DREAM IT & DO IT

A Look at the Online Apparel Business Market for Entrepreneurial Designers

A Master of Fine Arts Thesis By
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ABSTRACT

With an incredibly dense online market existing and expanding, the capability of an entrepreneurial designer to sell their work and stand out from the crowd is an ever-growing problem. A small self-owned business can be easily lost in the web’s plethora of ads, get-rich-quick schemes, and content in general. Through case studies, secondary research, and visual research, the graduate student has attempted to thoroughly explore this online realm before executing what she believes to be a prosperous route to success. The word “success” here is referring to the creation of an appealing brand and designed products within the brand. Various online platforms allowing for a sole-owned business have been examined, among which the student believes she has found the best option that also allows for individuality. In concurrence with the written portion of the thesis, the student will produce the following: a brand identity for an online business, a social media marketing presence, a wide range of designed products, and a designed platform on which to sell products featuring the student’s designs.
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“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6
Research Statement

In an online environment fueled by originality and designs driven by popular demand, a designer who seeks to branch out on his or her own may face many obstacles. The ability to uniquely self-brand their business is only the start - there are design processes that have to be endured and requirements met in order to begin any type of business. Once this aspect is successfully completed, the designer can finally focus on what they truly care about: the artwork and creations. With the excess amount of products, both professionally and amateurishly made, a designer can feel overwhelmed as the need also arises to stand out and garner attention from the masses. In trying to accomplish this, the designer is faced with the choice of what platform(s) to use, the selection of products to focus on, and other factors contributing to the hopeful success they wish to achieve. The graduate student’s thesis seeks to explore this creative process and environment to uncover what it truly takes for a single designer to triumph on his or her own with their own online business.

Research Questions

1. How does social media contribute to an online business?
2. What are the possibilities for creating products?
3. How should products be priced?
4. Why is a brand important?
5. Why the t-shirt?
6. What other products/deliverables can be offered?
7. What already exists regarding competition and resources?
Knowledge Gap

The purpose of the thesis in regards of the knowledge gap primarily resides in the budding creative entrepreneur’s quest to begin their own online business venture as they predominantly draw from their own skill-set. From preliminary research that has been conducted, there is little evidence found concerning an adequate existing amount of information regarding the proposed topic. To better satisfy consumer desire and appeal, an emphasis in the area will be placed within the thesis. In an effort to provide an answer to the questions pertaining to the knowledge gap, the thesis will attempt to provide a more complete understanding on the entrepreneurial process concerning the design-to-print field.

Stakeholders

While the purpose of the thesis is focused on solo designers who wish to create their own brand and product line, there are multiple types of people who can benefit from the research. Research pertaining to the start-up of a self-employed business could appeal to entrepreneurs of all backgrounds or those wishing to branch out on their own with whatever product or service they have to offer. Experience has shown that there is generally a question by those ordering a printed creation of how much profit can be made based on what the chosen maker is planning to charge. The portion of the research dedicated to the production of products could be interesting and beneficial to those who fall in this “seller” category.
"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7
Introduction

Where apparel and decor is concerned, the design-to-print market centers on the overall message of a design as it pertains to whatever is trying to be communicated through the artwork and layout. Various factors contribute to the success of a product line and online brand, such as identity, marketing, the correct use of social media and an online presence in regard to advertising and sales.

While a bit daunting, a potential business owner seeking to be the sole manager and worker of an online business has the ability to be successful upon taking the correct steps and precautions to do so. While it ultimately depends on the product at hand, there are other elements to consider as well.

The following research will be split into two separate parts. The first is a collection of information regarding the process that a designer may experience on their entrepreneurial quest. The second part is concerned with the existing materials that may be of use to the designer and the options that he or she may have to choose from in each aspect of the process.

It’s All in a Name

Brand Identity is an integral component for a successful business, whether it be online or in a physical store. Even among the continually evolving business world, a well-designed brand identity is crucial to the success and ability to maintain a profitable business with returning customers.

Branding is defined to be “a marketing practice in which a company creates a name, symbol or design that is easily identifiable as belonging to the company” (Smithson). This element allows for the consumer to distinguish between product lines and provides an opportunity for a relationship to be developed between business and consumer. Journalist Elizabeth Smithson writes, “Your brand is built to be a true representation of who you are as a business, and how you wish to be perceived.”

Recognition is the key factor of branding. This is the area where the company logo takes precedence and has a considerable amount of influence. A well-designed logo enables instant recognition for established brands as the face of the business. The logo is also generally used as a marker on a brand’s products, labeling the items to ensure identification. This identification of a brand’s product line also contributes to the business-consumer relationship. A successful start to
a business can earn the trust of returning consumers who were pleased with the brand. Upon seeing the logo after use, the returning customer has a general idea of the quality they could potentially purchase. Positive customer experience and a higher chance of return generates more business through word-of-mouth and online reviews, thus expanding the reach of a brand and the potential for new consumers and business opportunities.

» Surf the Web

Social media is one of the key factors that feeds into the success of a brand identity. One article from the Harvard Business Review suggests that “social media make it more urgent than ever that companies get the basics right, developing and reliably delivering on a compelling brand promise” (Meehan). While social media can provide an excellent platform to reach current and potential customers, increased negative feedback on a brand or product can sweep the internet almost instantly, thus possibly destroying a brand’s image to the point of no return in a short span of time.

Another aspect of social media’s involvement with a brand is the balance that must be continually kept in check. Obviously, a business who aspires to have an impactful social media presence must keep up with the advancements that are frequently occurring within the online realm. Failure to do so may result in a less to non-effective attempt at digital marketing. Alternatively, paying more attention to the social media presence and less to the product line causes the production of poorer-quality items for sell. This practice leads to the aforementioned widespread online negative feedback, which may irreparably damage the brand. It is at this point that a company fails to fulfill their brand promise, which is defined to be “a statement made by an organization to its customers stating what customers can expect from their product and services” (Smithson). Product quality and social media use must be equally balanced in order to better reach a business’s premium output and customer satisfaction.

In their writing, authors Patrick Barwise and Seán Meehan recognize four qualities that they believe successful businesses share. These qualities are:

• They offer and communicate a clear, relevant customer promise.
• They build trust by delivering on that promise.
• They drive the market by continually improving the promise.
• They seek further advantage by innovating beyond the familiar.

The duo goes on to state that when a business is able to accomplish and maintain these tasks, social media can be used
as a reinforcement to the four qualities in an effort to better promote the brand name. Basically, Barwise and Meehan believe that everything depends on the brand promise - “Start with your brand promise and let it guide all your actions in social media. Don’t get distracted by the abundance of options.” A business owner should endeavor to obtain a successful social media presence but not neglect the brand or promise originally made at the start of the business.

» Etsy the Problem

"Tell your customers what is distinctive about you and your product, which is something your competitors can’t reproduce." Competition in the marketplace is not a new concept or battle, especially for those in design or marketing. There is an ongoing struggle to stand apart from competitors and become the consumer’s top choice. Branding is a key factor in this aspiration, but there are other contributing elements that can equally have as much, or greater, impact concerning the success of a brand or business.

