

# **Rebecca Taylor: Marketing the “Princess Lifestyle”**

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## **Abstract**

Designer Rebecca Taylor defines the ability of marketing the “princess lifestyle” to affluent women. Her contemporary women’s collection has the merchandising power to target strong and powerful women drawn to her feminine, yet sophisticated, label. How does Rebecca Taylor, whose website design appears to have been inspired by childhood fairy tales such as Snow White or Cinderella, have the ability to market the “princess lifestyle” to these women?

## **Introduction**

Rebecca Taylor’s website is designed with a pale peach background depicting clouds, virtual birds and butterflies flying across the page. Lavender cursive font expresses the layout, and each of the various pages are adorned with forest animals and floral patterns, and are stamped with her logo of two intertwined cats. Women have come to describe the designer’s clothing as “pretty and soft with claws”, giving an iconic description of women today in general; and a strong statement about the type of woman that is Rebecca Taylor.

“The Politics and Spectacle of Fashion and Femininity” by Mary Lynn Stewart perfectly defines the type of woman that can describe Rebecca Taylor. By reviewing four books, the author discusses the ability of women who are structured and powerful to be fashionable and feminine at the same time. The review also describes the growth of fashion over the years, and how it has continuously affected the world and the people in it. It links fashion, especially ladies’ clothing, to long-term developments such as democratization, modernization, and class and gender formation. Rebecca Taylor perfectly fits in with the overview of the modernization of female fashion by marketing to clients that are described as modern women who want to typify the female gender.

Raksha Arora and Lydia Saad describe how one should go about targeting one of the largest, upwardly mobile groups in America today: affluent women. These growing groups of woman are smart, educated, have considerable discretionary income, and are obviously fashionable. Today, the women living the modern lifestyle have already gained the power necessary to becoming successful and independent.

Obviously, that is not all that women want. Rebecca Taylor understands the balance between being both a feminine and powerful woman. Rebecca's designs range from light pink and blue whimsical dresses with metallic accents to tailored and detailed suits which still allow for the attention to feminine details. Through her branding angle, Rebecca Taylor has designed her label to be a lifestyle brand for strong, powerful, and yet feminine and stylish women of contemporary society.

## **Review**

This paper describes the ability that designer Rebecca Taylor has to attract her client base, which is the population of affluent women. Though her collection is a variation of whimsical, ethereal designs, she aims for her clothing to be sweet and sexy with a girlish appeal that draws the wealthy, powerful female population. Her collections are comprised of strong, tailored pieces, as well as soft, feminine ones. This paper will show how Rebecca Taylor created her distinctive look, how she markets it, and the points that are attributed to her success.

The business side that represents the Rebecca Taylor Collection understands that women are largely in control of the retail aspect of the economy, and have marketed her designs to reflect this. To start with, the Rebecca Taylor label is exclusively women's wear. The designer has expressed that her inspirations range from her childhood to how she imagines upper-class, powerful women want to feel when they dress themselves for any occasion. One boutique's webpage advertises that women "love how just slipping into one of her dresses instantly makes us feel girly and pretty" (Rebecca Taylor). Women in positions of power purchase her retail items because they make the wearer feel sexy and girlish without taking away from their strong identities. Every aspect of her company, from her marketing strategy, to her design inspirations, to her flawless production, ensures that her retail will continue to be as successful as it has proven to be in the past.

Critiquing how this designer markets her collection is specifically unique because Rebecca Taylor is a fairly new designer. Officially launching her label in August of 2000, there is very little being researched about her brand outside of sources that simply summarize her upcoming collections and growing label. Rebecca Taylor has made herself into a key contemporary retailer not just in the United States, but internationally. In a time period that has been defined by a recession and the bankruptcy of many companies, and which has been especially difficult for the fashion industry, Rebecca Taylor has proven herself to be successful and necessary to the design world. She has also discovered a niche where no other designer has stepped up to fill. The collections that are usually geared for upper- middle class and upper- class, women can be considered modern, and age appropriate. Taylor is the first to create collections that consistently incorporates girlish, even fantasy- like details while still designing pieces that are suitable for a wide age range of women, from powerful executives to wealthy housewives.

Each famous fashion designer, no matter how broadly marketed now, began and became successful by designing for a specific niche. Diane von Furstenberg is classified as a

designer who creates with a woman's body in mind. Her shtick is the body conscious aspect of women's clothing design. Chanel began as a no-nonsense approach to fashion, and has continued that theme to produce a dignified look to women's clothing. Now, Rebecca Taylor makes her name by drawing on women's fantasies and creating pieces that look like the wearer just stepped out of a fairytale while maintaining a ready-to-wear appeal. This type of retailer is important, especially now. In an era where some of life's indulgences have been eliminated for life's necessities, Rebecca Taylor has been successful in offering women clothing that is fanciful yet still appropriate.

