

2018 Research Week Proposal

Title: *How to Make it as a Maker: Maximizing Customer Experience to Increase Brand Value in the Saturated Marketplace of Paper Goods and Gifts*

Program of Study: MFA Graphic Design

Presentation Type: PowerPoint

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Category: Creative and Artistic

Abstract:

The proposed presentation of an MFA Graphic Design Thesis investigates the problem of competition within the paper goods and gift industry, and identifies essential strategies to combat over-saturation. On Etsy in particular, an e-commerce resource for individual sellers, the number of active shops grew from 830,000 in 2012 to 1,748,000 in 2016, demonstrating the extent of competition on one platform alone (Statista 36). Targeted towards creative entrepreneurs with ambitions to launch independent brands, the research affirms potential for breakthrough despite market conditions. Initial analysis reveals opportunity created by the Maker Movement, and furthered by distinct attention to customer experience, best defined as “connecting customers with your brand through one or more meaningful and relevant experiences while appealing to both rational and emotional behavior” (Senthil 93). Developed research questions address the current demand for experience and the five elements of experiential concern, including product, brand, packaging, social media marketing, and point of purchase. Using scholarly sources and case studies of prominent brands, the proposed presentation highlights strategies for success, with actionable application to start-up brands. As a method to educate the intended target audience of creative entrepreneurs, the thesis exercises the identified strategies in the launch of a new paper goods and gift business. Through visual examples of each element of customer experience, the applied deliverables further clarify the recommended strategies and supporting research. The resulting business not only provides quality products, but also empowers other makers through the transparent communication of experiential strategies. As the foundational thesis of the investigation, the research affirms that while competitive saturation creates an issue of exposure in a marketplace of many options, the influence of the Maker Movement and an attention to customer experience fosters profound opportunity for success in the paper goods and gift industry.

Works Cited:

Senthil, M., et al. “Experiential Retailing” as a Strategic Tool for Retail Store Differentiation and Brand Association – a Conceptual Approach.” *SIES Journal of Management*, vol. 8, no. 1, Mar. 2012, pp.92-102. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=77886291&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

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