Where online business is concerned, there are many different pre-made and user-friendly platforms available where artisans, designers, and business people in general can sell their products or services. One of the most well-known outlets for such transactions, especially in the art and design world, is a website named Etsy. This site is an online shop that claims to “connect people looking for unique goods with independent sellers around the world.” The list of available products for purchase seems to be never-ending and a single “shop” as they are called can be lost in the sea of creativity. While this may have originally been a great option and opportunity for artisans and designers, the service seems to have turned into a casual way for many people to make a little money on the side. Competition for users wishing to sell on Etsy is at an all-time high as there are more and more additions daily. The increased volume of shop owners and similar products have resulted in lower sales per shop, thereby lowering the drive of existing users as the market becomes overpopulated.

An additional drawback to using the site is the threat of the dreaded copycat. The term “copycat” here is being used in several different ways. Firstly, product descriptions from successful shops are being copied by other shops wishing to increase their sales volume. Secondly, designs and ideas are easily stolen and remade on this platform for sell because the general customer will be none the wiser. As easy as it is for a shop owner to steal ideas and descriptions from others, it eventually results in a list of items that all have a similar appearance and description. Thirdly, Etsy does not allow for a large amount of customization concerning the appearance of a producer’s online shop. The header of a shop’s page is
basically the only customizable aspect about an account. The format for all shops are the same, making all accounts virtually identical. This lack of creativity and personalization incredibly decreases a business’ ability to stand out among the rest of the competition. In addition to the look-alike shops, the shopping format of Etsy is highly comparison shopper-friendly. A simple search on the site results in a mass amount of listing where customers tend to focus more on price than on quality.

Dependence on Etsy itself is another shaky deterrent for usage of the website as the service has the power to shut down a shop. All the work of an established seller could potentially be gone with the click of a button and they would be forced to rebuild on another platform. To sell on the site means putting a seller and their work at the mercy of the Etsy owners. In addition, sellers are required to pay listing fees for each item shown in their shop, transaction fees when a purchase is made, processing fees, and other costs depending on the product or service being sold. These fees are subject to increase at any time and are non-negotiable between sellers and Etsy. The shop is dependent on Etsy and by establishing an independent website, shop owners do not have to rely on the whims of a bigger entity.

Is a self-employed online business owner really able to genuinely hold that title if they are answering to the almighty Etsy or a similar platform? The only way for an online business owner to ensure that the “self-employed” title holds true is to obtain web property for their business. Websites like Etsy may work in situations as mentioned before, where a little side money is looked at being earned. Unfortunately, business growth and recognition is massively stifled in the Etsy-type environment.

» Riding Solo

There are so many advantages to selling online, and even moreso when a business owner is self-employed. Thanks to the extensive amount of existing services and software available on the internet, quite a bit of the work can be taken out of the shop owner’s hands.

The options for shipping products vary in the current online market due to the expansion of online services. No longer is an online business owner required to obtain the goods and ship straight from the business once the product has been received. There is still an option to carry inventory, as this is popular generally with businesses that have stores both online and physical, but there are businesses that work solely through an online platform and see a higher profit margin.

A more recent option is a process known as drop-shipping. In drop-shipping, the owner now has an agreement where the
order is directed straight to a manufacturer that will create and ship the purchase in one step. Profit is made from the difference of selling price to the customer and wholesale price with the distributor. While producing a smaller profit margin, this option allows for the owner to let the online store basically run itself with minimal maintenance or upkeep.

As with any type of work or business, there seems to be a direct connection between the amount of work put into a project and the amount of money made as a result. “With great profit comes great responsibility...” or something like that.

» One Step at a Time

An online store does not really exist without a website, so that is the first step in starting an internet business. A domain name and web host are the key components obtained in this first step. An effective domain name is short and easy to remember. Finding a web host that meets the needs of the seller while also being affordable seems to be the more difficult half of step one. There are hundreds of web hosting companies in existence, so a business owner must find the one that best aligns with his or her goals and needs.

Determining exactly what product to sell comes next. There are certain attributes of a product that online business owners try to shy away from, as it produces problems with shipping or delivery. Such attributes are an item’s fragility, size, and seasonal qualities. An ideal product for sale would be small enough to fit in a shoebox, timeless, durable, and have an ambiguous inherent value. Personalization is an added value for consumers, as it makes their purchase unique to them. A brand identity would also be good to establish towards the beginning of this step to ensure that it pairs well with the selected product line and encompasses the brand promise that is trying to be delivered by the business.

Once a product has been decided upon, design of the business’ website can take place. The color scheme of the site should match or be similar to the color scheme of the brand identity to avoid confusion. Navigation of the site is another aspect that should be designed well. The consumer should be able to quickly navigate the site without questioning where a path leads or why an element is or is not there. The overall look of the page should be professional. A shoddy design job has the capacity to quickly turn away prospective buyers.

Trust is a large portion of consumer interest and interaction, and this should be implemented in the design of a website. A contact page is recommended, allowing the consumer to reach out if a problem arises or they require additional information that could be pertinent to their future purchase. Testimonials
are also a great way of promoting trust in a brand. Personal experience speaks volumes in the buying process.

Checkout: a word that a business owner loves to hear. An online business must ensure security for the paying customer along with an easy and efficient checkout process. A responsive checkout is a popular form of design when completing a purchase online because it lays out the contents of the shopping cart for the customer to double check their list and subtotal while confirming choices, such as a shipping address and method. A comments section is also included occasionally to allow for specific instructions or feedback. This seems to be an efficient way to ensure customer satisfaction with confirmation of their order and a more organized way for the business to collect the specifics of an order to prepare for packaging and delivery.

The inclusion of mobile devices in terms of web design is crucial. The majority of the population carries a mobile device. The switch between design for a computer to mobile devices is known as “responsive design.” Thankfully, there are frameworks and usability testing that bring ease to the process of making web content available on multiple devices, both for Apple and Android.

> Histor-Tee

Consumers take the t-shirt today for granted. Most people own at least one t-shirt - whether it be for work, to workout in, a souvenir from a trip or event, in support of a sports team... The list goes on and on. Originally, the t-shirt was developed in the nineteenth century to be used as a type of vest and undergarment hybrid. Later, during World War I, Americans grew envious of European soldiers who had these lightweight knitted shirt to wear under their gear and uniforms. In deep contrast, the Americans were subjected to wear uniforms that were irritating to the skin and weighed them down. A man in America by the name of Jacob Goldfrab borrowed the style and idea, creating and branding his own cotton-based apparel with a name that stands tall in the apparel world even today: “Fruit of the Loom.” By the time World War II began, the Americans had adopted the undergarment style of their neighboring Europeans. This proved to be a popular and welcomed change, as it soon spread beyond the military ranks to the common citizen and eventually became an every-day type of apparel (“History”).

