

**MKT 430: Retail Management
Spring 2001
Group Project**

Marshall School of Business
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Project Overview

The purpose of the group project is to expose you to the real-world business environment where skills such as dividing the workload, accepting responsibilities, coordinating individual efforts, communicating effectively, effective resolution of conflict, and written and oral presentations are immensely valuable. In addition, the group project will provide you with an opportunity to integrate and apply the material learned in this class in the development of real-world marketing strategy. Your task is to research an opportunity for a retail establishment and propose a retail strategy for the operation. The proposal is going to be evaluated based on its profitability, growth potential, and sustainability. You have to develop a complete marketing plan for the establishment. The establishment can be a new one or an existing one (ex. Reformulating Office Depot's marketing strategy). It also can be off-line or on-line.

The assignment consists of preparing a written report and making a formal presentation in class. As you may be aware, leaving all the work to the last couple of weeks of the semester is tempting but ultimately counterproductive. Consequently, in addition to the final report and presentation, there is an intermediate requirement; interim report (due March 7). Since the purpose of this requirement is to help you make steady progress on the term project, you will not be graded on them.

Timeline for Group Project

GROUP FORMATION

DUE DATE: JAN. 31

You will work on this project in groups of four people. Like group projects assigned by your future employers, group projects in school can sometimes be a frustrating experience. It is often difficult to pick convenient times for everyone to meet. Group members sometimes feel that the division of labor is not equitable. As frustrating as this may be, it is important for each of you to learn how to manage group work. You will self select into groups by Jan. 31. Choose members who seem responsible and with whom you get along. In addition, you will elect one person in the group as a contact person.

All problems arising within the group related to relative contributions of the group members are to be handled internally by the group. This is an essential part of the group project experience. You will, however, have an opportunity to evaluate your group members at the end of the semester based on the quality and quantity of the contributions. Your grade can go down based on these evaluations. A group evaluation form is attached to the syllabus.

TOPIC SELECTION**DUE DATE: FEB. 5**

One week after your group formation you are asked to turn in a one-paragraph memo explaining the group project topic of your group's choice. A brief nature of the retail establishment should be described in the memo. It should be no longer than one double-spaced typewritten page with at least 10-point fonts and 1-inch margins.

INTERIM REPORT**DUE DATE: MAR. 7**

About five weeks after you have selected into groups you will turn in a one-page memo describing the retail establishment you have chosen to focus on and the approach you have decided to take. Try to pick an establishment that your group finds interesting since you are going to be working on it all semester. The report should be no longer than one single-spaced typewritten page with at least 10-point fonts and 1-inch margins.

FINAL PROJECT REPORT**DUE DATE: APR. 25**

The written report must be a professional and polished document, no longer than fifteen double-spaced, typed pages. Be sure to cite all references used throughout the paper. This reference section will not count against the page limit. Any charts and tables can be included as appendices and do not count against the page limit. List your sources of information, including articles, interviews, etc. Do not forget to cite them where appropriate in the body of the paper. All language and ideas not your own must be properly footnoted, either at the bottom of the page or at the end of the paper. Please provide the questionnaire you used for market research, if you have one, as an appendix and summarize all of your findings in that appendix (even if you do not use them in the body of the paper.) Cite the relevant results of your data collection where appropriate in the paper.

Papers must include a cover page with the names of all group members. The first page of the report must be an executive summary that provides a brief overview of the report (i.e., product chosen and your market repositioning concept.) You are also expected to submit a peer-evaluation form on the last day of class (Apr. 25).

FINAL PRESENTATION**APR. 23**

The final presentation must be professional, interesting, and must convey clearly both the strength of your repositioning concept and the soundness of your marketing plan. Plan on presenting no more than twenty minutes of material, leaving roughly ten minutes for classroom discussion. You are expected to attend and actively participate in all presentations.

