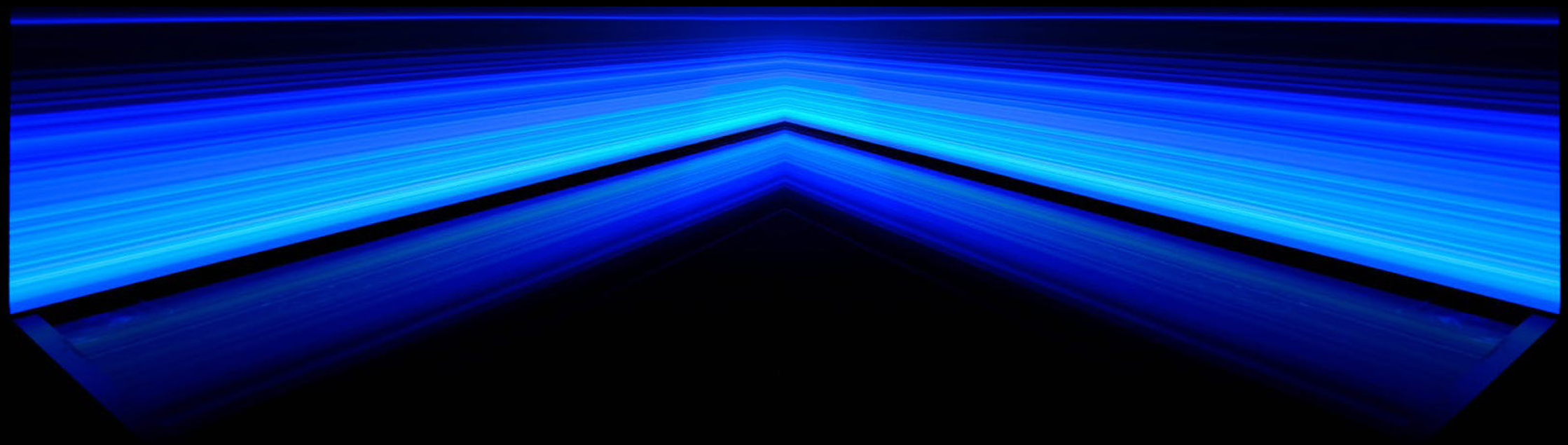
BUSINESS PLAN



HOLLY LACEY
FAS6129B

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WORD COUNT
3,238

BUSINESS OWNER:
HOLLY JO LACEY

Four years retail experience in both clothing and premium footwear sales along with providing the 'personal shopper' experience to a 'premium brand' demographic of consumer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A retail shopping experience for the majority of consumers is one that presents no hidden issues. This cannot be said for the 1 in 100 individuals living with some form of autism.
Shopping for them can invoke, distress, anxiety and physical and emotional meltdowns. Many parents with children with autism avoid the physical experience of shopping completely.

The launch of butterFLY aims to ensure that a shopping experience can be inclusive to all.
By discussing and engaging with parents and carers of children with autism, I have understood their wants and needs. By researching the physical needs of a retail environment for an individual with autism and building on what other retailers have done, I believe that with the launch of butterFLY, a fully inclusive experience can be achieved.

butterFLY will be the first standalone business to fully cater exclusively for the needs of parents and carers of children with autism providing a personal shopping experience in a safe, calm, inclusive and exclusive environment.

CHAPTER ONE :

THE CONCEPT

CHAPTER 1.1

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of butterFLY is to create an instore, inclusive personal shopping experience for autistic children and their parents.

The objectives of butterFLY are:

1. To create a service for people with autism along with any parent or carer that will enhance their shopping experience

2. To make the clothes and shoe shopping more manageable for the parent/carer and autistic individuals.

3. To create a space that will alleviate the stress and anxiety from shopping

4. To create a safe and calming space where items can be tried on without the fear of being judged for having an autistic child or being autistic.

5. To make face to face shopping accessible to all. (as 64% of people who are on the autism spectrum disorder avoid shopping centres due to the fear of sensory overload.)

6. Reduce the interaction an autistic individual has to face when in a retail setting.

7. Raising awareness and focusing on the needs of an autistic shopper (In the UK, businesses are losing around £2bn a month due ignoring this group of consumers).

CHAPTER 1.2

SUMMARY OF BUSINESS

butterFLY is an instore experience where autistic children and parents can come for a personalised shopping and sensory room experience. This experience will use an appointment system to ensure the experience is structured and efficient.

Via the appointment-based system, consumers will be able to advise for what occasion they are looking to buy, their style, size and price point. This can range from any occasion, style of clothing and preference of store.

A personal shopping expert will be able to pick these items out and have them ready for individuals to try on. This shopping experience will be for either parents or children. This creates an environment where they don't have to feel secluded and will no longer have to avoid shopping in general.

Whilst parents are trying on items of clothing, a sensory room will be available to use for the children. This will calm them down and create a safe and stress-free space to experience whilst their parents are picking out their clothes.

CHAPTER 1.3

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

1. The consumers will visit www.butterFLY.com, selecting the location of their personalised shopping

2. Once location is selected, they choose for whom the shopping is for- parent or child.

3. A timeslot will be selected, outlining occasion, product type, preferred colours/ material and price point for items they would like available on arrival at butterFLY

4. Arrival at the bespoke space with a number of outfits pre- selected and available to try and purchase

5. An exclusive pay point removing the need to queue

6. A sensory area will be within the secure retail space in order to engage the autistic child; allowing the parent to try on items without the fear of the child running off.

CHAPTER 1.4

KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS

Key features of the business include:

• A bespoke personal shopping experience

• An exclusive private space where the consumer can try on items of clothing without sensory overload

• The use of sensory room to provide a calm environment for children that suffer from sensory overload in a retail space

• Exclusive till point removing the need to queue

• Understanding and trained staff that are fully familiar with the needs of autistic children or buyer

• A range of clothing made available without the need to pre purchase in order to try

Key benefits of the business:

• A sensory room that will provide a calm environment for the autistic child

• A shopping experience for the parent/carer without the fear of being judged for having a child that may react in a different way

• Stress free shopping without a sensory overload

• The ability to have a choice of items to try without the need to pre-purchase

• A one on one personal shopper to give advice/styling tips

• The autistic individual can try on items of clothing already selected from a range of retailers, removing the need to browse

• The fear and stress removed from queuing

CHAPTER 1.5

KEY DRIVERS

Metamorphic Trend

The movement where consumers are expecting and wanting convenience within their experiences.

