hyllegard, Eckman, Descals, & Borja, 2005). Yu and Kunz's (2014) study noted the lack of research regarding the challenging decision-making and activities of the merchandising constituency, although their study focused on merchandising tools such as assortment planning and replenishment for the diverse consumer demand. This area of research is vital in understanding the apparel firm, but only a narrow view of the complex and multi-faceted merchandising constituency has been explored. The behavioural theory of the apparel firm is foundational in C&T disciple that gives a framework to understand and give an explanation of how the apparel firm operates (Pedersen, 2007).

2.1.1. The evolution of the merchandising constituency

Merchandising is the constituency that interprets customers' apparel preferences for the rest of the firm. As defined by Glock and Kunz (2005), merchandising is responsible for the planning, development, and presentation of a brand's product lines for a defined target market and manages price, assortment, styling, and timing. Varley (2014) narrowed the job focus to the planning and development of product lines and supply chain management of products for a target market to drive profit for an apparel firm. Frazier and Cheek (2016) continued to describe the types of skills a merchandising professional would need to execute strategic and operational tasks, which include product development,

forecasting, assortment planning, sourcing, distribution, retail, and marketing. As Kunz (1995) stated, job titles or positions that fall into the merchandising constituency include merchandiser, product development, designer, buyer, and product manager.

Jacobs and Karpova (2019) proposed the AMC framework, which is C&T disciple specific, organising a multitude of merchandising knowledge and skills into three competency domains (cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) and eight clusters (cognitive processes and strategies, innovation and creativity knowledge, teamwork and collaboration, leadership, intellectual openness, work ethic and conscientiousness, and positive core self-evaluation). This framework has aided educators by aligning C&T programmes with professional competencies as well as industry professionals by planning new hire training programmes. In addition, Jacobs and Karpova (2022) went on to apply the AMC framework to analyse the apparel retail industry in South Africa, finding specific soft and hard skills along with explicit and tacit knowledge required for merchandising professionals to perform their job responsibilities. The AMC framework aids in aligning academics and industry professionals to educate new merchandising professionals entering the apparel industry. However, there is a lack of understanding apparel firms' organisation, team membership, and job titles that currently develop new apparel products.

The merchandising constituency has continued to evolve and add new job titles and organise new teams to develop apparel products. Muhammad and Ha-Brookshire (2011) explained that as apparel firms grow and globalise the job responsibilities of merchandisers are separated by several job functions. Similarly, Granger (2007), studies have explained how buyers/merchandisers work with retailers to acquire the right product and plan the product line, marketers are responsible for the sales, product developers help develop the product, and production managers work to source and manufacture the product (Muhammad & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). Past studies have shown that research in merchandising and retailing has grown from 1993 to 2012, but omitted job functions such as sourcing and production, which are fundamental roles in an apparel firm (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2013). Ha-Brookshire (2015) proposed global sourcing as a new area of research and education for the C&T discipline. She explained how global sourcing in an apparel firm affects the decision-making processes of merchandising, product development, and marketing, suggesting a unique relationship and a cross-functional nature.

Further Ha-Brookshire and Hawley's (2013) outlined the supply chain functions within the C&T supply chain

that included forecasting, consumer research, design, product development, merchandising, sourcing/production, and retailing/distribution. Wang and Ha-Brookshire (2018) classified each supply chain function into job functions like design – product, design – graphic, merchandising, designing – technical, materials development, product management, and so forth. The findings of this research helped in aligning supply chain functions with job functions by using job postings to uncover the needed digital competency for future T&A supply chain members. Though research has expanded the definition of the merchandising constituency, there is still a lack of understanding the team membership and nature of the merchandising constituency.

2.2. Cross-functional teams

The adoption of formal team structures and the use of team-building approaches are vital for an organisation to maximise the value of its human capital (Glassop, 2002). Team structures allow organisations to be flexible in the creation and reconfiguration of team membership to align members' competencies with task demands (Mathieu, Gallagher, Domingo, & Klock, 2019). An organisational structure is determined by goals, environment, technology, and size. Therefore, organisations must carefully align various factors when structuring employees into teams to achieve goals (Ahmady, Mehrpour, & Nikooravesh, 2016).

According to Parker (2003), organisations may choose to structure teams in three types depending on the industry's nature. First, there is the *functional team*, which operates in a traditional hierarchical organisation in a stable, slow-growth industry with predictable markets. Second, there is the *self-directed team*, which is used in similar industries as functional teams, but particularly in start-up organisations or organisations with participative management. Lastly, there is the *cross-functional team* that seems to be most effective in companies with fast-changing markets, value adaptability, speed, and an intense focus on responding to customer needs. The apparel firm is focused on competing to satisfy the ever-changing needs and wants of their customer (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2013) in the hyper-dynamic clothing and textile industry (Ha-Brookshire & Dyer, 2008). Therefore, understanding how the apparel firm organises its employees into teams would help to further explore the merchandising constituency to build upon Kunz's (1995) behavioural theory of the apparel firm.