While Goldfrab had successfully dominated the t-shirt market at first, others began to make their appearance around the late 1930’s to early 1940’s. Many of these newcomers are well-known names even in contemporary culture. Several of
the brand names generated in this time period include Hanes and the Sears & Roebuck Company. P.H. Hanes, owner of the company of the same name, broke the mold in 1965 when he produced a two-piece underwear set (“History”). Hanes would also later produce a thicker t-shirt labeled the “Beefy-T.” It was this piece of apparel that was created with screen-printing in mind. Design for t-shirts via screen-printing exploded at this revelation. According to one article in Business of Fashion Journal, “People took no time to realize the potential of t-shirts and it turned out to be a kind of human billboard with slogans and messages” (Meehan). Political candidates were the first to take advantage of this new advertising concept, posting campaign slogans on the fronts of voters and citizens in an effort to further their election goals. The fad quickly leaked into pop culture, with famous icons and celebrities parading about in the new fashion trend (“History”).

Rock t-shirts are perhaps the most iconic development in the t-shirt industry. Originating in 1956 with the Elvis Presley Fan Club, the King’s likeness was the catalyst for the rock t-shirt movement. Typically pictured on a black shirt, band names and logos were printed on the front as a form of takeaway souvenir. There are even fans who collected the iconic tees in an effort to show their undying support. The t-shirt has evolved in the music industry to encompass all genres of music, artists, and movements in current pop culture. Not only are the band logos and musical artists pictured on the front of the tees but the shirt designs have also expanded to include lyrics, album covers, and any other aspect of the selected musician(s) that the public seems to find agreeable and worth purchasing (“History”).

Not only did musical groups flaunt their brand on t-shirts, but companies began using the human billboard piece as a marketing tool. Companies such as Coca-Cola and Disney were among the first to employ this advertising technique, thus allowing for the brand identity to become more recognizable and endorse consumption of a product or service. Again, this is a trend that continued on even in current pop culture (“History”).

The design of contemporary t-shirts is not limited to a certain style or trend. With new technology, consumers are even able to design and transfer their artwork onto the shirt themselves, such as with the heat-transfer process. There are countless designs that are marketed towards a specific group of people as well as creations that are meant to reach a larger audience. The t-shirt is a piece of apparel that has become prevalent throughout the country as well as the world.
» Are You Done Yet?

Almost. Besides t-shirts, there are other products that can be screen printed or designed through processes such as heat transfer or embroidery that a business could potentially offer. Design is all around and growing at a rapid rate in our current society. For the purpose of this thesis, the selected products would have to be narrowed down in order to combine like-items. For example, you would not normally find wallpaper being sold in conjunction with t-shirts. Different products that seem to pair well together are often favored, as they have the potential to produce a more unified appearance when used simultaneously.

With a designer being the head owner, there is less outsourcing needed in the creation approach as the design needed for branding purposes, product and web building all have the potential to fall under the owner’s knowledge, skill-set, and expertise. For a startup online business, this has the capability to allow for reduced cost in the beginning, which is a positive due to the general lack of funds that occasionally accompanies a new business venture. If the business is eventually showing greater success and a higher profit margin, the staff could expand to include more on the team.

» Conclusion

Opening an online business is much more than uploading a few images and adding prices on a web page. Virtual and physical components have to be taken into consideration in order to obtain the best chance for success.

Positive exposure and competition both play vital roles in any business venture, which must be looked at as well. In the end, the customer must be satisfied and happy with their chosen product while remaining financially secure in their purchase. While the solo road seems to be intricate and more difficult, it also seems to be worth it in the end. Jack Renwick, an established designer, once said, “Don’t let fear of failure be the reason not to do something. At the end of the day, no one that matters to you will care whether you fail, they will mostly admire you for having had the [courage] to try” (Dawood).
While there were several platforms and varieties of each platform explored, the following collection will showcase three specific online shop options that vary in process but were the most affordable for a start-up and sole-owned business.

Before continuing, the student believes it is important to define and explain a few terms that will be used:

Print-on-Demand: a retail fulfillment method for printing products on demand, only after the customer buys them. (Reinis) This takes away the need for a large investment, storage, and an inventory.

Drop Shipping: order fulfillment by the print provider. There is a third party who processes orders and acts as an intermediary between the shop and the print provider. Orders are sent directly to customers with the potential for the shop’s branding on the packaging. (Reinis)

Printify

Printify is an online print-on-demand platform that does not provide a shop option for sellers hosted through their website. Instead, an owner must set up a shop through integrated web commerce services limited mainly to Shopify or WooCommerce, which both require several fees to operate and maintain a shop online. If an owner wishes to pursue this route, they may then select from hundreds of products in Printify’s online selection. Each product selected may be customized with the owner’s design. Once finalized, the owner has the option of ordering samples to test and approve before listing the item on their site. The owner has the right to set whatever price they wish according to the amount of success and money they wish to garner after figuring in the base cost of creation. At this point, the job of the owner is finished. Printify handles all of the billing, manufacturing requests, and shipping through their drop shipping feature.

Printify outsources all of their print jobs. The owner selects a print shop from a list provided with each item. Print shops set their own base prices, shipping costs, and average production time. Options such as size, color, and printable areas also vary from one printer to the next. To a certain extent, it is up to the owner as to how much they want to pay for a certain item.

There is a large selection of options ranging from apparel to accessories and usable items. Basic clothing is generally found to be a given choice on each print-on-demand platform, but Printify also offers apparel such as swimsuits, dresses, bodysuits, and baby clothes. Many of the similar sites offered phone cases, coffee mugs, and bags in their selections, but
Printify goes even further in offering more unique choices such as jewelry, socks, and beach towels.

With the free version of the site, the cheapest shirt option found was $7.59. Items are marked down approximately 23% when a user upgrades to the Premium version of the site, but in order to cover the yearly fee, the seller must make at least $348 in sales. Initial set-up is free. A seller can continue on with the basic version of the service for free or can upgrade to the Premium version for $29 per month, which only seems to benefit through cheaper base cost for each product that is ordered. The only branding option found was for logo placement in the neck tag labels.

A similar alternative to Printify is Printful, which mainly differs by offering less products but more online store integrations, among which are the more popular Squarespace and Weebly. Base costs per product are little higher, with no premium option for lowering initial cost. Branding options for this service are wider, offering the neck tag as well as pack-in promos and logo placement on packaging.

Spreadshirt

With Spreadshirt, a potential online business owner creates a “shop” on Spreadshirt. Once the registration information has been filled out, designs can be uploaded and products created. The owner is given complete freedom over what type of items they want to display in their shop. Spreadshirt stores all the products and prints each order as they come in. The service also takes care of payment, shipping, and customer service. The owner’s only responsibilities are the creation of designs, posting them for sale, and promoting the shop on social media. For each item sold, the owner earns an affiliate commission equal to 20% of the print price plus the product price. In addition, the owner may also add a design price to the product, which they will receive in full with the affiliate commission. As the popularity of a shop grows, the owner can also qualify for a volume commission. This allows them to earn up to 40% of each sale at the end of the month.

Digital direct printing is the main print method for Spreadshirt. There is an option for plot printing that may be selected, but this allows only for the use of three colors. All printing is done in-house at Spreadshirt locations, making it a print-on-demand service.