With the evolution of technology, consumers now see everything as a service and expect it to be fast and efficient. Relevance of what they are shopping for is also key.

Civil Media Trend

Consumers are wanting a more one on one experience; they are moving away from the 'typical' social media posts.
They are moving towards more immerse experiences such as AR and VR.

Forgotten Consumer

Businesses aren't doing enough to help include people who have autism. They don't tackle the daily issues such as bright lights and sensory overload.

Even though, autism hour is considered in businesses it is nowhere near the amount that it should be; they only have an hour, once a week each year.

CHAPTER TWO :

THE CONSUMER

CHAPTER 2.1

TARGET CONSUMER

The target consumer is parent and carers with autistic children.

The demographics of the consumer will be within a 20mile radius of the initial shopping centre selected for launch- Merry Hill centre Merry Hill has ample free parking facilities, including disability spaces where, due to legislation that came into force on 29 August 2019, autistic people are now eligible for a Blue Badge.

Merry Hill is serviced by a good public transport network, including buses and Lye railway station, within 1 mile.

The West Midlands Metro Extension, due for completion for passenger services by 2023, will open up additional accessible transport links to Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Wednesbury and Stourbridge. (Midland Metro Alliance, 2020)

This experience will cater for two generations:
Generation 1 and parents between the ages 25-50. (Based on data provided by the office for national statistics, the average age of first-time mothers is 28.8) (Ons.gov.uk. 2020)

CHAPTER 2.2

TARGET CONSUMER VALUES

The key consumer for butterFLY are parents/carers of children with Autism and consumers with autism.
Based on Primary Research (full details contained in Appendices A,B & C) consumer values are:

PARENT/CARER

- Understanding and empathy from retail staff
- Structure and no surprises from the shopping experience
- No need to browse- items readily available
- Safe space with no crowds
- Quiet environment & muted colour scheme

AN AUTISTIC INDIVIDUAL

- No judgement from retail staff

- Structure of knowing where you are going and what you are going to buy

- Easy to find what you're looking for in shops

- No queues

CHAPTER THREE :

COMPETITION AND BUSINESS ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 3.1

MARKET RESEARCH

UK businesses are losing around £2bn a month by ignoring the needs of disabled people. (Hawkins and Bishop, 2019)

700,000 people in the UK are on the autism spectrum (that is 1 in 100 people) (Autism.org.uk 2020a)

Three million customers (this is including family members) find they are unable to go shopping without fear or judgment. Autistic people feel that 99% of people have heard of autism but only 16% understand it. (Autism.org.uk 2020a)

64% of people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) avoid shopping centres due to the fear of sensory overload This leads to the feeling of stress, anxiety and even physical pain as they have difficulty processing everyday information around sight, sound or touch. (Autism.org.uk 2020a)
This equates to over 1.9 million customers being excluded from a shopping experience. If the average spend per consumer per year was just GBP100, the revenue lost to the retailer is in excess of GBP190m. (Autism.org.uk 2020a)

The research into the viability of butterFLY has been completed via a variety of methods.
To gain first- hand understanding of how the business would best serve parents/carers of children with autism I have used survey monkey and held face to face meetings.
My research has explored evolving retail space such as visiting Glossier and Melissa to experience and understand how retail spaces can engage and connect with the consumer.

CHAPTER 3.1

MARKET RESEARCH

I have evaluated how an individual with autism reacts to a shopping experience and how and what established retailers are doing to make the shopping experience more inclusive for an autistic shopper.
Some examples of initiatives by existing retailers are:

New York NBA Store
They redesigned their flagship store to be more inclusive for people with sensory issues. They worked with non-profit KultureCity to improve the in-store experience for those customers, offering them *"sensory bags"* that had noise-cancelling headphones, fidget toys and an iPad. All employees had training to be on the lookout for signs that someone has specific needs and how to service this particular customer with empathy.

"Our hope is that we will demonstrate how easy it is to make spaces more inclusive, and will inspire other stores to do the same,""It's not just the right thing to do, it's also good for business,"

says Todd Jacobson, SVP of social responsibility at the NBA (Martin, 2018)

Gatwick Airport
Gatwick airport, London is the first UK airport to introduce a sensory room that allows travellers with autism to utilise the space in order to ease their nerves before flying. Gatwickairport.com (2020)

Landsec, the property firm have identified a need for more inclusive friendly spaces that are introducing initiatives to improve shopping experience for consumers who have autsim in all of their retail spaces.

Quiet spaces will be created through dimming the lighting, reducing noise, downloadable guides for shopping centres and training staff members within their retail centres on how to help and assist people with autism in order to try and create an inclusive shopping experience.

Head of Property at Landsec said:
"We recognise that retail destinations don't traditionally cater for neurodiversity, and, as a result, trips can be stressful and difficult,"

"We're confident that the measures we've introduced today are a step in the right direction, and will make our destinations more welcoming for people with autism and their carers." (Houghton, L. and Hawkins, A 2019)

Morrisons, Lidl and Asda have introduced a "quiet hour" Sainsbury's is trialling a 'Relaxed Lane' at its store in Prestwick, Scotland.

This is a two-hour 'Slow Shopping' concept that takes place every Tuesday afternoon to allow customers who need more time to carry out their purchases, such as those with dementia or physical disabilities. (Hawkins and Bishop, 2019)

CHAPTER 3.1

MARKET RESEARCH

The results from survey monkey highlighted:

- 46% of parents & carers of a child with autism find that noise, lighting and volume of other shoppers is the biggest challenge when shopping with a child who has autism.

