A Fashion Trend Forecasting Course as a Gateway to Career Discovery

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"Trend forecasting in the fashion industry is a widely used but little understood skill," (Holland & Jones, 2017, p. 7). Trend forecasting looks at what consumers are currently wearing as well as lifestyle and other trends that influence fashion choices in order to identify new ideas that are emerging and may become trends in the future. Trend forecasting textbooks (i.e. Brannon, 2010; Holland & Jones, 2017; Raymond, 2010) teach students to move from interpretation of current trends to development and presentation of trend forecasts. However, a gap exists in teaching students how to adapt trend forecasts to various industry careers.

Fashion trend forecasting texts tend to focus on forecasting as it is executed specifically by trend forecasters, but many fashion industry careers require trend forecasting skills. To enhance student development, students should learn to adapt trend forecasting skills to various industry roles, which may provide more direct, job-specific practice for their future careers as well as prepare them to adapt their skillset to the ever-changing retail environment. Furthermore, by exposing students to how forecasting is used in various industry roles, such as use by a designer, buyer, or visual merchandiser, students gain further insight into the processes that make up various industry roles and may help students to narrow their specific professional interest within the fashion industry. To address the opportunity in trend forecasting application for students, an undergraduate fashion trend forecasting course has been developed that emphasizes its applications in various industry contexts and uses skill-development opportunities alongside career discovery.

The purpose of this study was to explore a newly proposed undergraduate course that has been conceptualized to foster student trend forecasting skills and abilities to adapt those skills to various roles within the fashion industry. This could enable students to both (a) understand the broader application of trend forecasting in the fashion industry and (b) reflect on their personal interest in various career positions as part of their path of career discovery.

Theoretical Framework

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) has been utilized in the development of this course that prepares students to create trend forecasts that can be adapted to various roles within the fashion industry. The Taxonomy illustrates how student learning progresses from understanding of concepts, applying them, analyzing them, evaluating their application and usefulness, and finally to new concept creation. Furthermore, within each stage of the Taxonomy, there are knowledge dimensions ranging from lower-order factual to higher-order metacognitive dimensions (e.g., factual, conceptual, procedural, metacognitive). In the course development, higher-order dimensions, such

as metacognition, were the focus to help prepare students for application and creation of forecasts in diverse and changing fashion industry roles.

Description of Course Content and Activities

A 3-credit, half-semester course has been developed where students will explore many facets of trend forecasting, including trend research, managing trend ideas, product adoption, turning a fashion forecast into a buying plan, and the relationship between fashion trend forecasting and marketing, visual merchandising, and styling. Students will create a fashion trend forecast and evaluate its use and application across the aforementioned industry roles, bringing them together through a trend presentation. The course will be divided into 3 stages: (1) trend research and forecasting, (2) trend forecasting application to industry roles and (3) trend presentation for an industry audience.

The course format has been developed to allow students to move from lower to higher-order knowledge dimensions within each stage of the course. To achieve this progression, the course will utilize an active learning approach with the first part of each class (approx. 45 min.) being utilized for content delivery and in-class discussion and the second part of class (approx. 45 min.) being utilized for "workshopping", where students will apply, test, and evaluate the learned concepts.

The first stage of the course will cover trend forecasting concepts, proceeding to application, evaluation, and creation of trend forecasts. Following the first stage of the course, in which students will learn and practice general trend research and forecasting techniques, students will explore application of trend forecasting in various career contexts to understand its diverse use. For instance, students will think critically about the application of trend forecasting in (1) product adoption and (2) adapting a trend forecast to a buy plan. In the practice exercise for product adoption, students will be provided a toolkit of industry practices and asked to explore how they would proceed with their product line if the brand's key trends for the coming season were out of sync with their departmental image. In adapting a trend forecast to a buy plan, students will consider how reactive a retailer should be to trends based on the type of trend and type of retailer.

In the third stage of the course, students will combine the skills they have learned throughout the course to make a professional yet creative business presentation. In preparing presentations, students will be cognizant of potential outcomes, such as potential trend adoption and ramifications for their hypothetical department (i.e., design, buying, visual merchandising).

Intended Outcome

By employing an active learning approach to advance students through the stages of the Revised Taxonomy from understanding, applying, evaluating and creating trend forecasts, first in a general context and then in the context of specific industry careers, it is intended that students will have a stronger understanding of how trend forecasting is utilized within the fashion industry. It is intended that students will use the application of trend forecasting in various industry roles to further develop their understanding of career interests and continue their career discovery process. The course seeks to advance students' trend forecasting skills in order to enable adaptability and problem solving in various job roles. It is intended that the course provide practical industry applications of trend forecasting to help prepare students for industry challenges and foster success. Furthermore, developing the course alongside industry

needs is intended to maintain modern relevancy while also exposing students to the changing demands of the marketplace.

Conclusion

The design of this course is a departure from a standard fashion trend forecasting course in its focus on applying trend forecasting to various fashion industry careers. As students prepare to enter the fashion industry, it is important they learn how to apply concepts to various career contexts. Utilizing the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, this course encourages students to advance from factual to metacognitive application through each class period and stage of the course. The course is relevant to academicians by providing industry-specific applications of fashion trend forecasting. It is also relevant to the fashion industry as educators strive to advance student preparedness for diverse and changing roles within the fashion industry. As jobs continue to change, teaching students to adapt their skills to various contexts is both relevant and timely. The course will be delivered in Spring 2019 and data will be collected regarding the usefulness of the new course format according to the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

References

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