Points to Consider in The Project Write-up and Presentation

The heart of the project is your creative analysis of the 4C's (Company, Consumer, Competition, and Climate) involved in the marketing problem you are addressing. Here is your opportunity to apply many of the concepts, models, and theories we will discuss during the semester (i.e., retail environment, consumers, merchandising, pricing, etc.) What are your suggestions for using these concepts to help study, understand, and interpret the basic issues underlying the success of your proposal? Be sure to present your ideas in explicit and concrete terms; examples help here.

You should also offer creative suggestions for developing marketing mix strategies (4P's: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place) to accompany the segmentation and repositioning scheme that you have identified. These strategies involve aspects of product strategy, pricing, advertising, sales promotion, and distribution. Be as specific as you can. Be sure to justify your recommendations on the basis of all the information you have regarding how consumers behave towards your product and how the competition would influence your establishment.

I will evaluate your choice of the key retailing issues involved in the marketing problem, the creative way in which you analyze the consumer issues, how you select and use concepts from the class to help solve the challenges, the originality and soundness of the strategies that you recommend, and how well these follow from your analysis. Please remember that you are pitching your idea to a potential investor. The investors have priorities and profitability is on the top of the list.

Detailed Project Outline

1. Written Report

This report should be no more than 15 pages long (typed, double-spaced). Note that the page limit does not include the appendix. The report should consist of:

- ◆ **Executive Summary** (1 page) - this is a one page non-technical summary of the whole project including the study's objective and major findings/implications.
- ◆ **Introduction** (3-4 pages) - This should explain the content of the study and include a clear statement of the project purpose (why the idea is attractive), the motivation for choosing the target market (its size, importance, etc.), and the information needs (what specific pieces of the information were required from the survey). This section will be a refined version of your interim report.
- ◆ **Research Design** (2-3 pages)
 - **Sampling Technique** - Briefly describe the sampling technique you have used. Describe any inadequacies that may exist in your sampling technique, and briefly describe how you would modify it to make it better (for example, if you had more resources -- time and money). Again, this should be specific to your application.
 - **Data Collection Method** - Describe how you collected the data for this study, why you selected this method, and changes you would make if you had more resources. Identify any limitations to your selected method.
 - **Measurement** - Give a list of quantities you want to measure. Describe how you measured them (attitude scale, etc.). Describe the pretest of your questionnaire in this section. ATTACH A COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE APPENDIX.
 - **Analysis Procedures** - Briefly describe the analytic procedures you used, the statistical package, and any coding procedures that may be important (e.g., coding open-ended questions). Do not present any research findings here.
- ◆ **Results** (2-3 pages) - This should indicate, for each question, the main findings. The complete results need not be discussed here but rather should be presented in the form of tables in the Appendix. For example, if you are discussing the responses to a question such as "How often do you drink coffee?", it is sufficient to summarize the responses with a statement like "Over 40% of the respondents drank less than 2 cups of coffee a day, while 10% drank more than 5 cups a day". The complete information, of course, should be presented in a table in the Appendix.

- Make sure to interpret and discuss the findings that you describe in this section, rather than merely reciting the numbers. If appropriate, briefly mention some of the implications of your findings so that the reader is "primed" for the recommendations made later.
- Finally, try to organize the findings into "subsections" by grouping questions (or variables) that are related. For example, you may have a number of questions related to shopping habits (How often do you shop? Which stores do you shop in? What do you spend on average per shopping trip? etc.); the responses to these questions can be summarized in a subsection titled "shopping behavior." Use your imagination and common sense in deciding how to organize your findings. Make sure that you (1) cover all the questions, and (2) refer to the appropriate table in the discussion. Indicate, where appropriate, whether your findings are statistically significant. You should not, however, go into a detailed description of the statistical test.
- ◆ **Recommendations** (4-5 pages) - In this section you should summarize your major findings and present your recommendations for successful marketing strategy (naturally, the latter should be based on the former).
- ◆ **Appendix** - This should contain: (a) full citation of the outside sources used in the report, (b) a summary of the exploratory/secondary research findings, (c) a copy of the questionnaire with the basic results, and (d) tables and figures to illustrate the discussion in the "Results" section. There is no page limit for this section.