- 46% feel stressed, anxious and judged when faced with a shopping trip with their child
36% find the experience daunting and hard work with 18% avoiding shopping completely.

- The three 'most crucial things to change in a retail space to create a more autism- friendly shopping experience' were answered as 'Awareness', Quiet Space' and ' Type of music being played'

Full details of the results from the survey monkey are contained within appendix a

The collaboration and interviews held with Joanne Austin co-chair of Carers Network, part of the Ability Network within HSBC bank highlighted:

- "I have been unable to have a 'normal' shopping experience"
- "Children who have autism have 'meltdowns' when shopping as they cannot cope with the loud noises, the music playing and the bright lights."
- "We need to know what we are buying and where from"

The concept of butterFLY would give a 'calm environment' 'no surprises'- something to cut out the browsing' 'It would be a god send-especially if we didn't have to browse or queue to pay' 'if colour and , textures were chosen in line with what he was used to it would really help'

Full details of interviews held are contained in appendix b

The meeting with 23 parents and carers at a support group for parents and carers with autistic children detailed that 83% would use the service offered by butterFLY with 78% advising they would pay for this type of service.
Full details are in appendix c

From the research completed it is evident that the 'normal' shopping experience does not meet the needs of parents/carers and children with autism. The retail spaces are not conducive to the experiences of an autistic child and restrict the shopping experience for the parent carer.

butterFLY is a business that will address this, making the whole shopping experience bespoke and meeting the needs and wants of a parent/carer shopping with an autistic child.

CHAPTER 3.2

DIRECT AND INDIRECT COMPETITORS

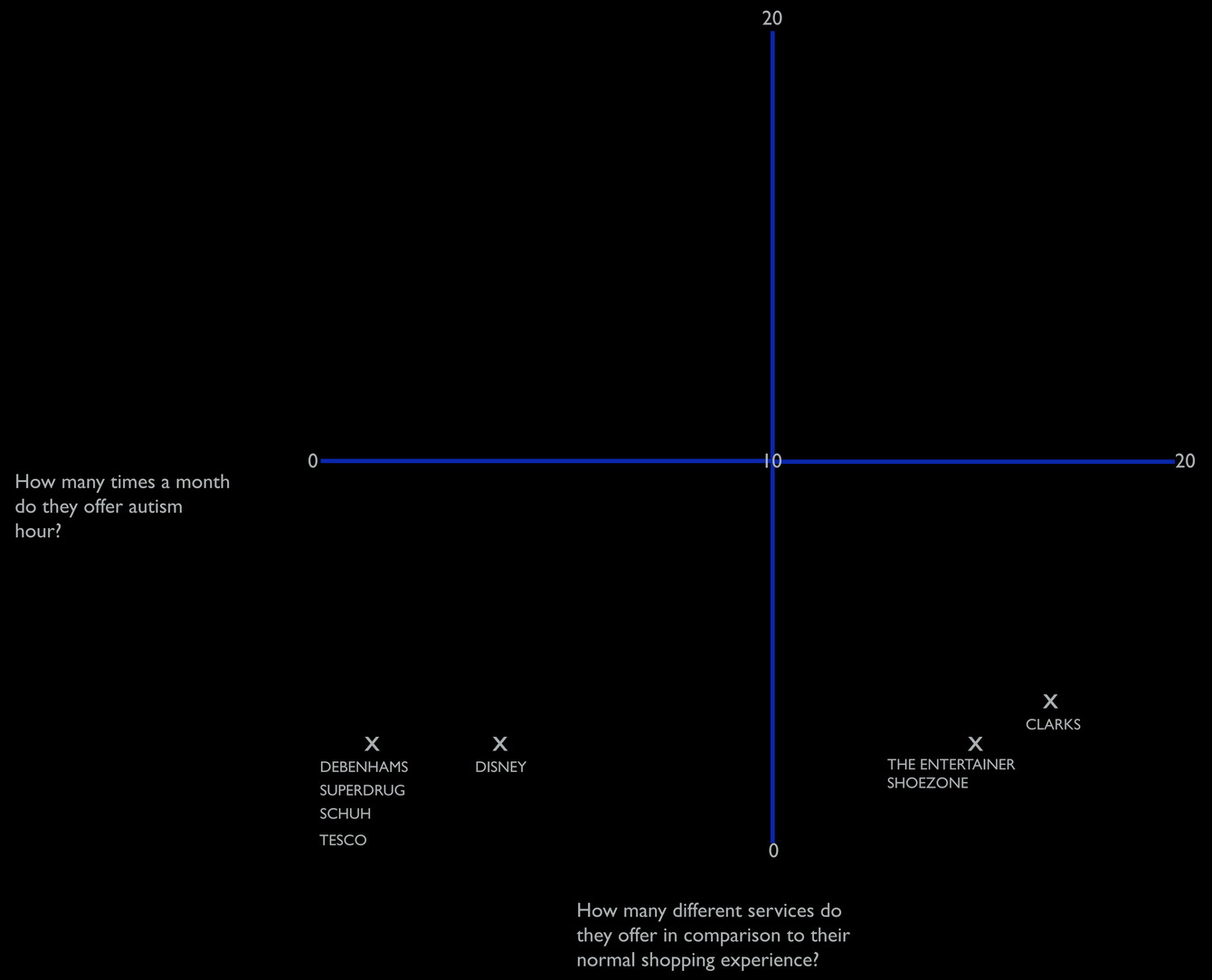
DIRECT COMPETITION:

• Personal shoppers within established retailers such as Topshop who are already offering a Personal Shopper experience.

• Autism Hour or 'Quiet Hours' many retailers take part in this national campaign so when this is held, it may effect business for butterFLY.
See brand positioning map for where competitors stand in comparison to butterFLY. Further expansion in Appendix D
(Autism.org.uk. 2020e)

INDIRECT COMPETITION

• Online shopping as autistic shoppers often shop online. As butterFLY will be marketing online, this will hopefully attract these consumers.