### **History of the Retailer**

The presently New-York based fashion designer had a branding image from the moment she appeared in the fashion world. Her clothing is inspired by her childhood, which she spent in a "fairytale seaside village" in New Zealand. This inspiration reflects in her design style, shown in her dreamy and whimsical clothing designs. She was inspired by ballet costumes as a child, and continues to design soft, warm and "kitten-like" apparel; hence her trademark logo (Rebecca Taylor). As a fashion lover, I adore her consistent attention to detail in each and every garment, and women today adore her balance of edgy and feminine.

The designer worked in New York City beneath Cynthia Rowley for five years, where she gained substantial experience before she launched her own label. She debuted the label in the year 2000 under her own name with the help of her business partner, Elizabeth Budaycay, whom she met in the East Village when they were younger. Elizabeth Budaycay actually influenced Rebecca to start her own line. Budaycay handled the financial part of the brand, while Rebecca gave her creative eye into the designs (Label Overview).



Figure: 1 Rebecca Taylor Blouse & Hang Tag.  
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In 2000, Rebecca Taylor (whose trademark logo is shown above, Figure 1), launched her signature label in Australia and New Zealand for the first time and traveled to Sydney to choose buyers for her range. It was an unusual position for the buyers, desperate to stock her items, because normally they get to select the retailers. Instead, the retailer was selecting the buyer. Some even went so far as to boldly state that they had secured the kittenish label in a vain attempt to make this statement true, a clearly unfounded statement now seeing the label's expanding growth (Rebecca Taylor).

The Rebecca Taylor Collection has seen national and international coverage through commercial publicity, such as news shows like the "Today Show" and "The View"; and entertainment shows like "Sex and the City." Further publicity for her line has come from her loyal celebrity clients, like Sarah Michelle Gellar, Kate Winslet, Jennifer Lopez, Uma Thurman, Chelsea Clinton, or Sarah Paulson (Label Overview). Mary Lynn Stewart observes the "parallels between fashion marketing techniques such as the fashion type and the celebration of Hollywood stars' looks and femininity as archetypes of successful self-fashioning" (198). She also observes "that film stars' images change regularly, mirroring fashion- marketing promotion of change to sell more clothes and cosmetics" (Stewart 198). Taylor successfully markets her lines in accordance with Stewart's researched observations of contemporary fashion.

For the past decade, Rebecca Taylor and her business associates have worked to achieve her label's current status. Her website allows for international purchasing, and her products are sold in twenty- eight countries, both in specialty stores, high- end department stores, as well as in her flagship boutiques in New York City, Tokyo, and Hong Kong. Rebecca Taylor works with *Liska + Associates Communication Design* to promote her international advertising, online and print look books, boutique videos, retail packaging, and other marketing materials that all reflect her whimsical, ethereal design.

The Rebecca Taylor Collection fits into our cultural context because she designs with a modern, successful woman in mind. Women control roughly five trillion dollars of The United States business and consumer spending, claims a Gallup World Poll:

"It has been widely noted that women influence some eighty percent of all consumer spending in the United States... Generational changes in women's education, pay, representation in the workforce, and domestic roles are what brought women to this point, and those factors practically guarantee that women as super consumers are here to stay" (Arora 1).

It is the ultimate business move in the fashion world to produce with this group in mind. Taylor was interviewed by the Forbes Video Journal about the production of her line and the future of her company. She claims she designs with a feel for "grown- ups playing dress up" and describes her line as a juxtaposition of "fun femininity and sophistication." When she was asked about how she sees the Rebecca Taylor line evolving in the future, she discusses the "very tough but amazing" process that her company has been through. She also states that she wants the Rebecca Taylor line to cross into other product categories, which is already in the process. Her next two stores to be opened will be in

Chicago and Los Angeles. The Rebecca Taylor collection has grown to include not just standard women's clothing but also maternity, handbag, footwear, hosiery, and accessory lines. Her most famous boutique is located in Nolita in New York City.

### **Conclusion**

By recognizing the current state of the fashion industry, by tailoring her design to target the population of affluent women, and simultaneously designing within an niche that no other designer has readily filled, Taylor has created a successful fashion design label that is contemporary, unique, and widely distributed. As her label grows with the previously mentioned additional stores, product lines, and celebrity endorsements, it will be possible to elaborate on this study. This research was unique due to the lack of information available about Rebecca Taylor's marketing strategies and her brand. Though this critique simply expressed how Rebecca Taylor markets her line towards powerful, affluent women, it could be elaborated by researching how Taylor will continue to make her products available in stores in countries besides the twenty- eight already available. It would also be interesting to further this research by examining how she incorporates the current fashion trends into her lines, which are so unique. Besides this, there might be articles and press in the future about whether or not it would be beneficial to her company to market another, more affordable line, or whether she will continue to design with solely affluent women in society in mind.

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