There is a large assortment of product choices to be found on Spreadshirt. Depending on the product, multiple print areas may be available as well. For example, the designer is not only limited to the front chest of a t-shirt - the range may extend to front, back, and sleeves. While this does raise the base cost of each product a bit, it allows for further artistic freedom.
Multiple colors are allowed for not only apparel, but many of the accessories as well. Product selection varies from apparel and accessories to home & living goods.

The base cost per product varies according to the item and the design areas designated to the particular item. The use of Spreadshirt is completely free. The owner simply sets up a shop, picks their products, and places the design. The rest is up to the popularity garnered through marketing and site traffic. Once established, the owner can sit back and wait for the designs to pay out.

The only branding option that seems to be available is the placement of a brand’s logo on the product. There was no other information found to suggest otherwise.

A similar alternative to Spreadshirt is Artist Shops by Threadless, which also has an abundance of products for an owner to choose from but is more limited on printable areas. For instance, the only printable area for t-shirts is the front, which limits creative freedom for a designer. The service is also completely free, but the owner’s commission is the entirety of the price after the base cost is subtracted.

Etsy

A potential business owner creates an account on Etsy where they can purchase from other sellers or open a “shop.” The owner sets up shop by adding things such as the shop name, policies, shipping information, shop sections, etc. Customization of shops concerning design is limited, which can result in a less memorable experience or chance of return due to weak branding and uniqueness. Once the basic details have been entered, the owner may begin listing their items for sell in the shop. Unless a customer directly visits an owner’s shop, they will have to search for desired items within the Etsy community. This has the potential to return an incredible amount of results, among which a seller’s item may have little chance of being seen by a potential buyer. There is also the risk that an item of higher quality may be passed on due to a similar product that has a cheaper price tag being shown in the search results. Once purchased and delivered, the buyer has the option of leaving a review on the shop or item’s page in order to provide feedback to the owner and future customers.

The owner of each shop generally has three options to choose from. The first is to employ the services of a direct-to-print company, where items are made upon ordering. The second choice is to outsource to a printing business, where the owner would have to keep up an inventory. Thirdly, the owner would have to be able to make the product themselves. Unless they are familiar with screen printing or direct-to-garment printing and have the materials, this a very costly and time-consuming
endeavor.

Any kind of apparel, accessory, home furnishings, etc. can be listed on the site for sale. As long as the owner is able to produce the product, they can list it for sale within their shop.

Product cost is dependent on which route the owner takes concerning print and creation. Ordering in bulk is a risk, but the price per product decreases in larger quantities when outsourced to a printer. So, a starting owner may find it more beneficial to begin with a direct-to-print service and then transition into keeping inventory if the business shows a fair amount of success.

Creating a shop in Etsy is completely free. The cost to list an item is $.20, which allows the listing to be active for four months or until they sell. Once an item sells, a commission fee and standard payment processing fees are added. Etsy requires a 5% transaction fee with each purchase, plus a 3% plus $.25 payment processing fee. That’s already three different fees- while the percentages may seem small, the extra fees will add up greatly over a period of time, especially depending on the cost and selling price of each item listed.

While the actual online shop is limited on personalization, the owner has free range to brand their products and packaging however they wish.

A similar alternative to Etsy is Artfire, which is based around the same idea- solo owners selling on a massive platform where potential customers search all shops at once for a particular item. However, opening up a basic shop costs $4.95 per month with a $.23 listing fee. Listings are only active for two months or until they sell. With the basic package, the owner must pay a 9% fee of their earnings to Artfire. There are two upgrades that an owner may make on their shop and shop features, which cost $20 and $40. Upgrading allows for free listing and only having to pay Artfire a 3% fee upon the selling of an item.

» Printing Methods

There are four primary methods of printing methods that are largely available to the public or for use in commercial business. These methods are screen printing, vinyl heat transfer, embroidery, and direct-to-garment printing.

» Screen printing

In order to screen print, a nylon mesh and a stencil or template is needed for the design. During the set-up stage, the nylon mesh keeps the stencil in place while a water-proof material blocks the negative space that holds the design. Using a
squeegee, ink is spread all over the design and mesh. The negative space has been made permeable enough to allow the ink to seep through onto the garment. Once the design has been successfully inked, the item can be laid to the side in order to dry and cure, which sets the ink into place.

Screen printing is widely available in many regions. Not only are there online options for the service, but physical locations exist as well. Selection of which screen printing business to employ is up to the client, determined by what best meets the needs and budget at hand.

The most common type of product that is screen printed would be t-shirts or other apparel. Although, the process is not just limited to fabric-based items. Other materials that have the capability to be printed include glass, wood, ceramics, rubber (balloons), and plastic. Even though the range of printable products is fairly wide, it is best for the item to be flat. Flatter products allow for an easier transfer and more accurate, especially when dealing with a multi-color design (Morris).

While screen printing can be done anywhere on a fabric-based product, printers generally limit printable areas. For example, a t-shirt would be limited to blocked off front and back areas designated by the printer. Some printers allow for designs to be placed on sleeves, but the addition of each new area generally comes with an added cost.

In order to print multi-color designs, different screens must be made for each color. While the process of making each individual screen is lengthy, screens can be reused over and over again. This attribute makes this process an attractive and efficient choice for bulk orders. Designs that are complex and heavily colored are not typically printed using this method. Generally, there is a “screen charge” for each additional screen that has to be made—meaning that the client is going to be charged by the number of colors used. While the color possibilities for screen printing could be considered limitless, a client should probably limit themselves to using no more than three or four colors for cost purposes.

Designs that have been created through screen printing have proven to be vibrant in color and long lasting. The process of screen printing originated in China around approximately 221 AD. The process evolved over time and spread throughout other nations such as Japan, France, and later to the United States. Artists such as Peter Blake and Andy Warhol experimented with the process in their own work during the 1960’s as an exploration into the medium (“Leicester”).

- Vinyl Heat Transfer

The most expensive piece of equipment required for the
process is a machine that will cut out the design. These machines come in a range of sizes and can cut up to 34 inches in width. The smallest machine could easily fit on a desktop in a user's home—popular name brands of these include Cricut and Silhouette. To actually transfer the design, a heat source must be used. Heat presses are the most popular option, but an iron may work as well. Heat transfer vinyl is of course a requirement, with the addition of a small tool for weeding. Weeding is the process of removing the extra material from around the design on the vinyl. There is an option to place a sheet of parchment paper or cloth scrap between the press and vinyl, but is not completely necessary.

A design is loaded into the machine, which then begins the process of cutting out the design. Once the machine has completed the cutting, weeding must take place in order to remove the excess vinyl from its plastic backing. Typically, the item to be printed on is pre-heated with the press or iron in order to flatten the area and begin the adhesion process when the decal has been added. The design is transferred through two factors—heat and pressure. Different types of vinyl paired with various materials require different heat and pressure settings, so this must be adjusted in order to best apply the design. Once the design has been heat pressed onto the material, the general rule is to allow the plastic covering to cool a bit before removing it from the vinyl. Upon cooling, the plastic can be removed and the vinyl should still be adhered to the material it was heat pressed on.