CHAPTER 3.3

PESTLE ANALYSIS

P E S T L E

POLITICAL

- Government Inclusive Initiatives
- Reduced local council funding resulting in higher rates
- Increase in business taxation

ECONOMICAL

- Increase in business rates
- Cost of living reducing disposable income
- Economic stability

SOCIAL

- Stigma of shopping with an autistic child
- Inclusivity
- Coronavirus
- Attitudes
- Working parent's availability to shop

TECHNOLOGY

- Reliance on a website
- Internet performance and reliability
- Online shopping

LEGAL

- DBS check for all staff
- Contracts between butterFLY and key brands

ECONOMIC

- Economic issues after the Coronavirus outbreak

CHAPTER 3.4

SWOT ANALYSIS

S W O T

STRENGTHS

• Unique proposition
• There is a need to address the barriers that shopping with an autistic child can present
• Autism/inclusivity high profile & growing awareness
• Located in one of the largest shopping centres so immediate marketing
• Intu already an advocate of Autism hour
• Fixed cost overheads
• Not dependant on having to purchase stock and trend forecasting
• No stock surplus
• Bespoke customer services encompassing both a personal shopping/ styling experience whilst supporting inclusivity
• Existing footfall trading from an established centre

WEAKNESSES

• Profitability as based on commission and minimum sale
• Awareness
• Retailer buy in
• Stability of shopping centres ongoing financial viability
• Concept can be copied by retailers
• Recruiting the correct calibre of staff

OPPORTUNITIES

• To diversify to support other disabilities
• To replicate the brand across all retail areas in UK
• Provide bespoke service that can be recommended
• Repeat business
• Reduced footfall of shopping centres is a positive as crowds are a restrictive factor in the autistic shopping experience
• Endorsement of autism charities
• Collaboration between butterFLY and brands to negotiate commission percentages
• Positive press
• Collaboration with Autistic charities

THREATS

• The ongoing viability of shopping centres.
• Retailers replicating the concept to avoid paying sale commission
• Retailers not supporting and refusing to provide clothing
• Rent and business rate rises
• Staff turnover
• Inability to generate profits or break even
• Macro-economic - such as Coronavirus
• Inability to source items requested

CHAPTER 3.5

UNIQUE SELLING POINT

The USP of butterFLY is that it is the first standalone business to fully cater exclusively for the needs of parents and carers of children with Autism.
It is driven by the consumers wants and needs, combining both a personal shopping experience whilst providing a safe, calm and inclusive and exclusive space for the individual with autism.

CHAPTER FOUR :

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

CHAPTER 4

HOW THE BUSINESS WILL WORK

A space within Merry Hill centre will be the first store to be created to cater for the needs of the parent/carer shopper.

Clients will be able to book an appointment via the website www.butterFLY.com specifying the date, time and location of the appointment. They will be able to specify the occasion that they are buying for, details about their style, products that are of interest, colours, fabrics, size and price point. Clients will pay a fee through an online payment mechanism such a paypal or global pay to secure the appointment.

On the day of the appointment items will be sourced from key collaborative partner brands with the room prepped and outfits arranged in line with the client's vision.

Individuals will be greeted in a bespoke autism friendly space which will have luxurious changing facilities along with a sensory space for the autistic child.

It is imperative that the whole experience is structured and timely, offering a seamless operation in order to facilitate the clients shopping journey

Exclusive pay point for butterFLY clients removing the stress of queuing to pay.

The concept is to make the shopping experience for parents /carers and autistic children one that is inclusive, stress free and enjoyable.

CHAPTER 4

HOW THE BUISNESS WILL WORK

We will look to build relationships with our clients encouraging repeat visits.

The seamless delivery of the shopping experience is an integral part of the business. It needs to be structured and calm to help facilitate the autistic child and their parent/carer.

Commission between 5-10% will be generated through the sale of items and payable by the retailers.

A contract of service will be set up between butterFLY and key collaborative partners, agreeing commission rates, returns policy and payment terms. The contract will include details of how funds will be paid to both the retailer and butterFLY.
A daily inventory of sourced items will be maintained by butterFLY with any unsold items returned to the retailer at close of business daily. No stock will be retained by butterFLY.
On a weekly basis butterFLY will provide the retailer a full breakdown of items sold and reimburse funds received minus the commission owed. (as detailed within the terms of contract)

CHAPTER FIVE :

MARKETING STRATEGY

CHAPTER 5.1

MARKETING STRATEGY

Launch the actual store in line with autism awareness month (for 2020 this is April with actual autism date April 2nd)

Collaboration with autism charities and autism parent carer groups to promote the store via social media and support groups.

Promotion via the shopping centre and stores

Working in collaboration with stores, offering their product for consumers. (butterFLY will gain a 5-10% commission on any product sold)

Profitability to be generated through external brand sponsorship and commission on items sold.

Instagram pages showcasing butterFLY from inception to launch. Regular posts and targeted adverts

Look to engage with local press to showcase the unique concept of the business.

CHAPTER 5.2

12 MONTH TIMELINE

Social Media Posts

Flyers in centre and key Collaborators

MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH

Autism Parent Support Groups

LAUNCH

Press Release

Ascot- Ladies Day Promotion

Autism West Midlands Parents Lunch

Schools out - Holidays

Back to school focus

Halloween Promotion

Autism friendly Christmas Focus

Half Term

Easter

CHAPTER SIX :

FINANCIAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 6

Embedded within this document is the financial information relating to:

- Start-Up Costs for the business.
- Profit & Loss
- Projected Cash Flow forecast
- Refurbishment costs
- Break even

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

APPOINTMENTS

Month	Daily appointments	Weekly appointments	Monthly appointments
1- 2	4	24	96
3-4	5	30	120
5-6	6	36	156
7-8*	10	60	252
9-10	11	66	276
11-12**	12	72	312

* is an assumption of a second store being opened (with the same trajectory level of appointments as store one)
**month 12 seeing both stores at capacity of 6 appointments per day over 6 days.

