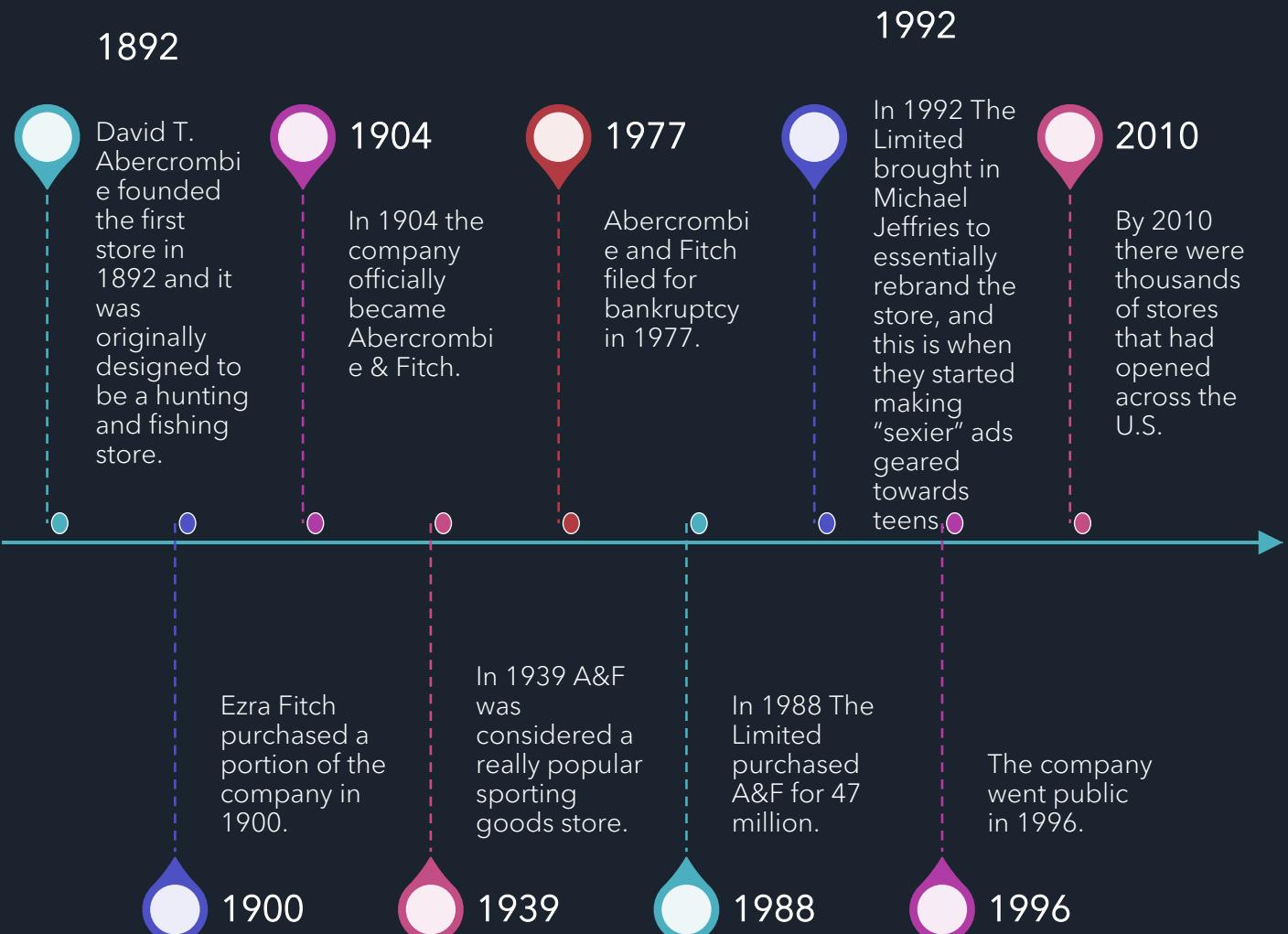




ABERCROMBIE & FITCH

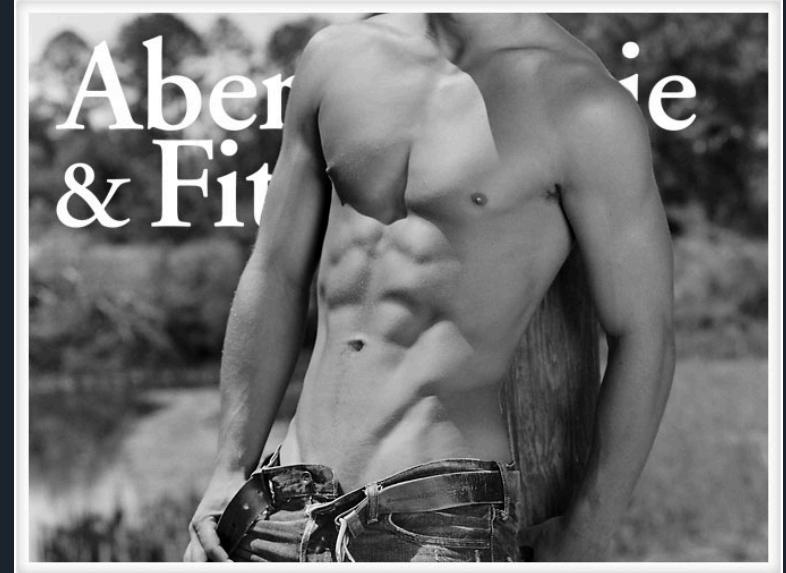
By: Amy Sahoo

BACKGROUND



SHIFT IN BRANDING

- Abercrombie & Fitch has been rebranded to a teen store by the new CEO Michael Jeffries.
- He wanted to make the store for “cool kids” and his strategy for this concept was based on “discriminating against ugliness”. He did this by making “sexy” campaigns that appealed to teens.
- Jeffries branding tactics started becoming controversial when there was a negative attitude against plus sized people, and the stores would not carry XL clothing.