Cross-functional teams have been utilised in many industries to organise employees from different specialties to collaborate and create new products or processes (Ghobadi & D'Ambra, 2012). Cross-functional teams, in business settings, have been defined as 'groups of individuals drawn from different functional specialties or departments who are brought together for the common purpose of creating and refining new products' (Sarin & McDermott, 2003, p. 707). Cross-functional team outcomes have been associated with lower development costs (Sarin & Mahajan, 2001), faster speed to market (Parker, 2003), greater innovation (Centindamar, Phaal, & Probert, 2016), and better product design and quality (Hausberg & Leeflang, 2019). However, misapplication and mismanagement of these teams could result in task failures (Henke, Krachenberg, & Lyons, 1993). Unfortunately, organisations often fail to investigate the dynamics of the cross-functional team when new products fail, missing the opportunity to learn from past successes and mistakes (Sarin & McDermott, 2003).

These cross-functional teams can be structured in many ways. Essentially, cross-functional teams are work groups created to carry out project tasks, build and manage relationships, and make decisions (Witt, Hilton, & Hochwarter, 2001). Compared to conventional or functional teams in the work environment, cross-functional teams tend to be more self-governing and have greater authority to choose their internal leader(s), establish their operating procedures, and resolve conflicts through consensual group processes (Gersick & Davis-Sack, 1990). Interpersonal and team-focused benefits have also been associated with better resource management, resource acquisition, and conflict management (Huo, Zhang, & Guo, 2016; Kwan, 2019), as well as skill development and talent management (Lenvenson, 2012). Therefore, cross-functional teams can contribute to how employees develop and deliver products and services (Rowe, El Amrani, Bidan, Marchiniak, & Geffroy-Maronnat, 2005), while also enhancing the innovation process of improving product/service quality and people management practices as well as business performance (Lee, 2020). Therefore, the notion of cross-functional teams may contribute to the success of today's apparel firms, working within the global supply chain.

2.3. Gap Inc.: the case study

Don and Doris Fisher founded Gap Inc. in August 1969, with its first retail store in San Francisco on Ocean Avenue in the heart of the Summer of Love movement and a short walk to the state university campus (Biron, 2019). Doris Fisher named the Gap in reference to the generation gap of the baby boomers, giving forth the advertising slogan 'for every generation there's a Gap'. The first

Gap store sold Levi's jeans, records, and cassette tapes, because the Fishers had trouble finding a good-fitting pair of jeans. In 1974, the Gap started selling clothing under its own name brand, and by 1976 the company went public (Engel-Bromwich, 2019). Since then, the specialty retailer has expanded into six brands with the global ambition 'to champion equality, inclusivity, and sustainability' (Gap.com/history, 2021, p. 1).

Through the retailer's ups and downs, the Gap is still the largest specialty retailer in the U.S. with the Gap, Old Navy, Banana Republic, Athleta, Intermix, and Janie and Jack (Biron, 2019). In 2020, the retailer operated globally a total of 3,100 stores and 117,000 employees, down from 129,000 in 2019 worldwide with approximately two-thirds of its employees in the U.S. The Gap Inc. generated net sales of around 13.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2020, a decrease from 16.38 billion in the previous year (Strata, 2021a, 2021b). Worldwide Gap Inc. in 2020 ranked the fourth clothing retailer by sales revenue after Inditex (Zara), Fast Retailing (Uniqlo), and Hennes & Mauritz (BizVibe, 2021). Gap Inc. has an over 50-year history as the largest U.S. specialty retailer and manages 117,00 employees. Therefore, Gap Inc. was chosen as the case to explore and investigate Kunz's behavioural theory of the apparel firm, the team structure, and team nature.

3. Methods

3.1. Study design

To achieve the purposed objectives of this study, a directed approach to content analysis was used. A content analysis is a method that utilises a set of procedures to make a valid interference for text (Weber, 1990). Further, a directed approach aids in supporting and extending existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The study aimed to explore an apparel firm's cross-functional behaviour through the lens of Kunz's (1995) merchandising constituency, allowing theory to predetermine the codes used for initial analysis and then examining the cross-functional nature of the merchandising constituency. Researchers in C&T have used content analysis to successfully explore T&A job responsibilities and requirements (Muhammad & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Wang & Ha-Brookshire, 2018). A case study method was employed to investigate a current phenomenon or case holistically within its real-world context (Yin, 2019). Creswell and Creswell (2017) support the use of a single-case study as qualitative research's purpose is to purposefully select participants, documents, or visual material that will aid the researcher in understanding the social phenomenon.

3.2. Source of data

Previous research in C&T has used job postings to not only expand on Kunz's theory but to gain insights into job tasks, skills, and experience (Muhammad & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Wang & Ha-Brookshire, 2018). Though job postings may only give a narrow view of the reality of a job, this study deemed job posting a valuable start. Gap Inc.'s career site is accessed through the home page www.gap.com The career site, which supplied the job employment raw data, is organised by the user self-filtering job postings by brand, talent area, and location. For this study, job posting data listed on the https://www.gapinc.com/en-us/careers/gap-careers website was collected by a programme written in Wolfram Language. When the programme was executed the application programme interface or REST API was accessible to gather all the job employment data. REST stands for Representational State Transfer, where the server will transfer to the client a representation of the state of the requested resource. REST API breaks down a transaction in order to create small modules, where each module is used to address a specific part of the transaction (Geer, 2019). JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) is the data-exchange format that transfers populated data structures from any language to formats that are recognisable by other languages and platforms (Geer, 2019). The JSON data provided a link to every job posting on the website, then downloaded in html. The extracted raw data information from each job posting was targeted for data collection. The raw data were exported to Microsoft Excel. Data were collected on February 3, May 3, and August 3, 2021, with data saturation achieved. Actual job postings dates ranged from October 2020 to July 2021 totalling 476 job postings.

