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USC Annenberg School of Communications

Comprehensive Exam

OWNED

La-Z-Boy - Gaming Chair Campaign

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- **Brand Trust and Legacy:** La-Z-Boy is one of the most recognized and trusted brands in American furniture. Founded in 1927, their recliners, chairs, and sofas have become synonymous with comfort and durability among users for generations. This has led to many of their products being passed down through generations and becoming part of a family's household identity. In addition, the brand has received several awards as of late, noting their trust and legacy, with them being ranked #1 in Newsweek's 2025 America's Best Retailers list in the furniture category (Cunningham, 2025), as well as listed in Time's America's Most Iconic Companies List (Hu, 2026). All of these factors contribute to La-Z-Boy's continued legacy and positive brand perception, aiding its sales and marketing efforts.
- **Strong Retail Expansion:** La-Z-Boy has aggressively expanded its company-owned retail footprint, reaching 370+ Furniture Gallery locations nationwide, with over 200 of them corporate-owned by the brand (La-Z-Boy, 2025). This allows the brand to have tighter control over marketing efforts than independent dealers do, as well as achieve higher margins and collect more accurate consumer data when selling products. Additionally, their high expansion rate signals the brand's positive outlook for the furniture industry, even amid uncertain economic headwinds.

Weaknesses

- **Perception Gap Among Younger Consumers:** Despite the brand's 2025 re-brand, featuring a new logo, color scheme, and advertisements, La-Z-Boy continues to struggle to identify with younger consumers, ideally Gen Z. While the brand's values of comfort and durability resonate deeply with older generations, who seek products aimed towards quality and longevity, Gen Z has continued to look past La-Z-Boy as a viable furniture option, seeking cheaper alternatives from brands that employ design-forward aesthetics and digital marketing. This is detrimental for La-Z-Boy, as the homeowner market begins to shift towards Gen Z purchasers seeking new furniture for their homes.
- **Underperforming Social Presence:** While the brand has previously experienced some social media buzz due to their #BanReclining TikTok ad in 2024 (La-Z-Boy, 2024), which prompted users to sign a petition to ban reclining on airplanes in favor of reclining at home, many of their recent posts across Instagram and TikTok have underperformed. While their Instagram presence is strongest, with over 68K followers, their content varies in engagement, with most posts receiving only 30-50 likes. The exception to this comes from their partnered influencer posts, which receive around 2K likes each. However, this contrast paints the picture of an underperforming social presence that does not resonate with online users, specifically Gen Z (as discussed prior). This is damaging to the brand due to its limited reach in connecting with new consumers organically through its social content, with low like counts potentially swaying consumers' interest in purchasing away from the brand entirely.

Opportunities

- **Centennial Anniversary:** La-Z-Boy's 100th anniversary is an ideal opportunity to celebrate the brand's heritage and values while introducing it to new audiences. By emphasizing their legacy as a staple in the furniture industry, serving comfort and durability to consumers for generations, it leans into their appeal as a long-standing

brand, even for new consumers (ideally Gen Z) who are being introduced to the brand. In particular, the idea of this campaign's gaming chair, starring Faker, complements the centennial storytelling piece, signifying how the brand is evolving into the gaming genre while staying true to its roots by producing high-quality, comfortable products.

- **Sustainability Storytelling Angle:** While La-Z-Boy has made several substantive sustainability commitments over the years, including a net-zero emissions target by 2050, these commitments largely go unnoticed by the general public. As the furniture industry and consumers continue to shift their preferences towards eco-friendly products and services, La-Z-Boy needs to communicate its ongoing (and spotlight previously unnoticed) sustainability commitments to ensure its brand positioning as an environmentally conscious brand remains intact.

