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Development of Schematic Tool for Use in a Senior Capstone Course

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Key Words: Schematic, Senior Capstone Course

Synthesis, critique, application, analysis, theorizing and hypothesizing are higher order thinking skills valued in a university setting (Dunn et al., 2004). Senior capstone experiences provide students with the opportunity to capture, synthesize and demonstrate what they have learned during their college experience (Kuh, 2014). The purpose of this presentation is to share a schematic tool developed to assist textiles and apparel students in completing their senior capstone experience focusing on trend analysis and product development. In this particular course, students engage in a multi-phase, semester long project that requires students to assimilate and synthesize knowledge and skills developed in previously completed courses. The course focuses on the syntheses of product development processes through target market analysis, competitor analysis, trend analysis and the development of a marketable product line. To complete the capstone project, familiarly known as *Trend Analysis*, students work in teams composed of students from various concentrations within the major, such as design, merchandising, communications and textile science.

A three-phased schematic (Figure 1) was created to outline the expectations for the *Trend Analysis* project, as well as to demonstrate how a trend analysis could be conducted and executed into a product line within the industry. The first phase demonstrates how a trend analysis would be conducted by collecting research and information from across all industries throughout the world. Permission was received via email (6/23/14) from trendwatching.com to use “The Consumer Trend Canvas” to assist student teams with organizing information and identifying a coherent ‘thread’ outlining a possible, future trend. Based on the trends found during the information search, ideas of how these trends could be translated into apparel products are developed.

Phase two asks student teams to consider their possible target markets and industry competitors based on the random assignment of a product category. Based on the trends identified in phase one, students must consider their target market in terms of customer needs, how their company could meet those needs, the size and location of the market, and who will benefit from products created. Business competitors are determined based on the product category, as well as the price points, locations, and brand image of those companies. Students are asked to consider methods of distribution, market share, competitors’ business history, current performance, as well as competitors’ strengths and weaknesses. Information gathered on competitors is used to create the differential component that sets the students’ business apart from real business competitors.

Phase three outlines how the information in phases one and two will guide the creation of a marketable apparel product line. Trends identified in phase one guide the development of three separate product lines. Product lines are expected to be cohesive in nature, demonstrating the effect of brand image. The product lines are expected to appropriately demonstrate the future trends the student team determined and analyzed. Teams are also challenged to check to see if they have violated any copyrights or patents.

The *Trend Analysis* project is evaluated primarily using formative assessment. Formative assessment is defined as “an opportunity for students to improve their performance on the same task” (Dunn et al., 2004, p. 18). Formative assessments have three purposes. The first is identifying student difficulties; the second is measuring improvement throughout the project; and third is providing feedback to students to help them improve. Since the project is divided into three phases, feedback is provided after each phase. The final report is a compilation of all of three phases, and allows students the opportunity to improve upon past phases of the project. By allowing for formative assessment, students “learn, by increments and gradual insights, the specific nature of their limitations” (Dunn et al., 2004, p. 18). After the duration of the semester, a summative assessment is undertaken.

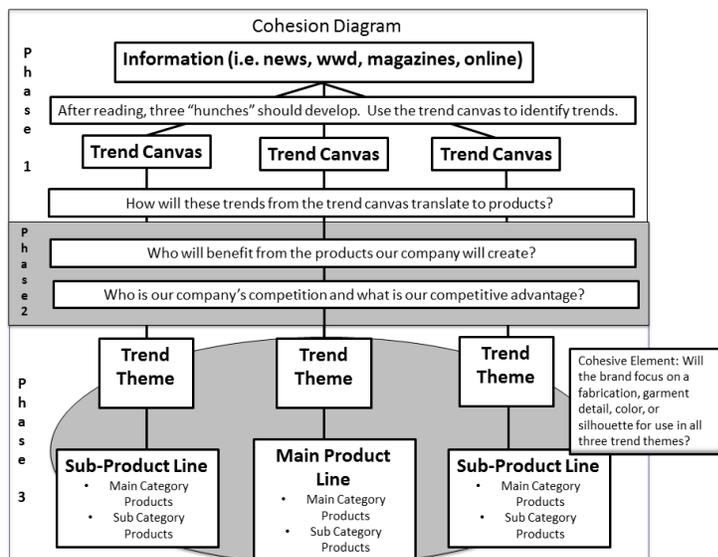


Figure 1. Three-Phased Schematic for Trend Analysis Project

A schematic was created to help students seek and analyze future societal trends, as well as to aid in the process of their senior-level capstone project. Feedback from students over the course of two semesters, indicated the schematic served students in two ways. First, it provided a framework for students to direct their actions for the manner in which a trend analysis should be conducted. Second, it demonstrated what is expected of students for their own trend analysis within the course.

References

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