The Excel chart with job postings' raw data was initially organised by grouping Gap Inc.'s 22 assigned job categories, also called the talent area on the user self-filter on the gap.com career site, and detailed in Table 1, column 3 (i.e. design, inventory planning, merchandising, etc.). Next, Kunz's internal constituencies (i.e. merchandising, marketing, operations, and finance) guided the grouping of Gap Inc.'s 22 assigned job categories. Within the merchandising constituency were 172 job postings with the job category of design, inventory planning, merchandising, and production. The marketing constituency had 128 job postings that included job categories visual merchandising, communications, marketing and PR. The operations constituency had the most job postings of 398 and included job categories of store operations, technology and digital, asset protection, supply chain strategy, strategic

Table 1. Data used for content analysis organised by internal constituencies (Kunz, 1995).

Internal constituencies (Kunz)	Level 3: Job category from Gap Inc. job postings	Level 4: Gap Inc. departments	Job posting count
Merchandising	Design	Design – product	31
		Design – print/pattern/surface	8
		Design – concept	3
		Design – colour	1
		Graphic designer	4
		R&D – fabric/trims	10
		Technical design	15
			69
	Inventory planning	Inventory analyst	11
		Inventory planner	23
		Inventory management	5
			38
	Merchandising	Merchandiser	20
		Digital merchandising	4
		Online merchandising	5
		Site merchant	5
		Buyer – outlet, Mexico, Canada	2
			38
	Production	Production	8
		Product development	7
		Product integrity	1
		Product engineering	2
		Project management	1
		Product operations	1
			27
		Total	**172**
Marketing	Visual merchandising		
	Communications		
	Marketing and PR	**Total**	**128**
Operations	Store operations		
	Technology and digital		
	Asset protection		
	Supply chain		
	Strategy		
	Strategic sourcing		
	Loss prevention		
	Corporate social responsibility		
	Human resources		
	Administration		
	Facilities		
	Customer service		
	Legal	**Total**	**398**
Finance	Finance	**Total**	**76**
		Total job postings	**476**

Note: The job postings belonging to the merchandising constituency were further organised by department.

sourcing, loss prevention, corporate social responsibility, human resources, administration, facilities, customer service, and legal. Finally, the finance constituency had 76 job postings in the job category of finance. Aligning with Kunz (1995), the executive constituency is integrated into the other constituencies, which was consistent with Gap Inc. Therefore, the executive constituency job postings were analysed within their respective merchandising, marketing, operations, and finance constituency. Table 1 summarises the categorisation of job postings and counts. Since the merchandising constituency was the focus of this study, a breakdown of Gap Inc. departments is listed for only this constituency.

3.3. Data analysis procedure

Before analysis began, data were checked for accuracy and job posting redundancy. Each job posting was identified with a unique id number. Therefore, collecting job postings on three dates could have resulted in a job posting redundancy if the position had not been filled and thus deleted for analysis. To check the accuracy between raw data and the website, a sample of 10% was reviewed which had 100% accuracy.

The Excel chart with raw data had 36 columns of data. All columns of data were reviewed; however, seven columns were targeted for further analysis which were job i.d., division (brand), job category, job title, what you'll do, who you are, and about the role. First, with the data grouped by Gap Inc. job category column, internal constituency (Kunz, 1995) all job postings were carefully read and checked for alignment with theory. Next, all job postings were reviewed by the 'what you'll do', 'who you are' and 'about the role' columns and coded by any mention of another internal constituency, Gap Inc. job category, and/or job title. Finally, in narrowing the analysis to the merchandising constituency job posting, the data were coded by the phrases 'cross-functional', 'cross-functional team' and 'cross-functional members'.

4. Findings

The study's analysis revealed themes that helped in answering the research objectives. The first theme details Gap Inc.'s organisation of internal constituencies by brand, division, job category, and department along with giving general job responsibilities through the AMC framework. The second theme reveals the membership and function of the product category teams. The final theme uncovers the cross-functional nature of the team.

4.1. Research objective 1: firm structure

From the 476 job postings that included all Gap Inc. brands and constituencies, a better understanding of

the firm's structure and employee organisation was revealed. Apparel firm structures are complex (Kunz, 1995) and the aim of this research was focused on the merchandising constituency, therefore Figure 1 is an illustration of firm structure for the merchandising constituency and as an example, Gap brand was used. However, the data showed a similar structure for the other brands in the merchandising constituency.

Each Gap Inc. brand is divided into divisions (i.e. men's, women's, toddler girl, baby boy, etc.). Next, each division is organised around a job category (i.e. design, production, merchandising, and inventory planning). Finally, the job categories had different departments with job titles. For example, the design job category has seven departments, which include design – product, design – print/pattern/surface, design – concept; design – colour; graphic designer, R&D – fabric and trim; technical designer. From the study's analysis, Figure 1 illustrates Gap brand structure into four levels (a) level 1 – brand, (b) level 2 – division, (c) level 3 – job category, (d) level 4 – department. To strengthen trustworthiness, two former Gap brand employees verified the firm's structure as illustrated in Figure 1. The former employees worked in design and product development with a combined tenure of 12 years.

