Catering to Pregnant Women Amid COVID-19

● Destination Maternity's two brands play in a niche that's less impacted by the health crisis.

In a health crisis that's pummeling fashion retailers, Destination Maternity Corp. has a better view.

The corporation's two brands, Motherhood Maternity and A Pea in the Pod, which sell maternity clothes and accessories — categories that could be considered "essential" in an otherwise "nonessential" fashion industry. They both no longer operate stores, just websites.

"We have been really focusing on our bestsellers. They're playing well in light of everything going on right now," said Ryan, president of Destination Maternity, told WWD.

"Our assortment wasn't keeping up with how our customer was shopping so we have refocused on our top products — maternity gowns, pajamas, sleepwear, hooded sweatsuits, leggings, knit joggers, T-shirts and jeans. "We already had the assortment there. Now we are making sure that we're messaging to those things. We are really catering to at-home, comfort, soft-dressing needs, that we're messaging to those things. We're really shrewd and intelligent with how they are working from home and overall, changing our normal routines," said Ryan.

"At Motherhood Maternity, our focus has always been on providing our expecting moms and new moms through pregnancy challenges and supporting from the first trimester through the fourth when she is seeking nursing and back-to-work post pregnancy options," said Ryan. "Today, we find ourselves in an unusual place in time, however, our customers are still having babies and connecting with close friends and family as their pregnancy progresses," said Ryan.

With the campaign, "We've been getting 1,000 new followers a week on Instagram and also getting messages and emails from women to know what happens when their water breaks, it is safe at the hospital, will my boyfriend, husband situate be with me. The thought of not having a partner in the delivery room has just scared people, and we've had communications that the brand has provided a forum for people to offer advice and for people to feel not alone. It's been very helpful. It gives people a sense of calm," Ryan said.

"It's also just a place to vent," she added. "Women are trying to figure out how to juggle it all, providing three meals a day which everybody expects, getting the laundry done, the dishes. For a lot of women, it's been very sad staying at home, and not being able to show their bump," in person.

Destination Maternity, based in Moorestown, N.J. was founded by Dan and Rebecca Matthews original under the Mother's Works Inc. "We also knew that there were many moms with young children trying to juggle it all as we have transitioned into working from home, homeschooling, working from home and overall, changing our normal routines," said Ryan.

The company's Facebook and Instagram platforms have videos, stories, pictures and conversations ranging from virtual doctor's appointments to grocery shopping, altering birth plans, getting birth during COVID-19, postpartum isolation and more. "We're working with young children around the company. The company concluded a contest during April whereby mothers submitted bump photos. The best photo of each day was chosen by the company and the winner received a Motherhood Maternity $100 gift card and care package. "We know that women are missing special mom-to-be moments that are emotional milestones usually shared with close friends and family as their pregnancy progresses," said Ryan.

"It's been very helpful. It gives people a reason to talk," said Ryan. "For the other women, it's been very sad staying at home, and not being able to show their bump," in person.

"I would never say never," replied Ryan. "There is a school of thought that the pregnancy rate could increase due to sheltering in, though it's also possible that with the economy tanking, people are worried about their jobs and financial security and may not be inclined to have children in the current climate and take on added expenses.

"Our e-commerce has been stronger than ever since the last two and a half to three years, almost comparable during holiday time," Freede said. "We are selling a lot of timepiece, sunglasses, expensive footwear and handbags. A lot of everything really, more than what I was expecting. A big part of consumers' wallet share has been going to experiences like travel and restaurants. But people can't do any of that now. So for many who still have jobs, still making money and stuck at home, there's a fervor to live their lives and buy fashion that makes you feel good. The online business is not enough to make up for our store closures, but there are some bright spots."