Adjacent are the projected level of appointments for butterFLY over a daily, weekly and monthly timeframe on which the projected income is based.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12	**Total**
Income													
Appointment Fees	960	960	1200	1200	1560	1560	2520	2520	2760	2760	3120	3120	24240
Sales Commission	960	960	1200	1200	1560	1560	2520	2520	2760	2760	3120	3120	24240
Total	1920	1920	2400	2400	3120	3120	5040	5040	5520	5520	6240	6240	48480
Expenditure													
Rent	533	533	533	533	533	533	1066	1066	1066	1066	1066	1066	9594
Utilities	50	50	50	50	50	50	100	100	100	100	100	100	900
Insurance	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	24	354
Card terminal rental fees	20	20	20	20	20	20	40	40	40	40	40	40	360
Payroll	840	840	840	840	840	840	1680	1680	1680	1680	1680	1680	15120
Refurbishment costs unit 2						2672							2672
Total	1473	1473	1473	1473	1473	4145	2916	2916	2916	2916	2916	2910	29000
Opening Balance		447	894	1821	2748	4395	3370	5494	7618	10222	12826	16150	19480
Residual Balance	447	894	1821	2748	4395	3370	5494	7618	10222	12826	16150	19480	

Income has been based on a £10 appointment fee and a sales commission of 10% from an assumed minimum spend of £100 per customer over 6 days

Expenditure remains consistent for M1-M6 - with payroll rising in M7 based on two stores.

Staffing costs are assumed as being three advisors covering a total of 84 hours. The business owner will aim to not draw a wage for the first 12 months, to keep expenditure as low as possible.

Profits will be drawn at the end of 12 months trading.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- PROJECTED PROFIT AND LOSS

- REFURBISHMENT COSTS

PROJECTED PROFIT AND LOSS

Projected Profit & Loss for butterFLY Year 1		
Total income	48480	
Gross Profit		48480
Operating Expenses/Overheads		
Salaries	15120	
Rent	9594	
Utilities	900	
Insurance	354	
Refurbishment unit 2	2672	
Total Overheads		28640
Repayment of Directors loan for Start up costs	5265	
Net Operating profit		23,375

Projected profit and loss which returns a pre tax NET operating profit of £23,375.

REFURBISHMENT COSTS

Item	Cost
Desk	265
Sofa	810
Mirrors	120
Rugs	78
Bubble Tubes	500
Bean Bags	210
Curtains	85
Clothing rail	24
Projector	90
Lego	35
Spotlights	160
Paint	25
Electrician	120
Fibre Optic Lights	150
Total	2672

Refurbishment of the retail space is calculated at £2672. A full break down is contained with supporting evidence of suppliers' websites recorded.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- START UP COSTS

- BREAKEVEN

START UP COSTS

Refurbishment of space	2672
Advertising (flyers & Bus cards)	118
Website	156
Solicitors fees for contract	500
Till point	449
Staff Training costs(National Autistic Society) Donation	1295
DBS check	75
TOTAL	5265

Start -up costs of £5625 will be will covered by initial cash injection from business owner. These will look to be repaid by end of year one.

BREAKEVEN

Annual Fixed costs in GBP	
Rent	9594
Utilities	900
Insurance	354
	10848

Average Monthly Break even in GBP	
Monthly B/E	904
Weekly B/E	208
Equates to 21 apps @ 10 per week	210
Equates to min 4 apps @ 10 per day	210

Breakeven has been calculated down to a granular level covering fixed costs. The weekly breakeven is £210 which coincides with the assumed initial level of 4 appointments per day.

CHAPTER SEVEN :

ONGOING AND FUTURE GROWTH

CHAPTER 7.1

ONGOING AND FUTURE GROWTH

butterFLY strategy will be known as the 3M's.
This is due to the schedule of the proposed store launch over a 12month period
First store will be opening in Merry Hill, month six in Manchester and by month 12, in Milton Keynes.
The locations selected are based within areas of the UK that have the largest number of Autistic children. (Data taken from Government figures of autistic children within schools)
In addition;
- Merry Hill- is the fourth largest shopping centre in the UK
- Manchester- the second largest shopping centre in the UK
- Milton Keynes: is an INTU shopping centre based in an area with a high percentage of autistic children of school age.

CHAPTER 7.2

LONG TERM VISION

MEDIUM TERM (5 YEARS)

To expand the butterFLY brand into additional shopping centres of Bullring Birmingham and Westfield Stratford.

To secure full collaboration partnerships with all retail brands

Full collaboration with autism charities to promote the concept of the butterFLY autistic shopping experience

LONG TERM VISION (10 YEARS):

To create a butterFLY space on all UK Retail High Streets, with full collaboration with all leading UK retailers.

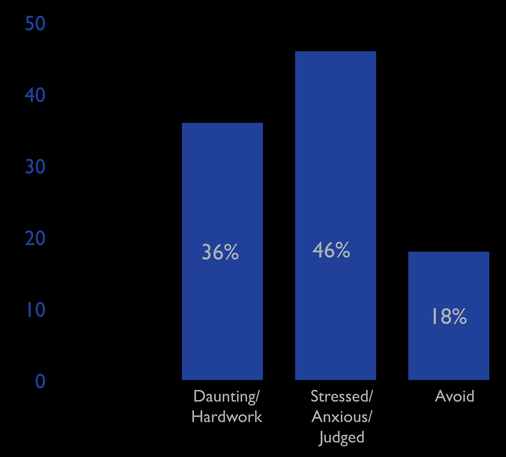
butterFLY to become the 'Inclusive Shopper' expert, providing consultancy services to UK retailers in how to create bespoke butterFLY spaces for all disability groups.