Building on previous literature, a unique finding was the inclusion and exclusion of certain job titles and functions. As stated by Kunz (1995) the merchandising constituency includes 'merchandiser, product development manager, designer, buyer, product manager, and merchandise manager' (p. 256). Previous literature is supported by Gap Inc. job postings, however, there are some distinctions. First, production is a job category and job title that is included in each brand's merchandising constituency. Second, sourcing is both a job category and job title that is included in Gap Inc., but not within the brands, suggesting the sourcing job category and position is a high-level function, perhaps executive function in Gap Inc. Finally, inventory planning job category along with the three departments of inventory planner, inventory analyst, and management, are integral in financially forecasting and partnering with the merchandising job category. In addition, as detailed in the job postings of inventory planning managers, they reported to the vice president of merchandising. This finding was supported throughout analysis and therefore, inventory planning was included in the merchandising constituency throughout this research analysis and interpretation.

4.1.1. Job categories' skills and knowledge through AMC framework

Within the merchandising constituency, each level 3: job category had distinctive job responsibilities and requirements, which were analysed through the skills and knowledge constructs of the AMC framework (Jacobs & Karpova, 2019). The AMC framework has previously been applied to merchandising professionals excluding design (Jacobs & Karpova, 2022) as well as analysing job postings skills and knowledge requirements for an apparel firm case study. The AMC framework was applied for the 172 merchandising constituency job postings to both validate and build on the theory. In addition, this framework assisted in understanding the skills and knowledge within the merchandising constituency at Gap Inc., which in turn revealed work teams. For the merchandising constituency within all Gap Inc. brands were four job categories: design, production, merchandising, and inventory planning. For each job category, skills and knowledge were communicated in each job posting. Table 2 reports the Gap Inc. job postings' skills and knowledge for the four job categories in the merchandising constituency.

Previous research limited the use of the AMC framework to merchandising job roles. However, the skills and knowledge framework were applied to the design, production, and inventory planning, as well as merchandising job postings. The findings validated the important soft and hard skills along with explicit and implicit knowledge that is needed for these job categories and positions. An important soft skill that was repeated throughout the data was not only the ability to work cross-functionally but the need to work dynamically with people from different functions suggesting the presence of a cross-functional team and the importance of working with this team to be successful in the apparel firm.
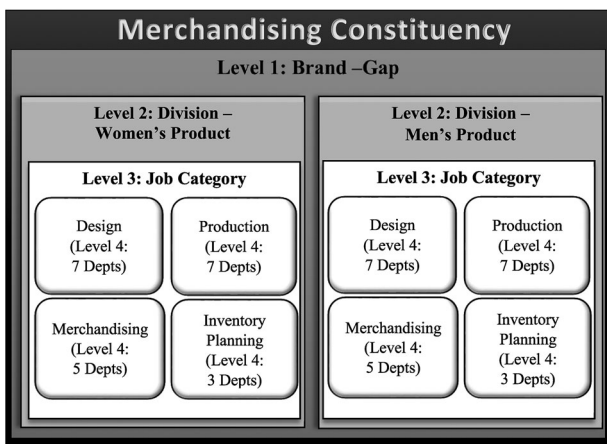

Figure 1. The Gap Brand Hierarchy within the merchandising constituency. Visual illustration of how Gap Brand organises their employees into level 1: brand, level 2: division, level 3: job category, and level 4: departments.

Table 2. Gap Inc. job responsibilities through the AMC framework.

Level 3: Gap Inc. job category	Skills		Knowledge	
	Soft skills: interpersonal and intraprersonal	Hard skills: technical and thinking/conceptual	Explicit: general apparel and job category specific	Tacit knowledge: experience
Design	• Passion for design • Team player • Strong time management, communication, and organisational skills • Partnership/support/ collaborate cross-functional team	• Strong computer skills – basic, Photoshop, and illustrator • Research market place • Hand skills-illustration, painting, drawing • Ability to think 3-demensionally	• Design and colour sense • Understanding design process • Basic flat sketch and fabric knowledge • Knowledge of basic fit, model, and standard measurements	• Degree in fashion design or related field • Design related job experience
Production	• Execute strategies • Communicate aesthetic and business strategy • Alignment and optimal responsiveness • Understand and work with cross-functional team to achieve goals • Demonstrate curiosity, professional presence and influence • Sense of urgency	• Basic retail math • Basic computer skills (word, excel, PowerPoint, outlook) • Communicate effectively verbally and written. • Aptitude in learning new systems or tools like PLM, Smartsheet, internal tools. • Negotiation skills	• Garment production knowledge – production cycle timeline, garment construction, and costing. • Experience with technical packages	• Experience in apparel product development, manufacturing, or sourcing. • Bachelor's degree or equivalent
Merchandising	• Work as an effective member of a cross-functional team • Strong listening, verbal written and presentation skills • Ability to multi-task in fast-paced environment	• Advanced computer skills in Microsoft applications • Possess working knowledge of financial measurements	• Product point of view and conviction yet open-minded. • Identify business and trend opportunities • Create inspirational merchandise presentations.	• Bachelor's degree or equivalent • Previous retail or buying experience
Inventory planning	• Solution and detailed orientated. • Collaborate with cross-functional partners to drive outcomes. • Possess strong organisational and time management skills	• Analytical skills • Think objectively • Proficiency in Microsoft excel and an aptitude to learn technical application quickly.	• Ability to evaluate financial and business indicators and translate data into action.	• Bachelor's degree • Work experience • Omni channel experience a plus

4.1.2. Job responsibilities and cross-functional partners

Further to analysing the skills and knowledge through the AMC framework, the job categories were explored to understand job responsibilities and team membership. The level 3: design job category is responsible for 'the creation of the aesthetics of the product', which included the concept or inspiration, colour, print/pattern, graphic, fabric, trim, and actual product design and fit. Within the design job category are seven level 4: departments (designers – product; designer – print and pattern and surface; designer – concept; designer – colour; graphic designer; R&D – fabric and trim; and technical designer. Of the 72 job postings in design, 62 postings called out the soft skill of 'collaborating with cross-functional team members' and

named specific job titles that were included in this team.