This method is actually one that can be done at home with personal cutting machines. As stated earlier, a heat press is not required—a household iron will work as well. Large scale heat transfers are not popular at this level and are usually outsourced to printing businesses with large-scale printing capabilities.

As with screen printing, the product variety for this process is fairly limitless. While heat transfer is generally used for fabric-based items, other products can be printed on using the design transfer process as well.

If a client employs the services of a professional printing business, then there will be limits to design placement. Through the use of in-house or home printing, the client has no limitations as to where they wish to place or transfer the designs on any particular garment or product.

Due to the single-use process of each cut design, this process is not recommended for large orders, especially those that employ the use of multiple colors within the desired design. Even a small order requiring a multi-color design may not be feasible as the extra colors have the potential to add to the
The use of the heat transfer printing process has been described as “the best quality in terms of durability and is guaranteed in most cases to outlive the fabric that it has been printed on” (“Heat Transfer”). When done correctly, heat transfer seems to produce great results concerning simple prints and designs.

### Embroidery

Typically, the required equipment for embroidery is spools of colored thread, an embroidery machine, and a computer.

The design artwork is created or loaded onto the computer, which then has to be “digitized.” The digitalization process is where a piece of two-dimensional artwork is converted into the stitching pattern necessary for the machine. There are single and multiple head machines, meaning that a single item is created or multiple items can be embroidered at one time using the same design. Clean, flat artwork is required for the process in order to produce the highest quality product possible. The colors to be used for an item have to be loaded into the machine individually. For example, an embroidered version of the Google logo would require four different spools—blue, red, yellow, and green. The embroiderer then is able to put the product on the machine, held in place by a holder, hoop, or frame. Once setup is complete, the “start” button may be pushed for the design to be stitched onto the product. Time of production varies, but an average baseball cap design takes around five minutes to complete (“Learn”).

As with screen printers, there are embroidery shops prevalent in many regions and some that operate out of or in conjunction with screen printing businesses. There are personal embroidery machines that may be purchased for home and individual use, but these vary in quality of output and expense.

Any fabric that is able to fit on the machine under the needle and is soft enough for the needle to penetrate is eligible for embroidery. The most common candidates for embroidery are shirts, jackets, and hats. Larger items such as blankets, duffel bags, and duvets can be embroidered as well but may require additional work or accessories to hold in place and not interfere with stitching.

Embroidery on garments is not generally large-scale, so placement is usually reserved for smaller areas such as shirt pockets, sleeves, caps, etc.

Due to the process being done with a needle and thread, embroidery is limited solely to fabric. While detailed designs
can be embroidered, this generally requires a greater amount of color usage and can potentially result in a less-than-pleasing outcome.

The stitching process has proven to have longevity and durability, even upon the repeated wear and wash of well-worn garments.

Direct-to-Garment (DTG)

All that is required aside from the product at hand is the direct-to-garment printer.

This process is one of the newest technological forms of printing in existence. In DTG printing, the printer works just like a desktop printer would with a piece of paper. The water-based ink is printed directly onto the product. The fibers absorb the ink, thus holding the design or artwork in place. This process allows for higher detailed items to be manufactured and there is no color limit. Products do not have to be ordered in bulk, as there is no setup or wasted materials by only printing once.

While there are physical locations for DTG printers, they are fewer than screen printing or embroidery due to their newer nature. Many of the DTG printing services are available online or through companies such as Printful or Printify.

The DTG process is pretty much limited to textiles and garments due to the ink printing nature. The ink is able to soak into the material and become part of the pieces, so slicker and less permeable materials would not be well-suited for the process.

There is a limited amount of variation concerning design placement for the DTG process, as the item is run under a printer and the product placement must be close to exact to obtain optimal print location and quality.

Direct-to-garment printing is limited to fabric-like materials and only certain areas can be printed. The process must be outsourced, as the printers can be extremely expensive, especially for an at-home business or the budding entrepreneur. Unlike screen printing, DTG printing is more cost-effective for smaller orders. Larger batches require more ink and more time, leading to higher prices per item.

Ink used in the DTG is not as opaque as that which is used in the screen printing process. This can lead to a slightly less durable product that could potentially fade with a high amount of washes.

Existing Brands & Shops

Through the use of visual research, the student attempted to
examine successful brand identities as well as their underlying designs that were targeted towards each of the sexes.

*Branding*

Many of the brand identities that were viewed during the study had a logo that could be broken down and used in various formats for different purposes. For instance, the Simply Southern logo has several different variations that can be used without losing the visual identity of the company.

The variations do not differ greatly from elements found in the original logo. Each of the different versions have been used in a way that best suits the design on the apparel or accessory that they are placed on.

Text used within logos tended to follow a pattern. Companies with a southern or vintage connotation tended to employ serif fonts while sporty and modern-style businesses used sans-serif. Every so often, a business using a decorative font as its logo appeared, but these were fewer.

Color selection typically seemed determined by the feel of the brand. In general, the three most prevalent colors that were seen being used were red, navy, and black. However, there were brands that did not set a color scheme. These seemed to be more successful and interesting from a design standpoint as the color could fluctuate from one product to the next. In this manner, the logo’s color could change in order to best match the product’s base color.

*Female Targeted Designs (Apparel & Accessories)*

The female-targeted apparel and accessory colors tended to gravitate towards vibrant pastels or muted shades. Few neutral colored shirts were seen with the exception of white or a heathered gray.

If the design was one-color, then it tended to be fairly simple and mainly made up of text with occasionally small decorative elements. If the design was colored, then it was typically intricate or contained many more graphical elements than the one-color designs did.

Text found within designs that employed the use of multiple colors was still mainly kept at one color and minimal in comparison to the graphical elements of the design. Fonts varied - some designs used only one typeface in different sizes, while others employed several fonts. However, the designs that featured multiple fonts were limited to no more than 2-3 different typefaces per design.

Design placement seemed to depend on the content (and
occasionally color usage). Many shirts featuring one-color designs were only printed on the front. Research into pricing and cost shows this to be the cheapest option concerning printing on shirts. Designs that used more colors usually seemed to be printed on front and back. If the shirt was long sleeved, there was also found to be printing down one or both sleeves of the garment. Graphical placement on garments such as pants tended to be on the pocket areas or down the side of the leg.

› Male Targeted Designs (Apparel & Accessories)

The fabric colors viewed were typically dark- a lot of black, gray, and navy was seen with white being the main light color used. There was an occasional pop of color in regards to fabric, but businesses typically resulted to more neutral colors for the fabric base.

Visuals were one-color for the most part and simple in nature: mainly made up of text with few decorative elements. Any content featuring more than one color seemed to do so sparingly. There were not many designs featuring a heavy design that was not text-based.

Typefaces selected for the designs were mostly thick or heavy weight in the most featured spots. Accompanying text was shown in a smaller size and/or lighter weight.

