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Technology is Essential in Teaching Analysis of Fashion Window Displays: A Subscription Approach

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Introduction

In today's textile and fashion world whether you are a small or big apparel retailer, window display is one of the most powerful armaments in the arsenal of tools you have in order to stand out from the competitors and draw foot falls into the stores. Many retailers especially apparel retailers are looking for fashion designers with window dressing capabilities. Hence students in Textiles, Fashion and Merchandising promotion courses need to be trained to harness their creativity in practical and industry focused tasks and projects in which they create inspiring design concepts behind the high-street window displays and in-store configurations. For students to advance as a visual designer/merchandiser or window stylist, they will be required to develop many analytical and critical thinking skills such as trend analysis and forecasting. In an ever changing fashion industry teaching fashion window trend analysis and forecasting can be challenging to educators. One of the reason being limited accessibility and exposure to fashion window display for students residing far away from fashion capitals such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Milan, London, Japan, etc. Today's web/internet technology enables students to access and virtually experience the window displays at high fashion streets around the world. However, the web search gives only dispersed/scattered window display information. Only the popular brand's window display images and information are available on the web. In order to get structured information about the world window displays a web based subscription approach is essential. Subscriptions have a distinct advantage in that most students develop a high level of expertise and critical thinking skills in analyzing the fashion window displays. As such, they provide an ideal platform to learn the basics of trend analysis methodology. In this study, we describe the use of subscription to WindowsWear Pro as a tool for teaching fashion window display trend analysis. The main objective of this approach was to examine student's analytical skills and critical thinking while using the subscription approach.

Methodology

24 students' enrolled in Visual Merchandising and promotion class were assigned to analyze fashion apparel window displays on World Wide Web and write a trend report based on their research and analysis. Students were asked to present their reports in class. The following criteria's were given to students to work on their assignment, 1) select at least four different stores in two different countries and two different seasons/months (example: Holiday, summer, spring). 2) Analyze the window display in terms of Key trends (Design trends; Color trends; Window style trends; Mannequin trends and Design inspiration). 3) Use graphs and charts to show the analysis. Students were required to present their findings in class. Next, the same students were given access to WindowsWear Pro subscription (purchased by the department) with a unique username & password for each student. They were given the same assignment as mentioned above using WindowWear Pro. The findings from both assignments are given in Table 1.

About Windows Wear Pro

It is the premier site for the window display and visual merchandising industry. The site features world's leading brands and has proprietary access to the world's fashion windows. It allows merchandisers to keep tabs on global fashion trends in real time. It enables analysis of 25,639 windows from 540 brands in 7 cities around the world. They track 360 design inspirations and 11 color trends globally [1].

Discussion and Explanation of effectiveness

The assignment evaluation clearly indicated that the students with Windows Wear Pro subscription began to engage in actual analysis rather than simply searching for others' analysis on the web. When analyzing window displays and creating trend reports using Windows Wear Pro subscription, students applied their critical thinking skills to move through the analysis with an understanding that fashion connects with everything found in our surroundings. For example, the fashion window display inspiration themes identified ranged from nature, pictures, movies, music, cultural impacts, politics and luggage to neon lights that continually form trends. In addition, using this approach, students had an easier time analyzing and creating trend reports for local, national and global brands. Therefore it becomes clear that technology not only enhances student competencies and is essential in teaching analysis of fashion window displays.

Reference

1. http://pro.windowswear.com

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Findings from evaluation of student assignments that were completed using WindowsWear Pro subscription	Findings from evaluation of student assignments that were completed with web search (without WindowsWear Pro subscription)
All students identified, compared and contrasted the **window display themes** by national, international and store brands	All students identified, compared and contrasted the **window display themes** by well-known brands that were available on web search.
All Students analyzed the window display's by **design principles and elements** (Balance, Line, Emphasis, Rhythm, Texture, Color etc) for national, international and store brands	All Students analyzed the window display's by **design principles and elements** (Balance, Line, Emphasis, Rhythm, Texture, Color etc) by well-known /popular brands that were available on web search
Students were able to prepare window trend reports for any **desired month of the year**	**Desired month** trend report was not possible through web search
Students were able to prepare window trend reports for **exclusive brands**	**Exclusive brands** window trend reports was not possible through web search
Students were able to prepare window trend reports for **major fashion retailers** in cities including New York, Paris, Milan, London, Barcelona, Los Angeles, Japan etc.	**Major fashion retailers** trend report in cities including New York, Paris, Milan, London, Barcelona, Los Angeles, Japan etc. was not possible through web search
Students were able to prepare window trend reports on **design inspirations, color analysis, style trends, mannequin trends** based on their research over more than 500 stores around the world	Students were able to prepare only window analysis reports for **design inspirations, color analysis, style trends** for only a limited number of stores through web search.

Table 1: Compares the student performance on the assignment that were completed using Windows Wear Pro subscription and without subscription (web search).