Level 3: production job category is responsible for the 'product development of the seasonal line driven by product decisions based on category, vendor strategies, and nuances' and communicating the 'implications on merchandising and design'. Within the production category were six level 4: departments (production; product development; product integrity; product engineering; product management; product operations). Within the production category, 'working with cross-functional partners' was only a soft skill noted for the production, product development, and product engineering departments and positions, suggesting some departments and positions were not in a cross-functional team.

The level 3: merchandising job category is 'responsible for driving the Omni merchandise strategy to meet the commercial needs of the business by overseeing the full product lifecycle'. Within the merchandising job category were five level 4 departments (merchandiser, digital merchandising, online merchandising, site merchant, and buyer). 'Working effectively with cross-functional partners' was a soft skill for 32 of the 36 job positions and was omitted for some of the site merchant and buyer postings.

Finally, level 3: inventory planning job category 'develops division, department, and class level sales and inventory plans that support marketing and merchandising strategy'. Within the inventory planning category, there were three level 4: departments (inventory analyst; inventory planner; inventory management), where specifically 21 out of 23 inventory planner job postings stated a need to 'collaborate with their cross-functional team'. The collaboration with the cross-functional team was significantly less noted in the inventory analyst and inventory management departments and positions.

Building from Figure 1's firm structure, Table 3 sorts the Gap Inc. level 3: job categories into level 4: departments and provides job responsibilities for each level 4: department in the merchandising constituency. Job posting counts that had cross-functional soft skills are also noted along with the cross-functional partners mentioned in the posting. In addition, job categories and titles are included.

4.2. Research objective 2: product category teams

The departments of designer – product, technical designer, production, product development, product engineering, merchandiser, and inventory planning had job titles that included what the job postings noted as a 'class', 'product team', or 'product category'. Some job title examples were 'merchandiser – *men's denim*', 'assistant manager of product development – *women's denim*', 'assistant designer – women's knits', and 'associate technical designer – *toddler boy denim*'. The job titles in R&D were divided by component material, for example, 'senior manager, R&D *fabric*' or 'assistant manager, R&D *trims*'. Designer job titles that were colour, concept, surface and graphic designer were divided by level 2: division, for example, 'senior graphic design, *women's*' or 'designer concept, *women's*'. The remainder of the departments specified either a level 1: brand or sales channel, with no reference to a specific product. In the end, a total of 116 job postings that had job titles specifically linked with product category or component material (fabric/trim) were 31 designer – product, 15 technical designers, 8 production, 7 product development, 2 product engineering, 20 merchandiser, and 23 inventory planners, along with 10 R&D.

In the C&T discipline, 'category' has been used to reference types of garments. For instance, in women's apparel, there are the categories of outwear, dresses, blouses, maternity, etc. (Stone & Farnan, 2017). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a product category is 'a particular group of related products', (2021). In analysing the study's data, the term product category seemed most appropriate to describe how teams were formed at Gap Inc.'s different brands. Product category teams were formed within level 1: brand, level 2: division, level 3: job category and then select members from the different departments. For example, with level 1: Gap Brand, in level 2: women's division, the designer – product, technical design, production, product development, product engineering, merchandiser, and inventory planner creates a product category team. Though R&D job titles do not specify a product category, as they specify a material, from the job description, R&D seems to also be a part of the product category team. The job postings of R&D describe how they 'provide expertise to design, product development, and production product teams'. In addition, designer – product, product development, production, and product engineering all reference R&D in their job postings. From the analysis of 180 job postings in the merchandising constituency, not all level 3: job categories and level 4: departments had direct responsibility or decision-making the end product. In the end, 116 job postings with the Gap Inc. job titles of (a) designer – product, (b) technical design, (c) production, (d) product development, (e) product engineering, (f) merchandiser, (g) inventory planner, and (h) R&D were directly linked to a product category and therefore creating the membership to the product category team.

4.3. Research objective 3: the cross-functional nature of product category teams

Once structure, job skills and knowledge, along with product category team were identified, the next objective was to discover the cross-functional team's nature which was done by linking job titles within the level 4: departments, level 3: job category and AMC framework soft skill of 'collaborating' 'partnering' with a cross-functional team. As previously discussed, the phrase 'cross-functional' was used in many of the job postings for required soft skills in the merchandising constituency, but especially for the product category team members. In addition,

Table 3. Job responsibilities for Gap Inc. jobs, departments, and cross-functional partners within the merchandising constituency.