Design placement, as with the female targeted designs, depended on the content. But, many of the male shirts viewed only featured content on the front. There was generally a larger design that took up the entirety of the front design space or a running design across the chest region. Male pants or shorts did not typically feature graphical elements except for the occasional emblem or small design at the bottom of a shorts leg, similar to that of a basketball shorts style.

› Conclusion

› Online Business Options

For an entrepreneurial designer wishing to make a start with an online business, it is the belief of the graduate student that an option such as Spreadshirt would be the most plausible choice. By using a service such as this, an entrepreneurial designer is able to focus solely on their artwork. A designer’s sole responsibility through the use of the service is to design and upload each design to its respective product. The selection of products that can be designed for is wide, and the designer would have no money invested in the initial start of his or her business. One can only make a profit from the products, and if the business venture proves to be successful and profitable, then the owner has the option of moving to
another platform. Such a move that could be made would be the creation of a website through outlets such as Shopify or Wix for e-commerce that integrates with a service such as Printful or Printify to fulfill orders. Etsy and Artfire seem to be the least profitable options if the designer’s desire is to cultivate a long-lasting business, as the business’s individuality has the potential to be lost and products drifting in an endless sea of lookalikes or cheaper alternatives.

- **Printing Methods**

The four aforementioned printing processes are all very different from one another. The student believes that the selection of one process over another is best decided by looking at the product at hand and the featured design. A design that is large scale and more intricate would most likely require the services of a DTG printer, while a more simple design could be produced through screen printing or possibly heat transfer. Items such as baseball caps are limited almost solely to being printed using the embroidery process. In conclusion, it is apparent that the item, price of creation, and design will determine which printing process should be chosen in each situation.

- **Existing Brands & Shops**

Perhaps there is a connection between the difference in design placement due to the male and female physiques. The male shirt front is designed to feature larger artwork more so due to a flatter canvas, while the female shirts were found to have a higher chance of front-and-back design as the backside could potentially be flatter than the front and therefore able to feature a larger design in a more readable format. The student believes color choice is based on femininity and masculinity and the shades that typically accompany each gender - light and pretty colors for the female as compared to the darker and more plain colors for the male.

Additional products that were seen within brands that seemed uncommon were shower curtains, skateboards, fanny packs, car coasters, and stationary. All products clearly reinstated the brand identity and were made to match other items within the collection. Some designs were used for multiple objects but changed a tad in order to best fit the canvas.
And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. 

Colossians 3:17
Upon completion of the research portion, the graduate student began working on the design process component of the thesis project. The following chapter consists of the work and considerations that played a factor in the design process. This process was undertaken in an effort to show and experience what an entrepreneurial designer may undergo as he or she starts his or her business and create sell-able designs across a variety of products.

For those who are unfamiliar with the design process, there is a certain amount of sketching and ideation that plays into the design. Through this period of rough sketches, a final design emerges which can then be solidified and polished for display. This preliminary process applies not only to the products but also to the brand identity or logo. For the purpose of this thesis project, the graduate student developed six different designs for the chosen products that she tried to align with the design trends that were observed in the previous chapter. There were two sets of three designs created for the purpose of each set being directed towards the two genders.

For the third and final deliverable, the student attempted to create an online shop and a social media presence in an effort to market both the shop and products to potential consumers. Again, the media was created in conjunction with the research and findings that were discovered through research in the previous chapter.

This chapter seeks to document the process undertaken by the student as she attempted to apply what was learned through research to the designs and deliverables that were previously laid out and proposed at the beginning of the thesis project.

» Brand Identity & Logo Creation

Before a logo can be created, the desired characteristics of the brand must be established. This step is crucial as it serves as a written identification of what the brand identity seeks to convey. A first impression is important, especially in marketing and design.

Shown above, the student listed the traits that she wanted the logo to display.
Once the basic characteristics were decided on, the student expounded upon the traits in order to present a clearer idea of what she wished for the brand to personify.

At this point, the time had come to finally put ideas to paper. A few thoughts were jotted down, but the student preferred experimentation with fonts and visuals in a digital environment. The following are a few of the sketches, followed by trials made from some of the favored sketches:
After careful consideration and a poll among peers, the graduate student selected the logo below to be the face of the brand. The chosen visual seemed to best fit the guidelines from the preliminary planning stage.

![Camp Creek Collection](logo.png)

The name of the chosen font for the “Camp Creek” portion of the logo is Bataler. This font was selected due to the simple lines that make up the letter forms, which lies in order with the desired simplicity that was mentioned in the planning stage. The font also seemed to align with the “down-home” feel that the student wished to convey. While the sleek forms are modern in nature, the curvature of the lines and hook on the letter “C” add a slight rustic touch to the design. The “C” form was also used to create the icon in the middle of the name. By linking two of the “C” forms together, the student was able to create an icon reminiscent of the ichthys. This implementation was able to implement the Christian factor that the student listed in the preliminary phase of the logo creation.

The accompanying font seen on the lower half of the logo is named Cochin. The graduate student’s visual research found there to be a common trend in effective brand identities to pair a sans-serif font with a serif font for greater contrast. After trying several different serif fonts, it was decided by the student that Cochin was the best visual fit to accompany Bataler in the logo.

Although, the icon in the middle of the logo gave some of the viewer’s pause when first viewed as it seemed to look like, as one viewer stated, “a fish with horns.” Since that was entirely not the purpose or intent of the graduate student, the middle icon was reworked to better reviews. The final logo can be seen below.

![Camp Creek Collection](final_logo.png)

While the logo is intended for use on many different items and products, the graduate student decided against a color scheme but instead created guidelines and a list of approved colors that may be referred to in a moment of question. The guidelines for logo usage state, “The logo will typically be displayed in white, black, or the selected navy. For specific designs, the logo color may change in order to better match the color palette that it accompanies. Black/White or Navy/
White may be used in conjunction with each other, but Black and the selected Navy may NEVER be used together. The following neutrals were approved for usage:

- **Black**
  - CMYK: 0,0,100
  - RGB: 0,0,0
  - Hex: #000000
  - Pantone: Black

- **White**
  - CMYK: 97,99,38,44
  - RGB: 255,255,255
  - Hex: #FFFFFF
  - Pantone: 275C

The logo and its color variations can be seen in the next section in the product mock-ups.

### Product Designs

The designs created for the thesis project were based around Biblical principles and verses. The student created three designs targeted towards each gender for a total of six pieces. In an attempt to best design pieces deemed successful, the graduate student tried to follow the observations found within the research portion of the thesis project concerning existing designs and successful products.

The student’s wishes for the product designs were similar to the feel of the logo. Nature and God-made images were what the student used as inspiration for the designs. In an effort to brainstorm once again, the student took a different approach. At varying points during the course of a day, the student left the desk and computer to take a walk outdoors. While taking these breaks, the student was able to observe more closely that would be the focus of each design. For the female-directed designs, the student took a fairly straightforward approach and selected verses from the Bible to center on. She decided upon the following three passages:

- “Let all that you do be done in love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14)
- “Perhaps this is the moment for which you have been created.” (Esther 4:14)
- “Kind words are like honey - sweet to the soul.” (Proverbs 16:24)

For the male-directed designs, the student took more of a Biblical principle approach for two of the pieces while the third was a verse. The selected messages for the male-directed designs are as follows:

- “Faith can move mountains.” (Based on Matthew 17:20)
- “Sometimes the right path isn’t the easiest.” (Loosely based on the story of Joseph found in Genesis 37-50)
- “Here I am, send me.” (Isaiah 6:8)
the natural world. After the student returned each time, she was able to list different elements that she believed may work well within the designs.