SELECTIVENESS

- In an interview Jefferies said, “good-looking people attract other good-looking people”.
- It became clear that the brand was exclusive towards a certain type of group. In this instance the brand was geared towards skinny attractive white men and women.
- An employee even stated that CEO Jefferies wanted the “thinnest, tallest, and whitest models visible” when he came to the stores.
- The employee even recalled an instance where all the black models were sent home an hour before their shifts ended and before Jefferies was scheduled to visit.

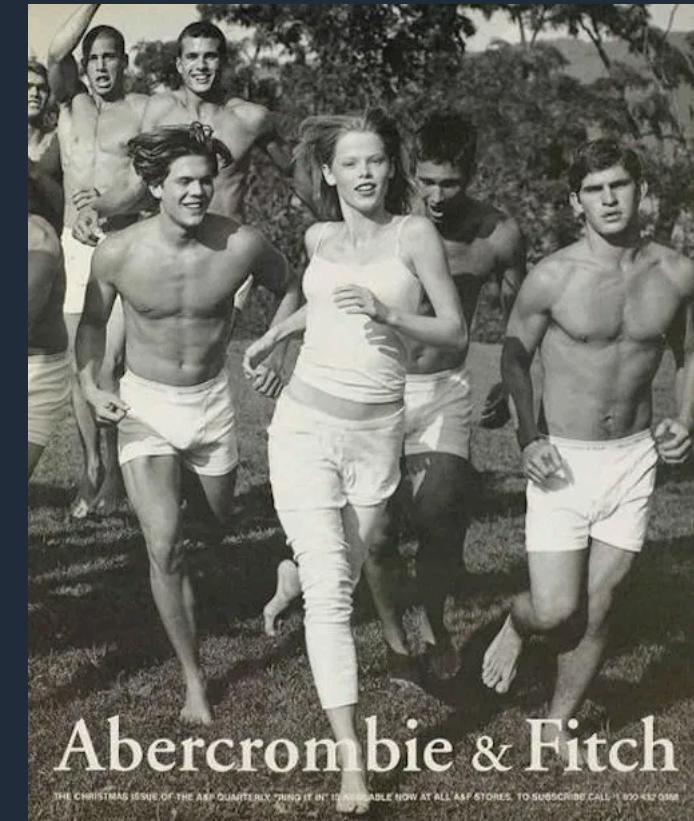


“LOOKING THE PART”

- Abercrombie and Fitch has had many lawsuits filed against them for discrimination.
- Some include:

When A Muslim woman sued the company for refusing to hire her because she wore a head scarf. The company argued that its employees were required to have a look described as "classic East Coast collegiate style".

The “looking the part” requirement was observed so strictly that according to a lawsuit filed in 2003, any Asian-American, African-American, and Latino individuals who were hired by Abercrombie were relegated to stockrooms where those staffers could not be seen by customers. The retailer settled the suit a year later, agreeing to pay \$40 million to put an end to the litigation.



ASIAN AMERICANS

- Asian Americans are underrepresented in film and advertisements., they tend to get cast as background actors and models instead of getting lead roles.
- In a study it was found that Asian -Americans responded better to ads when they were depicted as normal Americans mingling with all sorts of people and not just be included in ads with all Asian people.
- Asian culture and American culture is very different and not depicted a lot either.

A&F'S BIGGEST CAMPAIGN MISTAKE

- It was already clear that A&F was not an inclusive company, but to make matters worse they tried to target Asian American teenagers/ college students.
- They did this by using a “stereotyping-for-laughs” marketing strategy in order to appeal to this crowd.
- They released these shirts in 2002.
- One of the shirts featured two stereotypically Asian men pointing at a sign that said, “Wong Brother’s Laundry Service: two Wongs can make it white.”



APOLOGY??

- After the shirt incident in 2002, A&F did not release any sort of apology statement. All they did was retract the shirts and stop selling them.
- A&F has always been known for its unapologetic marketing strategy, which worked until social media became huge.



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- There have not really been any apologies, so it's clear the culture of the company is not the best.
- They hired diversity recruiters for their stores after the incident in 2003 with the employee's lawsuit.
- They fired one of their models after discovering many anti- Black Lives Matter posts.
- They started to make more inclusive advertisements.



SUMMARY

- The company has always had a reputation that they chose not to rebrand until much more recently.
- They have been very discriminatory not only against minorities but against plus sized people as well.
- They have always been very unapologetic about most of their incidences, especially the one with the stereotypical shirts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are ways Abercrombie & Fitch can make their workplace a better environment and all inclusive?
- What else should they have done besides recalling the shirts, or was recalling the shirts enough?
- If they continued to be selective and have discriminatory practices, do you think the company would still exist in the next 5-10 years?

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