A Redesigned Aesthetics Course with a Focus on Building Brand Identity through the 5Ps

Ann Marie Fiore  
_Iowa State University_, amfiore@iastate.edu

Janet E. Fitzpatrick  
_Iowa State University_, janfitz@iastate.edu

Amrut Sadachar  
_Iowa State University_, amrut@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm_conf](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm_conf)

Part of the Fashion Business Commons, Fashion Design Commons, Marketing Commons, and the Sales and Merchandising Commons

**Recommended Citation**

Fiore, Ann Marie; Fitzpatrick, Janet E.; and Sadachar, Amrut, 'A Redesigned Aesthetics Course with a Focus on Building Brand Identity through the 5Ps' (2010). _Apparel, Events and Hospitality Management Conference Proceedings and Presentations_. 88.  
[http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm_conf/88](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm_conf/88)

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Apparel, Events and Hospitality Management at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Apparel, Events and Hospitality Management Conference Proceedings and Presentations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
A Redesigned Aesthetics Course with a Focus on Building Brand Identity through the 5Ps

Abstract
This is a description of a course emphasizing how brand identity guides development of every aspect of the consumer offering, including, including the design of the product, of relevance to apparel design students, and the consumer environment, of relevance to merchandising students.

Keywords
aesthetics, branding

Disciplines
Fashion Business | Fashion Design | Marketing | Sales and Merchandising

Comments
A Redesigned Aesthetics Course with a Focus on Building Brand Identity through the 5Ps

Ann Marie Fiore, Janet Fitzpatrick, and Amrut Sadachar
Iowa State University, USA

Keywords: aesthetics, branding

Branding is the use of a name, sign (e.g., color), symbol (e.g., logo), design, experience and/or combination to identify and tell a story about goods/services/sellers, which helps differentiate the offering from others (Neumeier, 2006). Branding has become increasingly important to the success of businesses and in consumer decision-making (Carpenter, Moore, & Fairhurst, 2005). A growing number of books (e.g., Gobé, 2001; Lindstrom, 2005; Schmitt, 1999) suggest the importance of formal, expressive, and symbolic qualities of aesthetic elements of the consumer product and environment to successful branding. However, I have found no textbooks or college courses that provide students with a thorough understanding of the role of aesthetic elements in branding.

Therefore, I redesigned a three-credit aesthetics course, required by apparel design and merchandising majors, to fill this gap. The original course focused on providing an in-depth understanding of the elements and principles of design applied to visual analysis of apparel products and environments (e.g., store design, Web site design). The new course provided a framework for understanding the elements and principles of design in the context of building brand awareness and identity. Brand identity is a cluster of associations that the firm wants consumers to connect with or maintain towards the brand (Neumeier, 2006). The course emphasized how brand identity guides development of every aspect of the consumer offering, including the design of the product, of relevance to apparel design students, and the consumer environment, of relevance to merchandising students.

Elements of the Redesigned Course

The new course included a primer on branding including important concepts (e.g., brand personality, brand equity), strategies (e.g., co-branding, brand extensions), and its impact on firms and consumers. Aesthetic aspects must be coordinated when building brand identity (Lindstrom, 2005). To give order to the multifaceted contributors that should be considered in this process, a 5P framework was created for students and used throughout the course.

The 5Ps are Product, Property, Product Presentation, Promotional Activities, and People. This framework was inspired by the 4Ps briefly mentioned in Marketing Aesthetics (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). Products are material (tangible) goods with multi-sensory properties that can be repeatedly experienced by the consumer. Property includes the more permanent elements of the physical retail environment and corporate assets (e.g., office) such as building interiors, architecture, and service vehicles. Product Presentation entails the more easily changed elements of the setting that surround and enhance goods or services (e.g., packaging, store display). Promotional Activities are outlets (e.g., magazine ads) and events (e.g., sponsored charity events) for publicizing/promoting the brand that usually
take place outside the retail store. The last P, People, consists of appearance of brand representatives (broadly defined), interactions between brand representatives and consumers, or interactions among consumers that affect the brand experience.

Pedagogical strategies included PowerPoint-based lessons supporting detailed discussion of formal (sensory), expressive (emotional), and symbolic qualities of each element (light, color, texture, line, shape, space) and principle of design (proportion, scale, balance, rhythm, emphasis) along with music and scent, because all have an impact on building brand identity. PowerPoint-based lessons included copious visual and verbal industry examples illustrating how the elements and principles were used in branding. Numerous industry and popular press readings were included to provoke discussion. Active learning exercises were included in most classes to clarify concepts and further enliven the learning process. Many of the learning exercises involved responding to images or examples provided by the instructor. Some activities required that students bring in examples used to stimulate class discussion. Students were given credit for participating in the exercises rather than for deriving a correct response.

Given the large course enrollment (100+), multiple-choice exams were used, but many of the questions required application of concepts to visual or text examples. The student’s final grade was based on three exams (75%) and exercise participation (25%).

Impact on Student Learning and Future Plans

This new aesthetics course enhanced student understanding of the role of aesthetics in developing brand identity through the 5Ps. The average score on the new branding/5P-related exam questions (including concept application questions) was 79 percent, which supports successful student learning. This is a seven percent increase over average exam scores in the semester prior to the addition of the branding/5Ps focus. (Variance could be affected by difference in student samples.) Empirical pre-post tests, using within subject ANOVA with 94 usable responses in Fall 2009, revealed significant positive effects of the course on student learning. At the end of the course, there were significant ($p \leq .01$) increases in the perceived importance of four of the 5Ps in building brand identity. The Product was the only one of the 5Ps that was not significant, which supports the need for the broader (5P) focus. Future goals include completing a textbook that could be used for the course.

References