The report will be graded on (a) quality of data analysis and interpretation of results, (b) quality of recommendations, and (c) readability (clarity and organization of material). The report should be neatly typed. Your ability to communicate the findings effectively is as important as the content. This means you should pay attention to details (e.g., grammar, spelling, page numbering, well-labeled headings, subheadings, and appendix, etc). The ability to communicate effectively is consistently one of the most important criteria for selecting applicants for managerial and many entry-level positions.

Some hints on effective report writing:

- ◆ Make the report look nice and readable.
- ◆ Number the pages.
- ◆ Divide the report into sections with appropriate headings.
- ◆ Have a table of contents with page numbers.
- ◆ Do not give too much statistical information in the main body of the report. Have a separate appendix with tables of numbers that the reader can refer to.
- ◆ Do not include the SPSS or any statistical software output in the paper. You are supposed to create your own tables and charts by using the numbers from the output.
- ◆ Avoid using technical language unless needed. This is particularly important when writing the executive summary.
- ◆ Remember that your audience is relative novice in terms of research -- they are most interested in the findings and the implications those findings hold for their business.

2. Oral Presentation

- ◆ Aim for a 20-minute presentation.
- ◆ Use PowerPoint or transparencies (overheads) or handouts to summarize what you plan to say throughout the talk. A recommended strategy is to have "bullets" ("points") on the transparency, and to explain each point in more detail as you go along.
- ◆ Be prepared for questions from the audience.

Suggested Outline of Presentation:

- ◆ Background (on the industry/company/product -- as appropriate)
- ◆ Research purpose and information needs
- ◆ Survey methodology: sampling procedure, sample size, response rate, sample representativeness
- ◆ Results (main findings)
- ◆ Managerial recommendations

Plan on spending most of your time on the last two topics.

Tips for a better presentation

You should plan for your presentation to take 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for questions. Practice to make sure that you can complete the presentation in this time period. You will be allowed no more than 30 minutes total for your presentation.

Remember that this is a marketing class and that effective communication requires competent and interesting presentation techniques. Style counts in and of itself, but it also counts in how it helps you communicate your ideas. Make your presentation style work for you. Be professional. In the past, the biggest problems I have seen in presentations such as these include:

- ◆ Ineffective use of visuals -- throughout the presentation, you should use some kind of visual to help the audience follow your logic/ideas. These visuals should not have too much writing on them and should be in a font size that people can see.
- ◆ Inadequate explanation of survey findings. You need to walk the audience through each result -- tell them what questions were used to obtain the data in the table, how the data were tabulated (is this a count or a mean? how were the percentages calculated?), and what the implication of the result is. Organize your discussion of the findings around the key research issues.
- ◆ Too much time spent discussing detailed information that could be better obtained by reading the report. For example, you do not have to describe each and every question in the questionnaire, nor do you have to describe the results of pretesting in great detail. You do not have to provide the t/z values for statistical tests, though you might mention whether or not a difference is

significant. You do not have to describe the intricacies of SAS, SPSS, or of any other statistical package that you are planning on using.

- ◆ People reading their section of the presentation, rather than speaking naturally. You should develop an outline to follow -- don't read from the paper or from note cards!

Note

Your primary job in this project is to demonstrate your understanding and ability to apply the concepts and frameworks of retailing. Do not get so carried away with presenting facts about the industry, the firm, or the product that you fail to explicitly relate them to retailing concepts.

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Peer Evaluation Form

PRODUCT: _____

You have 10 points for every member of your group. This means that if there are 4 people in your group you have 40 points.

Allocate the total number of points that you have among the group members according to their effort and contribution to the entire project. Remember, this covers the whole project and it can affect others' grades so take your time and think through everyone's involvement carefully. Grades can only get adjusted downward depending upon the degree of contribution of each member.

Print each person's name on one of the blank lines below. Be sure to include yourself on the first line. Then, calculate the number of points for each member of the group.

Make any specific comments you wish to either to justify the points allocated to a group member or if you think it is relevant to their evaluation.

Number of people in the group: ____ X 10 = ____ Total points to allocate

Name	Points	Comments
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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Group Information Sheet

Group Member List:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Group Contact Person

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____