Level 3: Gap Inc. job category	Level 4: Gap Inc. departments	Job titles	Posting count	Summary of job responsibilities	Posting count with 'cross functional'	Cross-functional partners listed in job posting
Design	*Designer – product	• Assistant level • Associate level • (Full) Designer • Manager level (for R&D only) • Senior designer • Director • Vice president of design	31	• Prepares/revises/approves flat sketches, design packages and BOMs. • Review/approve garment development through fitting sessions along with approval of all components of the garment. • Initiate designs through research to communicate seasonal trend and inspiration • Develop fabric/trim/colour/print/pattern/surface/wash and presents designs to team.	25	R&D; graphic/surface team; merchandising; product development; product engineering; marketing; tech design; production
	Designer – print and pattern and surface		8	• Manage development of print and dye techniques throughout product pipeline. • Manage artwork submits to approval	8	Design; concept; R&D; product development; production; vendors/suppliers; GIS offices
	Designer – concept		3	• Communicate/present conceptual direction. • Manage conceptual process by researching marketplace, competitors for inspiration.	2	Design; R&D
	Designer – colour		1	• Building and communicating creative colour vision with art and design research. • Create product category colour palettes and communicate through swatches, inspiration boards, lab dips.	1	Design; merchandising; visual merchandising; surface design; R&D
	Graphic designer		4	• Creation of graphics and branding of division and brand • Sustain best production practices	3	Art director; design; GIS offices
	*R&D – fabric, trims		10	• Create, engineer and source design and technical requests with appropriate mills, suppliers, and GIS partners. • Translate design intent on fabric/yarn and ensure materials meet quality standards. • Manage fabric, yarn, and trim libraries.	8	Design; product development; production; vendor/suppliers; GIS offices
	*Technical designer		15	• Ensure overall customer fit consistency • Lead fit session, give construction apparel and documentation of all fit changes within the spec sheets • Identify potential fit construction, and quality production problems	15	Design; vendor; GIS offices; design; merchandising; product development

Table 3. Continued.

Level 3: Gap Inc. job category	Level 4: Gap Inc. departments	Job titles	Posting count	Summary of job responsibilities	Posting count with 'cross functional'	Cross-functional partners listed in job posting
Production	*Production	• Assistant level • Associate level • Manager level • Director • Vice president of production	8	• Coordinate production costing and product options to solve costing issues • Manage product category's liability log and ensure timely consumption • Review test reports for failures and execute action plan for improvement • Ensure timeliness of approvals and product changes meet deliveries	8	Design; merchandising; R&D; product development; vendors; GIS offices; inventory planner; technical design
	*Product development		7	• Execute product development strategies that align with production strategies and division goals. • Manage costing and time and action targets. • Ability to influence and make decisions with speed, accuracy, and cultural sensitivity by communicating across all team members.	6	Designer; merchandising; vendors; GIS offices; technical design; production R&D
	Product integrity		1	• Review, approve, reject or improve products based on test reports. • Support brand protection and enhancing product quality. • Create and implement procedures and policies that support execution of quality.	0	NA
	*Product engineering		2	• Evaluate all samples for correct construction. • Engineer product within the strategic costing direction and provide solutions.	1	Design; production; technical design; GIS offices; R&D; costing engineers
	Project management		1	• Develop comprehensive project plans, processes and workflows for efficiency. • Establish appropriate ownership of for all deliverables. • Contribute thoughtful and creative discussion with departments and management on resource and scheduling, plans and challenges.	0	NA
	Product operations		1	• Drive pipeline strategy, execution and maintenance of end-2-end baseline and P2M. • Work with leadership to re-define expectations and agendas for milestones or cadence changes and continuously drive improvements.	0	Design; production; inventory management; GIS offices; merchandising; marketing

Table 3. Continued.

Level 3: Gap Inc. job category	Level 4: Gap Inc. departments	Job titles	Posting count	Summary of job responsibilities	Posting count with 'cross functional'	Cross-functional partners listed in job posting
Merchandising	*Merchandiser	• Assistant level • Associate level • (Full) Merchandiser or buyer • Vice president of merchandising	20	• Deliver results that align to overall department strategy and drive profitability. • Create and communicate seasonal strategies collaboratively in the product life cycle. • Own assignment of flow, season code, size model, and time on offer by style. • Critique the assortment including silhouette, print, graphic, and colour selection.	20	Marketing; design; production; inventory management; inventory planner; customer; distribution
	Digital merchandising		4	• Accountable for the development and communication of divisional product strategies that align with financial goals. • Oversee team through web management to create a compelling product experience on the site, to include inspiration merchandising presentation, simple and intuitive category navigation and clear and accurate product details.	4	Merchandising; marketing; customer; product development; design
	Online merchandising		5	• Responsible for timely workflow of site management deliverables, overseeing pricing, sort merchandising, flagging, and tagging. • Ensure ease of featured marketing styles and messaging for customer. • Manage sizing and packaging PO's post-buy planning along with size profiles.	4	Merchandising; marketing
	Site merchant		5	• Manage site navigation and merchandising strategy (site structure and linking). • Manage product launches and execution of product pages while managing product photography process to ensure timely product launches and holiday events. • Plan and manage Omni asset across site, app, email, paid ads, social.	3	Merchandising; marketing; inventory planner
	Buyer – outlet, Mexico, Canada		2	• Develop assortment, visual and inventory strategies that aligns with channel. • Own financial and inventory positioning for management and pricing strategies. • Lead business recaps to inform short- and long-term financial strategies/actions.	1	Inventory planner; merchandising

Table 3. Continued.