APPENDICES

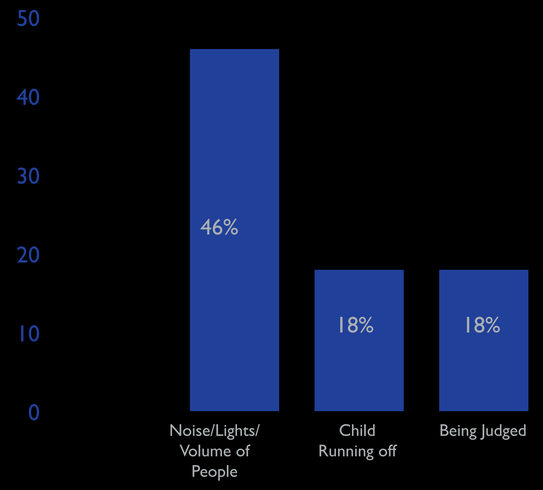
APPENDIX A

SURVEY MONKEY RESULTS

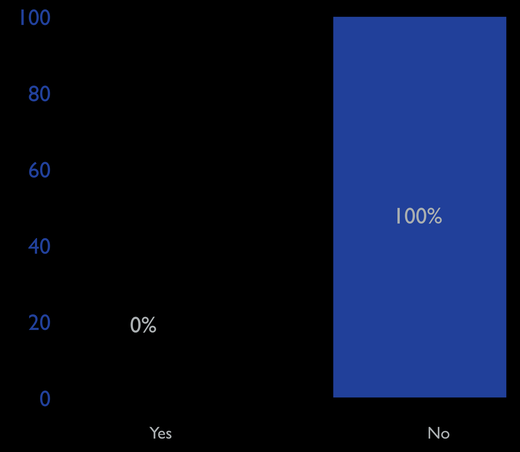
How do you feel when faced with a shopping trip with your child?



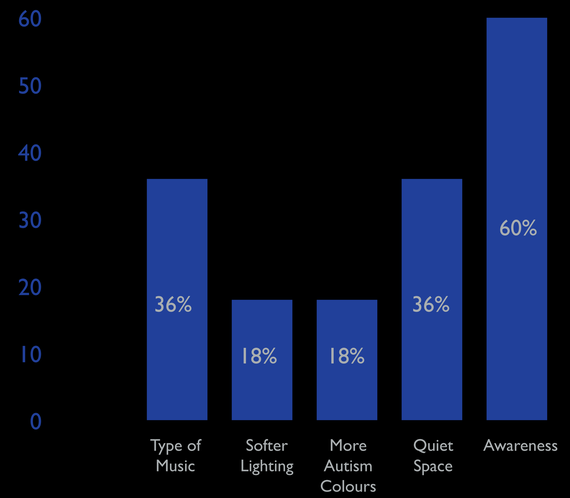
What is the biggest challenge when shopping with a child who has autism?



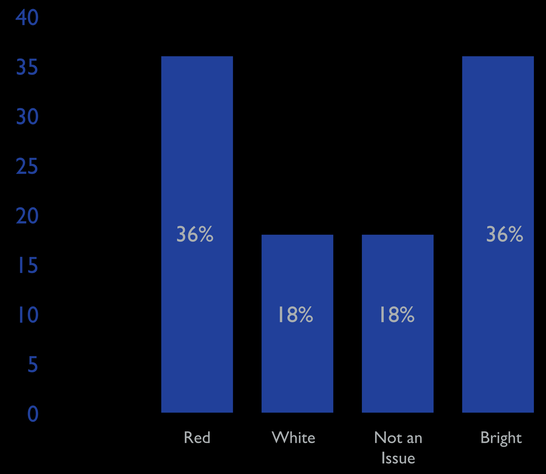
Do you think people/retail businesses understand what Autism is?



What do you think would be the three most crucial things to change in a retail space to create a more autism- friendly shopping experience?



Are there any specific colours that should be avoided in a retail setting for people with autism?



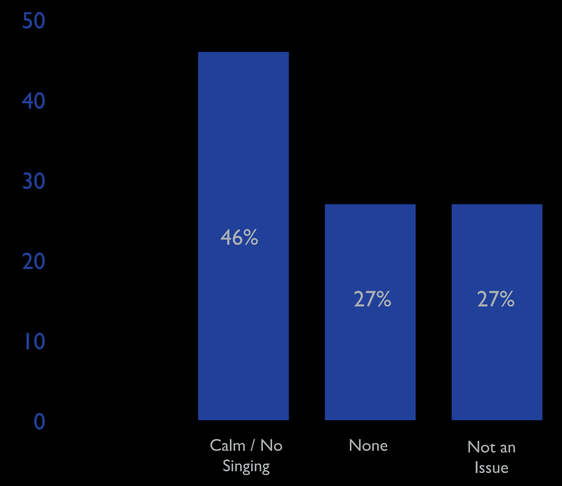
<u>The results from survey monkey highlighted:</u>
46% of parents & carers of a child with autism find that noise, lighting and the volume of other shoppers is the biggest challenge when shopping with a child who has autism.

46% feel stressed, anxious and judged when faced with a shopping trip with their child

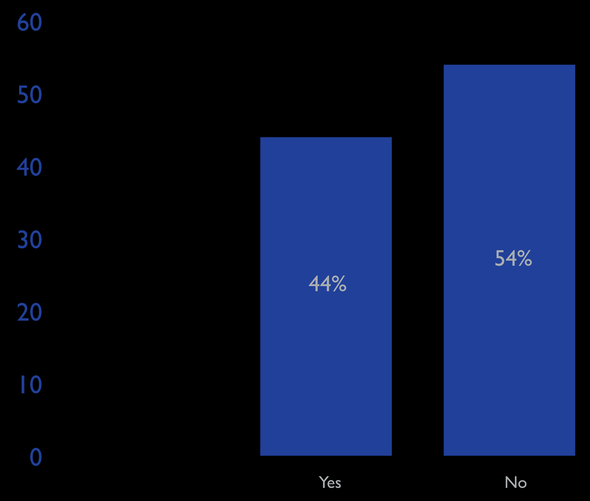
36% find the experience daunting and hard work with 18% avoiding shopping completely.