The student began with sketches of various items from the list in order to try and visually pair each of the messages with the visual that the student believed best fit. Some of these sketches can be seen below:
ONLINE SHOP

After carefully considering the research pertaining to the online shop options that the graduate student researched in chapter two, there were several factors that had to be taken into consideration before choosing a definite route. Ultimately, the student decided the best option was Shopify with the inclusion of Printful and Printify. The main elements that contributed to the decision were product variability, design options, and set prices.

Shopify has the ability to integrate with many other platforms, through which the owner can outsource labor and the creation of products through outlets such as Printify and Printful. This integration aspect allows for the addition of any product available through the drop-shipping applications that work with Shopify. The owner also has the option to upload buyable items that are created from home or through another service, but the owner is then responsible for the creation and shipping of the items. Technically, there is no limit to the variety of items that are capable of being listed on Shopify.

Whereas Spreadshirt would be the least expensive start-up, once the graduate student signed up for the service, she found that the cost to print would have resulted in the need for higher prices that seemed unreasonable for the products being purchased. The addition of any printed area besides the basic offer (i.e. the front of a shirt) resulted in an increased charge. For example, the creation of a t-shirt that required only front printing would cost approximately $15 while front and back printing would require a base cost of approximately $21-22. This meant a dual-sided t-shirt would have had to be listed for $27 for the creator to only make $5 per shirt. The graduate student asked a number of people if this price seemed feasible but was met with negative responses. Many believed this was too high of a price for a t-shirt, especially since shipping would most likely add to the cost. Respondents considered the $20-$25 range the maximum amount to pay for a t-shirt.

Printful also charges per printed area, but the cost per additional area is less than that of Spreadshirt. There are also more design areas available (regarding t-shirts) than is offered through Spreadshirt. On many of the t-shirt options available through Printful, the creator may choose to print on front, back, either sleeve, the inside label, and the outside label. Spreadshirt offers the ability to print on the front, back, and sleeves.

The graduate student first tried to outsource entirely through Printify, as it had the cheapest cost to print items. Being able to go this route would allow for the graduate student to list
items to sell at a cheaper price. Although, once the designs had been uploaded and samples ordered, the student found the printing and embroidery jobs through this service to be lacking. Colors did not match compared to what was promised, designs were fuzzy, and there seemed to be a double print on one of the logos (seen below).

(Note: These samples were ordered before the change in the logo’s form, so the middle icon was still in the “fish with horns” stage.) There is no Photoshop nor trick photography involved with that image - that is how blurry and low-quality the printed image actually turned out. The color for the shirt in the image was supposed to be a light aqua-green color similar to what is displayed on page 71. Obviously, the shirt color that was displayed on Printify’s site was wrong or the printer made a mistake in selecting shirt color. Either way, this was not a great first impression of Printify’s services and was not deemed acceptable as the student would not have wanted a customer to experience poor quality or the delivery of an unwanted item. At this point, the student switched to a similar service named Printful. The only difference between Printify and Printful’s production is that the products are printed in-house at Printful instead of being outsourced like Printify. A sample of the Sweet Like Honey shirt was ordered from Printful and can be seen below.

In addition to the higher quality of service and sample order experience, Printful also offers free mock-ups for the creator’s products. This addition allows for potential consumers to visually observe how the item they are looking to purchase may appear once in hand. The mock-ups seem to be flawless.
and very professional. This factor was another deciding point that sold the graduate student into using Printful’s services. Examples of the free mock-ups can be seen below.

Shopify allows for the greatest amount of personalization in comparison to the other platforms mentioned. If so wished, collections can be created within the website in order to group similar products, which contributes to the ease of the customer experience. Any changes made through Printful immediately updates the item’s counterpart on the Shopify website. The sole drawback that was found by the student was the cost associated with using the service. There was a 14-day free trial to start, but a cost of $29 per month afterwards for the basic version of the site. Cost of creation (for a t-shirt) ranges from $12-18, according to the required number of printed areas. By still charging $5 higher than the highest base cost, the student can offer items at a lower price but still make at least the same amount per item that she would by using Spreadshirt. Even though the use of Shopify is not free, by selling only 6 items with a minimum profit for each being $5, the student can make back what was spent on the service.

In addition to printed services, Shopify has the capability to integrate with other forms of applications as well. This includes social media. By integrating with one or multiple social media platforms, an owner is able to market with much more ease and sell from the ads as well. This integration allows for a higher chance of purchase and ease on the consumer.
Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 15:58
Logo Design

The logo design was the initial phase of the design process. Design for the logo was based on the values that the graduate student wished for the products and company to convey.

The fonts were paired together in an effort to create contrast and a professional look. The larger font (Bataler) was selected due to the rustic yet sleek appearance that it offers, making it still adaptable to modern design. The graduate student adjusted the kerning for Cochin, which was used for the smaller font. The space between letters helped fill the empty space without making the bottom half too large, which may overpower the name.

The form of the icon in the middle of the logo visually keeps the two words adjacent to it joined while separate. The addition of the icon also allows for later brand recognition if the collection were to grow and become more popular. If so, the icon may be used by itself for branding purposes, similar to the Nike swoosh or McDonald’s golden arches. Through the creation of the icon, the graduate student was able to create a visual akin to the Christian ichthys. This will hopefully be a marker of the brand and a beam of light as to what the brand represents.

Logo

Approved Logo Colors

The logo will typically be displayed in white, black, or the selected navy. For specific designs, the logo color may change in order to best match the color palette that it accompanies. Black/White or Navy/White may be used in conjunction, but Black and the selected Navy may NEVER be used together.

Typefaces

“Camp Creek” Font: Bataler
“Collection” Font: Cochin
Supporting Fonts: Avenir

This is sample text. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. Jaded zombies acted quaintly but kept driving their oxen forward.
» Female Design #1: All in Love

When considering the first female-directed design, the phrasing of the message was reminiscent to the graduate student of the hippie counterculture movement of the 1960’s in America. Through this, the student began studying the designs and art from the time period and was drawn to the art nouveau inspired pieces. In many of the art nouveau designs, there was a central image with outlying text, usually arched over the image with accompanying text underneath. The student used this style to form her own piece.

The flower design is hand-drawn, scanned, and recreated using Adobe illustrator. The chosen font for the piece is named Beauty of the Beast and was also selected due to the art nouveau characteristics and similarity that it visually had.

