



Re-interpretation of an athleisure young casual wear line  
through an industry-academia cooperation project

Sooah Choi, Ph.D., Dankook University, S. Korea

Keywords: Athleisure, young casual wear, industry-academia cooperation

Given the demands of practical education, today's design education programs focus more on various industry–academia cooperation projects. Especially in the fashion design industry, professionals need to be aware of the current trends while students must be more eligible and closer to an entry-level designer who is able to perform immediately upon graduation. This case study is an industry–academia cooperation project which that served as one of the graduate fashion stages in a university in South Korea in 2016. It is a re-interpretation of an athleisure young casual wear line “Tate Like” from the Tate brand. The company launched a new line to correspond to the current trends for youth and to meet the lifestyle of young adults looking for stylish urban athleisure casual wear. The project lasted 7 months, from March 2016 to September 2016. Participating students designed 1 to 6 designs each, and 1 or 2 outfits were selected to make into final garments. The stage included 16 menswear and 8 womenswear outfits, for a total of 24 outfits. Then to hear from participants, a survey of the 18 participating students was then collected in three parts. All questions used a 5-point Likert scale analysis except for the last part. The first part focused on satisfaction (11 questions), the second part explored the recognition and changes in interest about the brand (4 questions), the third part examined the design interests and relations to the subject (6 questions), and the last part gathered any additional comments.

From this industry–academia cooperation project, the company was looking for various different interpretations of the new “Tate Like” line, especially from young people's perspectives, and students were asked to participate in promoting the company by putting up various photos about the process on their own SNS. The final designs and the images of photoshoots were going to be available for the company to use. In this particular case, it was interesting to see students' re-interpretation of the line and related developments. The results of the four-part survey may help plan for future projects by identifying the pros and cons.

The process was as follows: (1) the researchers met with participants to discuss the project; (2) students received the materials related to the brand story and concept, product line-up, interior and VMD information, logo, and graphics from the company; (3) students developed the research materials with a seasonal concept, color story, and ideas about design details; (4) students developed the designs and looked for fabric sources; (5) students made revisions after receiving feedback from the company's head designer; (6) the company let students choose fabric swatches to use for the designs and provided yardage for the sample products; (7) students developed at least two prototype samples and had at least three jury days before developing the final garments; (8) students found appropriate accessories and did professional photoshoots; (9) the works were presented at the graduate fashion show; and (10) the president of the company rewarded students at the ceremony.

The purpose of the new “Tate Like” line is to develop a new street athleisure line for younger generations by adding a signature logo and artwork. It was re-positioned from the classic line to a somewhat sportive line with a mid- to little lower price. The “Tate Like” line mainly targets youth in their early 20s; its sub-target is consumers between 15 and 35 years old. Millennials communicate through SNS and share their daily lives through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. The product line-up of the original Tate brand also changed from 50% of jackets, shirts, and pants to 58% of jumpers, denim, training wear, and t-shirts. The company tried to maintain the modern and clean aspects of the original brand while adding a logo and playing with artwork to incorporate more fun and casualness. The logo represents young people who see the world and observe trends as part of their cultures. The seasonal concept that students developed was derived from consumers who still want to purchase the brand; however, they are not decisive in many ways and almost seem risky in some ways, being uncertain about things around them (First View Korea, 2016). Young people, including seniors about to graduate and getting ready to find their first jobs, experience stress from the job market competition and would rather look for entertainment and fun. According to PFIN’s (2014, 2015) survey for 13- to 24-year-olds, youth use their smart phones for several purposes, with entertainment ranking fourth (among 13- to 19-year-olds) and third (among 20- 24-years-olds) in 2014, becoming first and second in 2015. This concept became known as “Risky Break Out.” The color story was saturated middle tones, mono tones, and neon colors as accents. The design details included lettering items and fun word plays, which were used on SNS. Unusual design details were purposely placed to express both the risky and fun sides.

The first part of the survey focused on the outputs and satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree). The average of all 18 participants (15 female & 3 male / 17-20s & 1-30s) was as follows: satisfaction with supported materials (3.78), usage of supported materials (4.06), helpful feedback (3.56), participation in the project (4.06), time-consuming nature of the project (4.39), satisfaction with output (4.06), promoting (3.78), various experiences (4.06), helpfulness (4.28), overall satisfaction (3.95), and successful achievement (4.17). The second part examined brand recognition: knowledge of the brand before the project (3.39), purchase experience (2.23), more interest in the brand (3.78), and willingness to recommend to others (4.05). The results indicated that, by participating in the project, students started to recognize the brand better, and interest in the brand increased. The third part sought to identify the connection between the brand and students as designers: interest in ready-to-wear (4.39), interest in womenswear (4.33), interest in menswear (3.89), interest in athleisure wear (3.17), interest in casual style (4.06), and interest in modern style (3.78). Students also commented that they were satisfied because the company provided the right fabrics as well as an original logo and artwork to use as is or extend their designs. However, they struggled to fully understand the brand concept and find their own styles to re-interpret. All students liked when the head designer commented on their designs and wanted to have more time to ask questions and get feedback. A few thought it would have been better to see the fabrics available before they even started the designs.