The three 'most crucial things to change in a retail space to create a more autism- friendly shopping experience' were answered as 'Awareness', Quiet Space' and ' Type of music being played'

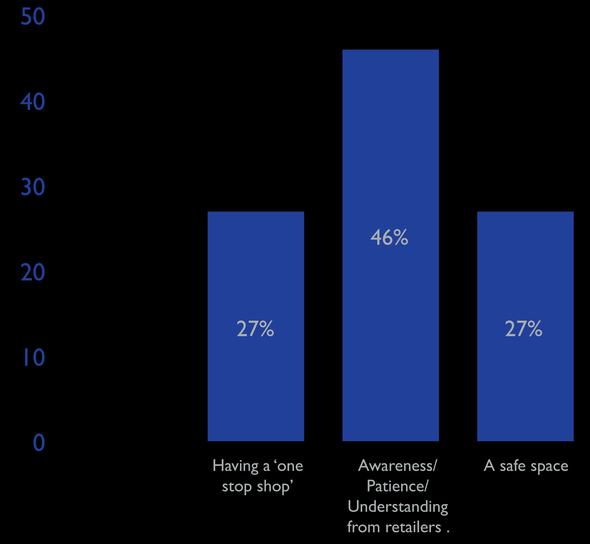
What type of sounds/music (if any) would you suggest is best suited to play when shopping with an individual with autism?



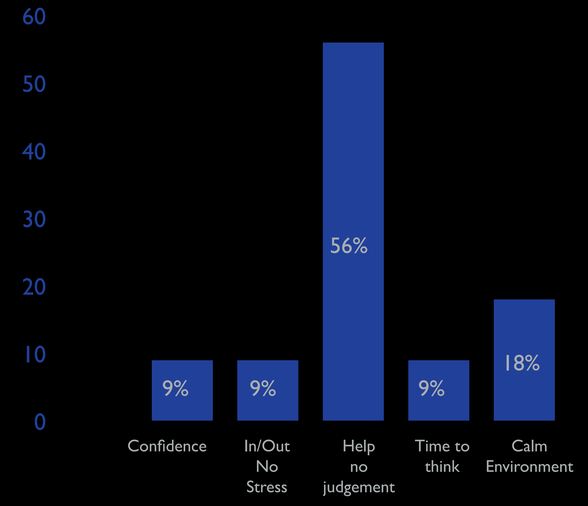
Have you heard of autism hour and if so, do you think it is successful or good enough?



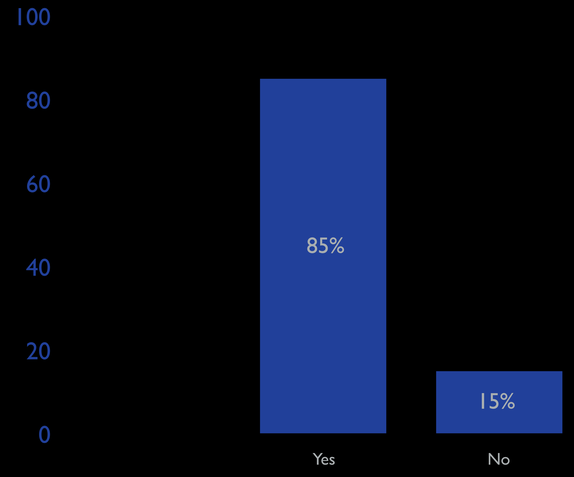
What would help enhance your shopping experience in a retail space?



What is the most crucial thing an autistic shopper/parent of a child with autism needs from a shopping experience?



If a one on one personalised shopping experience along with a specialised sensory room, dedicated to parents and children with autism, opened in your local shopping centre, would you be encouraged to use it?



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW ONE

INTERVIEW HELD WITH JOANNE AUSTIN

Meeting held with JA Co-Chair of Parent Carer Network - HSBC Employee Ability Network
Discussion held with JA about her personal experience as the mother of an autistic child

R- Researcher
JA- Joanne Austin

R- Can you please explain a little about the carers network

JA- The network is set up to provide support to individuals who have caring responsibilities. This can be caring for sick or old relatives, children and partners with mental and physical disabilities etc. We provide signposting to resources available along with practical and emotional support from people in similar situations along with professional networks. I am a member as I have a son with autism so I know what it's like to be working full time and having caring responsibilities.

R- Can you please tell me about your son

JA- We adopted SA when he was one and after five challenging years he was finally diagnosed with autism and given an Special Educational Needs Statement when he was six. This was following ongoing battles with his school, doctors , social worker and health visitors. The main issue was that people didn't understand his behaviour. He would literally scream and cry for hours on end. I had to resort to physically restraining him at times to stop him hurting himself. People said he was naughty and I was made to feel I was a bad parent.
He had no concentration at school and took everything said to him quite literally -
For example if he was told to 'wipe his feet' he would take off his shoes and socks and get a towel to wipe his feet. I soon realised you needed to say 'Wipe your shoes that you are wearing on the mat that you are standing on '
It was about adapting to how he processed things.

I explained to JA that I was in the first phase of an idea in how to support autistic shoppers.

R- can you explain to me the challenges you faced when shopping with S

JA- It has been hard; I have been unable to have a shopping experience that is considered 'normal'. With S and what is seen with a lot of other children who have autism is that they have meltdowns when shopping as they cannot cope with the loud noises, the music playing and the bright lights.

R- Would you say that having a structure is an important factor with how you shop with S?

JA- Yes definitely! Having frequent meltdowns because of the lack of structure has stopped me shopping. If it was an essential item i needed to buy, say school shoes, I had to draw a map of where the shop was and it was in-out - measured as best as he could be, with the hope that the shoes fitted. To be fair it was quite embarrassing- he could not cope with other children either being around him- the noise and variety presented for trying on was too much.

R- What would you say is a major factor that helps when shopping?

JA- Sometimes a map of the place is the best way forward as it gives us a route to follow. We can make our plan but unfortunately that means we can't deviate from that.

R- Is having a routine important?

JA- Yes, as it allows us all to know where we are going, in and out and what is coming up next.

R- What is a shop that S coped with best ?

JA- The Lego shop is an amazing place to be. Research is actually being developed to show how Lego really stimulates the mind of an autistic child.

R- What is the most important part of a shopping experience when shopping with an autistic child?

JA- We need to need to know exactly what we are buying. We can't alter from that

R- Why is this?

JA- An autistic child has a problem with dealing with the unknown and they can have issues with specific textures and ranges of items.
Because of this, we have to stick to the same brand, styles and specific colours.