Level 3: Gap Inc. job category	Level 4: Gap Inc. departments	Job titles	Posting count	Summary of job responsibilities	Posting count with 'cross functional'	Cross-functional partners listed in job posting
Inventory planning	Inventory analyst	• Assistant level • Associate level • Manager level • Director • No V.P. level as director reported to V.P. merchandising	11	• Execute initial and replenishment allocation. • Manage target inventory levels and validate allocation of product. • Provide ad-hoc allocation analysis and support hindsighting, plans, and strategies.	3	Inventory planner; store; inventory management
	*Inventory planner		23	• Develop division, department, and class plans that support market strategy. • Own bottom-up financial reconciliation. • Recommend and execute in-season pricing strategies.	21	Merchandising; production; web; store; inventory management
	Inventory management		5	• Analysts and provide leadership in a results-orientated environment. • Drives the creation, management, and execution of sales and inventory plans, ensuring achievement of department and divisional financial goals.	1	Supply chain operations; finance; inventory planner

Note: GIS office is a Gap Inc. term for Gap International Sourcing office. *Denotes departments in the product category team. Job responsibilities and requirements are all direct quote from job postings.

many job postings directly stated that responsibility was to work with other level 4: departments and/or external coalitions. Referring to Table 3, the summary of cross-functional partners that were directly linked in a job posting and the counts are noted.

The term cross-functional was used in 134 job postings in the merchandising constituency out of the total 172. Cross-functional was used in 104 out of the 116 job postings that were in the product category team. Job postings in the product category team that did not have the word cross-functional were at the 'assistant' level or for inventory management were in the omni channel. From the job posting analysis, product category teams seemed to be cross-functional in nature. At the Gap brand within the women's division, the cross-functional teams were women's knits, women's woven bottoms, women's woven tops, women's outerwear, women's denim, and women's accessories. Each of these cross-functional, product category team members included (a) designer – product, (b) technical design, (c) production, (d) product development, (e) product engineering, (f) merchandiser, (g) inventory planner, and (h) R&D. Figure 2 illustrates the cross-functional product category team membership and where it fits in Kunz' (1995) behavioural theory of the apparel firm functional areas of specialisation.

5. Discussion and implications

The study aimed to delve deeper into understanding the merchandising constituency (Kunz, 1995) through the lens of cross-functional teams by conducting a content analysis of Gap Inc. job postings. Though previous literature had inferred job positions working together to create, develop, manufacture, and distribute apparel products (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2013; Kunz, 1995; Muhammad & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Wang & Ha-Brookshire, 2018), there has been a gap in understanding the team membership and nature. The study's findings were able to construct an apparel firm's merchandising constituency structure, job categories skills and knowledge to identify the product category teams and their cross-functional nature. The findings from this research are just a beginning, but the implications are an important start.

First, the study's findings help to further a foundational theory in the C&T discipline. The findings support and expand Kunz's (1995) behavioural theory of the apparel firm. The theory's internal constituencies were validated in how Gap Inc. organises its job functions. To begin, the constituencies of executive, merchandising, marketing, operations, and finance constituencies aligned with the Gap Inc. case study, 26
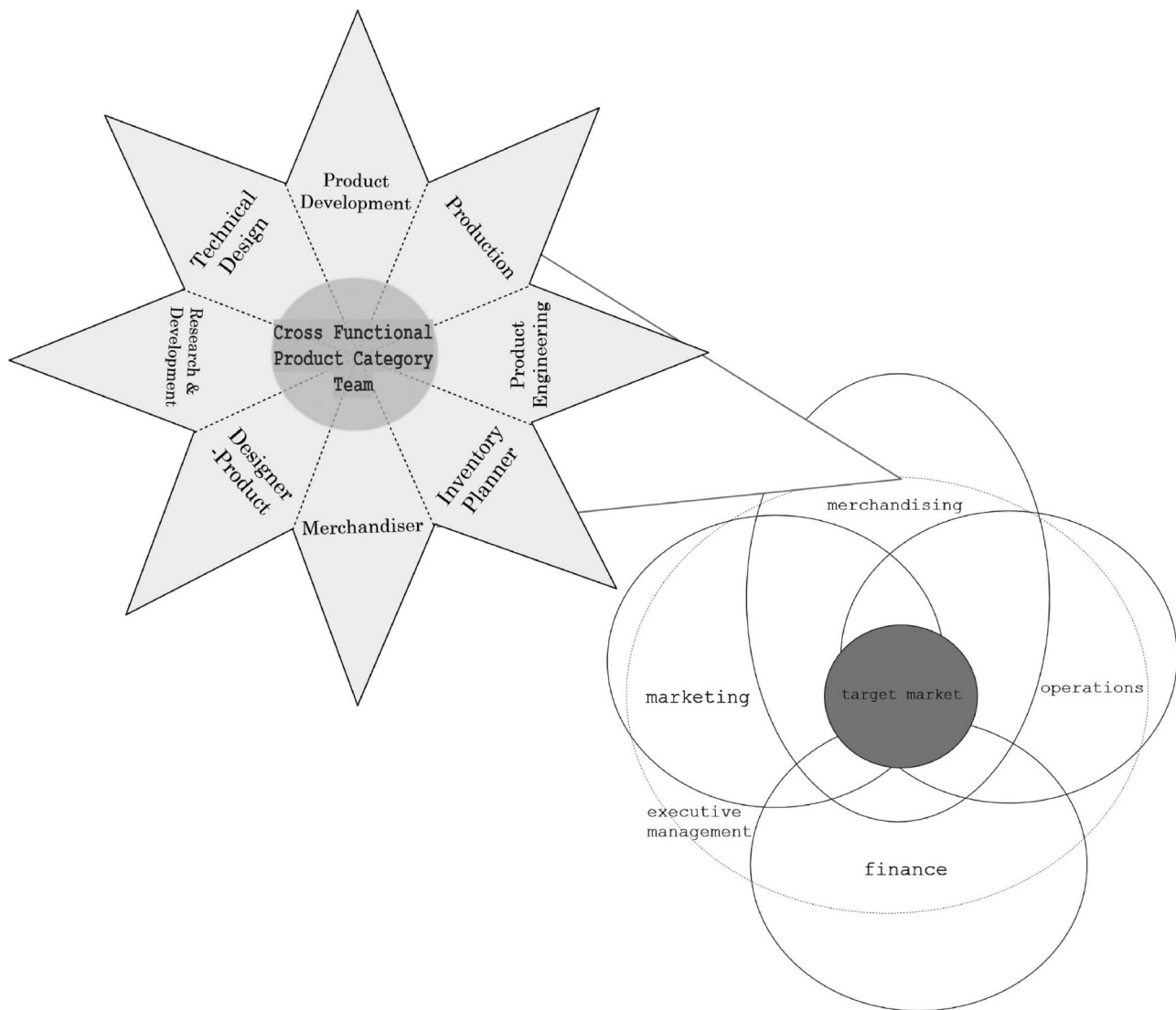
Figure 2. The cross-functional product category team within the merchandising constituency. Building from Kunz's Behavioral Theory of the Apparel Firm (1995) to illustrate where the product category team would operate.

