



Targeting the Baby Boomer Market: A Collaborative Marketing and Design Branding Project

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(1) New/Creative/Innovative Strategy

This paper demonstrates a creative approach to teaching student collaboration between a marketing course and an apparel design course. It presents specific communication strategies to have students evaluate and negotiate a final concept. Restricting the students to developing a brand and clothing line for the Baby Boomer market provides a structure to make them more objective in the creation of the final project and requires them to research a significant market demographic. This project could be easily implemented by faculty in fashion programs to build stronger communication and problem solving skills.

(2) Purpose/Objective of Strategy

The purpose of this paper is to present an innovative strategy to collaborative learning methods within a fashion curriculum. This cross-disciplinary approach initiates collaboration between students from marketing and apparel design backgrounds to work through a diverse array of problems to find real world solutions. Undergraduate textile and apparel curriculums frequently use team-based projects as a method for collaborative learning because it provides an opportunity to simulate a working environment that is comparable to the apparel industry (Karpove, Jacobs, Lee, Andrew, 2011). Frazier and Cheek (2005) say, “Proponents of collaborative learning claim that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking.”

Another objective of the project is to build critical thinking skills by establishing a demographic target market which the students must research. As Millennials, the students must identify the needs of a Baby Boomer generation unlike their own. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, adults 45 – 64 years old represented 26.4% of the U.S. population. Kendall (2009) explains this demographic as significant because of their large discretionary income and their willingness to seek and obtain “the kinds of goods and services they want” (p.64).

(3) Project Design/Deliverables

An initial meeting between the marketing and design classes was held to form groups and establish project parameters for the creation of a brand targeted to the Baby Boomers. Each group was a combination of 2 designers and 2 marketers. The marketing class was responsible for preliminary research on the target market, a brand brief report, and visual branding elements. The design class was responsible for researching customer trends and creating an apparel collection based on the brand brief from the marketers.

1. Marketers created a brand brief report which included a detailed description of the target market, company mission/vision, key competitors, and competitive advantage. They also created visual brand elements which included brand name, logo, and a branding toolkit.
2. Designers were given the brand brief report to design a collection for the target market. They researched the customers, fabric preferences, and trends. They prepared technical flat illustrations for a design review with the marketers.
3. Each group of 2 designers and 2 marketers came together to evaluate the development of the brand. The designers reviewed the visual branding elements created by the marketers and provided additional feedback. The marketers critiqued the designers' collection and together selected the final garments for the brand.
4. The final brand concepts were presented at the annual student fashion exhibition.

(4) Outcomes/Effectiveness of Strategy

Cross-disciplinary communication between marketing and design is essential for effective branding. This project provided students with an educational opportunity to experience communication challenges often resulting from differing creative visions. As a team-based collaborative project, students gained problem-solving skills in the negotiation of the final brand concept and presentation. Student feedback indicated that working in cross-disciplinary teams made communicating a consistent brand concept challenging. Working in cross-disciplinary teams encouraged decision-making for a successful project. Learning experiences that simulate real world challenges are essential for preparing students for the fashion industry. The presentation of this project would include photographs and images of the process and final branding design concepts.

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