R- Can you give an example?

JA- Take a jumper for example, if they want a jumper, we need to establish what this means- if they want a knitted jumper, it has to be knitted, if they want it a specific colour, it has to be the correct shade- it can't be anything other than that. If it is different it could lead to a "meltdown". We always need to make sure we are aware of this.

R- Do you feel like you could go shopping anywhere?

JA- Not really, we have to know the store has what we want in order for us to go there. S for example, will only go to one shop as he knows what is in there; he knows the colours, brands and style. He cannot cope with browsing!!

I gave a broad concept of my idea and asked if that type of experience would benefit her and Sam 'Personal one on one shopper, in a bespoke space designed with an autistic child in mind'

JA-Yes- calm environment, with distractions such as Lego - no surprises- something to cut out the browsing- as for me when S was little there was no way I could browse and try on clothes with him in tow. People would say 'leave him at home' but baby sitting an autistic child is not an option - they can't cope with change.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW ONE

INTERVIEW HELD WITH JOANNE AUSTIN

Meeting held with JA Co-Chair of Parent Carer Network - HSBC Employee Ability Network
Following on from our previous discussions - I outlined my thoughts to gain JAs personal opinion on how this would support a shopper with an autistic child

R- Researcher
JA- Joanne Austin

R- Would a personal one on one experience be of interest

JA- Yes

R- Have you ever used a personal shopper say in Debenhams

JA- No- department stores are too 'busy' and noisy. It would be challenging to even get him in there

R- Would a separate space that allowed you and S to be the only people there of interest

JA- Yes but having rails and rails of clothes where you needed to browse would still be an issue

R- Say if you could book an appointment, and advise what you were looking for or the occasion you were buying for and a selection was made available in an autistic friendly space would you use this.

JA- Yes it would be a god send - especially if we didn't have to browse or queue to pay
For S if the colours and textures were chosen in line with what he was used to, it would really help

R- Would you pay for this service

JA- Yes as it's difficult to-see and try on multiple items at home- even buying online you would have to buy them all first and return unwanted items. Sometimes you don't have the money or time to do this

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW ONE

INTERVIEW HELD WITH JOANNE AUSTIN AND SAM AUSTIN

Explained purpose of meeting which was to discuss the shopping experience with both Joanne Austin & Sam Austin who has autism.

R- Researcher
JA- Joanne Austin
SA- Sam Austin

R- What is the hardest part of shopping?

JA – can only go for what we are going for- no deviating. Planning- everything to be exactly where it is.

SA - My reaction is different as I've gotten older. I can go now but I don't enjoy it - I have to be in and out. The queues are horrible and the people who serve you are not nice, judging what you have bought and what you are like.

R- What do you think would be the three most crucial things to change in a retail space to create a more autistic friendly shopping experience?

JA-
1.queuing – long waits
2. quiet space if you are trying things on
3. Better parking and no crowds

SA-
1.What I want just there - so I don't have to look for it
2.Private so no one is judging you
3.No queuing

R-Are there any specific colours that should be avoided in a retail setting or are more calming

JA -
1. Green is effective
2. Blues and purples

SA-
1.Purple and blue
2.Not reds or orange

R-What type of sounds are best to use in a retail setting?
JA - better if calming

SA- I don't listen to any specific sounds- prefer it quiet

R-Have you heard of autism hour and do you think it is successful or good enough?

JA-
-The problem is it's usually on a week day which is no good to a working parent as you can't access it because it's in working hours.
- Good concept but does not happen enough

SA- it's okay but you still have to look around and I don't like that

R-What would help enhance your shopping experience in a retail space?

JA-
-What is on your list you are able to go in and get it
-If there were choices but you didn't have to browse for them

SA-
-If I wanted something new I could get it without going from shop to shop
-If you ask for something shops don't understand, so if they did and had the things straight away it would be better
-I hate different Textures and people don't understand

R- If shopping with children who have autism, what activities/toys would engage your child?

JA-
-Lego
-Thomas the Tank train station- chunky building toys or flat pack items that need building, fibre optic,s or anything that connects
-Things to avoid are role play toys or things showing how it works -inferring and deducting are a no.

SA-
-I've always liked Lego and putting things together like Ikea furniture

R- What is the most crucial thing an autistic shopper needs from a shopping experience?

JA-
-A calm environment
-A space where not judged and where you have patience
-For me it would be fabulous to have pre selected outfits for me to try without having to look for them

SA-
-Having the things I like in one place
-When little having Lego and it being all calm and not having people shout at you and look at you
-Not having lots of noise and bright lights

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP

AUTISM PARENTS COFFEE MORNING

Attendees – 23 parents

Concept of butterFLY explained to parents

butterFLY is an instore experience where autistic children and parents can come for a personalised shopping and sensory room experience. This experience will use an appointment system to ensure the experience is structured and efficient.

Via the appointment-based system, consumers will be able to advise for what occasion they are looking to buy, their style, size and price point. This can range from any occasion, style of clothing and preference of store.

Questions raised with attendees with results from a show of hands:

Would you use this type of service:- *19 from 23 said they would (83%)*

Would you pay for this type of service:- *18 from 23 said they would- (78%)*

What would be the maximum you would pay?

£20 per hour- 7 from 18 said they would pay this - (39%)

£10 per hour – 18 said they would pay this – (100%)

Do you think this type of service would be beneficial to both the parent/carer and child?

Parent only- 3 from 23 said parent only (13%)

Parent and child –19 from 23 said it would (83%)

No use – one said the service would not be beneficial (4%)

APPENDIX D

BRAND POSITIONING MAP

Brand positioning map comes from information on what competitors are doing with Autistic Hour.
The next Autistic hour in October and some stores are doing once in that month and others are doing multiple. All of the data comes from shops located in Birmingham City Centre.

The 5 different things that businesses were altering in their stores were:

- Reduce background noise / tannoy announcements
- Educate staff about autism
- Clear information about where things are in store
- Dim lights
- Turn off till/scanner noises

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