years after Kunz's article. Next, the findings build on the initial merchandising constituency to include more job categories and titles. Though previous literature added sourcing and production as a job position (Muhammad & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Wang & Ha-Brookshire, 2018), this research shows that inventory planning is also included in the planning, developing, and presenting of the product line for the target market (Kunz, 1995). This study was limited to the job postings of a single-case study, which was a specialty retailer. To take this research further, content analysis of job postings of other apparel firms that are specialty retailers, department stores, or even discount stores could help in advancing the understanding of the merchandising constituency.

Second, the application of the AMC framework to the Gap Inc. job postings in the merchandising constituency aided in validating supply chain and job functions and identifying work teams. The findings of this research expanded the application of the AMC framework beyond merchandising professionals as the framework helped organise soft and hard skills along with explicit and implicit knowledge needed in the design, production, merchandising, and inventory planning job categories. The skills and knowledge matrix developed in this study gives C&T discipline's educators guidance in curriculum development and mentorship of students applying for fashion jobs. Future research could apply the AMC framework to other constituencies in an apparel firm.

Third, the identification and construction of the product category team membership, which includes the (a) designer – product, (b) technical designer, (c) production, (d) product development, (e) product engineer,

(f) merchandiser, (g) inventory planner and (h) R&D. From the analysis of job postings, the product category team was central in the decision-making of the product line where consumers' apparel preferences are interpreted. This finding helps to evolve the perspective of how scholars view the apparel firm (Wang & Ha-Brookshire, 2018). In addition, the product category team operated as a cross-functional team, where job positions from different disciplines and specialties were brought together around a specific task to develop new products in a high-demand, ever-changing apparel and textile industry (Ghobadi & D'Ambra, 2012; Parker, 2003). The findings of this research continue to explain the interconnectedness of job titles and functions around the product category team and the cross-functional nature of the product team. Previous research on the apparel firm has not identified the product category. Though the cross-functional team's titles and positions were identified, the actual number or size of the team is unclear and therefore an opportunity exists for future research to validate membership and to understand the team size. Additionally, content analysis as a method has its limitations; therefore, future research could collect data from product category team members, through either surveys or interviews, to give insight into validating the cross-functional team dynamic.

Finally, the findings on firm structure, job category skills and knowledge, and job title responsibilities are greatly informative for C&T educators and students. Many C&T departments are structured into analytic merchandising/retailing and creative design (McAndrews & Ha-Brookshire, 2019). This research begins to reveal a hidden aspect of the industry for future T&A supply chain members. Many C&T students have the desire to be the decision makers of the product line and may have a limited view of the various job positions besides the merchandiser/buyer role or designer role. From the student perspective, the research provides a list of potential jobs within the merchandising constituency giving job descriptions, skills needed, and education preferences. Along with cross-functional team roles within the product category team, students could work to gain experience and skills for their career path. From the educator's perspective, the findings help in advising C&T students for internships, interviews, and resumes. In addition, educators could continue to emphasise the interconnectedness of job positions, internal constituencies, and supply chain functions within the classroom. Many students in C&T classes are minors and may not be pursuing jobs in the merchandising constituency. Therefore, C&T educators may introduce students to all constituencies within an apparel firm would be beneficial for majors

and minors. Future research should continue to explore and investigate the other apparel firm constituencies' job responsibilities, skills, and education to attract cross-discipline students and provide more students with a pathway into the T&A industry.

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