Threats

- **Digital Competitors and Changing Consumer Behaviors:** With the rise of online shopping platforms, such as Amazon, Article, Wayfair, and the recently growing TikTok Shop, retail-focused brands like La-Z-Boy face serious competition as they vie for online shoppers' attention. While La-Z-Boy does host ship their own products online, as well as works with online retailers/competitors like Wayfair and Rooms-To-Go to list their own products, their own line-up falls to the wayside when being sold alongside other brands at a cheaper price point compared to La-Z-Boy's products, which start at around \$1,000 at minimum. This poses a severe threat to La-Z-Boy, as they must figure out how to market themselves online while still promoting the value of their products, which is best experienced by sitting on one of their chairs in stores.
- **Economic Market Conditions:** Several recent economic conditions can pose serious threats to La-Z-Boy's production going forward. From high mortgage rates in the U.S. leading to lower demand for furniture among new homeowners to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding tariffs and how they may affect production pipelines, the

furniture category is currently undergoing many shifts as companies try to market to consumers. La-Z-Boy has suffered as a result of these changes, with same-store written sales declining by 5% in Q4 FY25, despite the company's overall revenue growth being attributed to an increase in store acquisitions (La-Z-Boy, 2025). As a result, La-Z-Boy must continue to find ways to maintain brand relevance and drive sales if it is to survive in harsh economic conditions.

Strategic Insights

- **Strategic Initiative 1: Launch a La-Z-Boy Centennial Anniversary Social Campaign**
 - **Rationale:** La-Z-Boy's 100th anniversary in 2027 is the perfect opportunity to spotlight the brand's history and values while introducing it to a new audience. This could be accomplished through a new video series on their social channels (TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook) that spotlights real families who have relied on La-Z-Boy products across generations and shows how those products have changed their lives. Doing so pays homage to the brand's identity whilst conveying that its products are for all ages, and adds to the brand's increased social presence. In addition, this campaign would include an influencer component, with the La-Z-Boy account cross-posting videos from influencers who are already La-Z-Boy product users. While primarily addressing the brand's underperforming social presence, this would also help extend the brand's reach to those influencers' followers, bringing them into the loop on La-Z-Boy's products without sounding too corporate-speak or inauthentic.
 - **Success Metrics:** Generate a 15% increase in brand consideration among consumers aged 21-35 within 12 months of campaign launch.
- **Strategic Initiative 2: Build a Consumer-Facing Sustainability Content Hub**
 - **Rationale:** While La-Z-Boy promotes its sustainability initiatives primarily to shareholders, these are largely invisible to consumers, who are unaware of its

environmental impact. To resolve this, La-Z-Boy will launch a new content portal on its site (www.lazboy.com/sustainability), which will continually update with easy-to-digest stats available to readers, and will be posted via social posts on La-Z-Boy's social channels. In addition, the content hub will host an updated sustainability blog/email newsletter (similar to Substack) that will spotlight several of La-Z-Boy's sustainability initiatives for readers. These can include an interactive impact tracker, behind-the-scenes on the brand's sustainable manufacturing and sourcing, interviews with ESG experts, and more. These tactics help address La-Z-Boy's opportunity for a sustainability campaign, its weakening perception gap among younger consumers, and its strength in brand legacy by utilizing all three to create a positive impact and share it with its audience.

- **Success Metrics:** Sustainability hub driving a minimum of 100,000 unique monthly visitors (or UMV) within 6 months of launch, as well as a 20% increase in brand awareness from La-Z-Boy purchasers of their sustainability efforts (measured via post-purchase survey).
- **Strategic Initiative 3: Spotlight the La-Z-Boy Gaming Chair Via a Gaming Lounge**
 - **Rationale:** To help promote the upcoming La-Z-Boy Gaming Chair alongside their upcoming ad campaign starring Faker, as well as tie into the brand's centennial anniversary (see Strategic Initiative 1), La-Z-Boy will attend several gaming industry events throughout 2026 to showcase its new gaming chair to hardcore gaming audiences. These events include Summer Games Fest 2026, PAX West, and Gamescom, in which La-Z-Boy will host the "La-Z-Boy Gaming Lounge," designed to allow convention attendees and influencers to rest after a busy day of walking across the convention floor. They will allow media and influencers to check out the booth (via some light media pitching from their PR

team) to test-drive the chair while playing video games on several devices on hand, such as Nintendo Switch 2, PS5, and PC. This will lead to several pieces of earned and organic media coverage about the chair, aiding the product and the brand's reach and perception among Gen Z, who may be looking for the perfect gaming companion after a long day at work. Additionally, allowing users to test the product themselves before purchasing leverages the brand's strength in in-person experiences while mitigating the threat posed by competitors' online shopping by offering a try-before-you-buy approach.

- **Success Metrics:** Secured coverage in at least 15 GEM (or gaming-enthusiast media) publications post-tour (ex: IGN, GameSpot, GamesRadar).