As seen on the next page, the design is able to be transferred across many different products with the exception of embroidered items like a cap. For the cap visual, the student created a more simple and basic form of the sunflower in order to align with the embroiderer’s guidelines for creation.
Female Design #2: This is the Moment

The student’s first approach to the design for this piece was received with mixed reviews. The original, seen to the right, was considered “too busy” and “dark in color” by one reviewer, while another said it was “very regal.” While the message accompanies the regal theme well, the student decided to simplify the design and incorporate more of the “laid-back” feeling that was mentioned in the preliminary planning stage. Upon the decision to make this change, the student tried to think of how natural elements could be included into the design. Thus, the vines seemed to be a nice fit with the crown while providing a more subtle touch.

Accompanying the crown and vines is a serif font that exudes a royal feeling. Three lines of text are highlighted in yellow in order to emphasize importance and add a slight design element.

Again, the design proved to be versatile. The white and yellow continued to be paired with purple, a color associated with royalty. Gray was used occasionally as a supporting color.
Female Design #3: Sweet Like Honey

Honey was an obvious choice for the visual portion of this design. While the options for the honey container varied (honeycomb, hive, bottle, jar, etc.), the student ultimately went with the jar visual to give the piece a southern touch. For the same reason, the main font of the accompanying text was chosen. Thicker and more decorative, the font named Belmonte Rough served as the font for the outlying text as well as the label for the honey jar. As the thick font by itself seemed too heavy, the words of lesser importance were outfitted with a thinner, less eye-catching font named Indy Pimp. The two fonts seemed to pair nicely while stressing importance in the right areas.

Reviewers seems to concur that the jar by itself seemed lacking, so the student added the bees on either side to add a soft touch of content to the piece. The bee was also used to adorn several of the accessories, such as the cap, phone case, and backpack.

Keeping the golden honey color, the student decided to pair the gold with light blues and greens for a subtle offset. The fonts are in a dark brown to coincide with that of the jar and in order to be readable on lighter backgrounds.
Male Design #1: Faith Can Move Mountains

For the first male-directed design, similar to the honey, mountain visuals were the most obvious choice to accompany the text. While the student did indeed use mountains as the basis for the visuals, the viewer can see that the mountain grows as the eye travels across the heading word “faith.” Any mountain, no matter the size, can be moved. This was intended to be an extra visual effect while also allowing for continuous flow throughout the design.

The design was adaptable to any product it was placed on, but seemed to do well on its own. The student believed that any added texture or background elements would take away from the primary design or make the piece seem too busy from a visual perspective.

As navy was one of the observed colors for men’s apparel in the conducted visual research, it seemed to be a good pair for the mountainous theme. Making the design white allowed for a stark contrast between design and background, which was regarded by viewers as a visually positive design choice.

The word “faith” can be seen in a heavy, block font which is ironically enough named “Destroy Earth.” Accompanying the heavier text is the rest of the message in a smaller, much thinner font named “Optima.”
Male Design #2: The Right Path

The basis for the message in this design was the story of Joseph from the Bible found in Genesis 37-50. Joseph traveled to Egypt from his homeland and his path in life was diverted on several occasions. His life story was guided by God’s hand and ultimately led to Joseph’s triumphant seating as second in command to Pharaoh and being put in charge of Egypt.

As the student pondered how best to design a visual to accompany the message, Proverbs 3:5-6 was recalled: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” What else helps to direct one’s journey but a compass? The compass serves as a reminder that God is always present and has plans for each person. While Joseph’s compass through life did not always point north, the Lord made sure that he was where he needed to be in each situation.

The design seemed to be fairly versatile as it was tried on various products. Similar to the mountain design, the student did not think it wise to add much around the compass as it could draw the attention away from the compass and message. On two products, the rays were expanded upon in the background as a subtle space filler.
Male Design #3: Send Me

The most simplistic design, the artwork for this piece was inspired by a sports term. In baseball and softball, “sending the runner” means that the coach has signaled for the runner to advance to the next base. Isaiah volunteered to serve the Lord and advance in his ministry. Through this connection, the graduate student created a design in resemblance of a baseball or softball diamond.

Whereas the block of green holding the “Send Me” type was solid, the suggestion was made to visually enhance the block. Several viewers said the design seemed too flat and “was kind of boring.” The graduate student decided to add some texture to the block of green in order to make it a little more interesting.

The main color in the design (green) was chosen because green is typically associated with “go,” as in the color on a stoplight.
After deciding to use Shopify as the outlet for her business, the graduate student began designing the online store. With Shopify’s ability to directly integrate with other online services, the student was able to design products through Printful and link them to Shopify once the accounts were synced.

Printful provides useful tools that make it easier for the designer to professionally display products and designs while maintaining a business. Aside from mockups, Printful also offers branding options like packing slips, personal messages to customers, and the option to place the business’s logo on tags and inside apparel. The owner also has the option to send “pack-ins” to the Printful warehouses so they can include them in orders to add an “extra.”

Printful keeps track of orders for the owner and provides statistics. The option for downloadable statistics exists or, the owner can go online to view statistical categories such as a sales and costs summary, costs by amount, costs by product, cost by category, and cost by country. The more that an owner sells, the higher the chance of them receiving a volume discount, where Printful marks down the fulfillment cost which allows for an increased profit.
Social Media Marketing

In addition to the online shop component, the student created a social media account in attempt to self-market and promote her thesis creation.

As the thesis is very heavily image-based, the student selected the social media service Instagram as her outlet to market. Through Instagram, the student was able to showcase designs and products with accompanying text. The employment of the hashtag in this service also allows for an attempt at a greater following for those not already familiar with the brand. By incorporating a string of hashtags with each post, the student is able to reach a greater audience who are interested in similar products.

Upon the publishing of this thesis, the account has been active for less than a month and has garnered over 150 followers, which has been steadily growing day by day. The student made several sales in less than a week after the site went live.
“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9
This thesis was based on the effort to provide key information for potential future entrepreneurial designers. Through research, trial-and-error, and exploration on the web, the graduate student was able to uncover what she believed to be the best options for a budding creative business mind.

Upon discovery of these options, the student attempted to implement what was believed to be best within her own work. Through this, the student found unforeseen snags and stumbling blocks which made the process less than perfect. But - the student ultimately proved that success was possible.

Identity and individuality are key when establishing a business. Creativity and marketing are crucial to developing and selling products. Professionalism and ease are pivotal when creating an outlet from which to sell online. The journey from beginning to end is long and fraught with various risks. There are many factors that creators must take into consideration as they venture throughout their quest that may make or break their business. The graduate student cannot say that there is one perfect route to take but tried to compile the best possible information and advice that was observed throughout the duration and execution of this thesis. As this thesis comes to a close, the student wishes to leave readers with these parting words: “Dream it... Then do it.”
And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:2


“HandMadeInAmerica.org.” *HandMadeInAmerica.org*,


Meehan, Patrick. “The One Thing You Must Get Right When


Reinis Pauli. “Print on Demand Drop Shipping Platform - Shopify Print On Demand App.” Printify, Printify Print on Demand, 12 Mar. 2019, printify.com/print-on-demand/.


APPENDIX

The e-mail correspondence seen on the following page affirms that Lexi Shubert has been granted permission to reproduce all photographs utilized throughout the thesis publication, initially captured by Morgan Byles Shubert.

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