ROCKING BRAND ANTHROPOMORPHISM:
APPLYING MULTIMEDIA TECHNIQUES TO BUILD BRAND CONCEPTS

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Technology in the classroom as a learning tool is a necessity. Brand development on all platforms of social media continues to gain acceptance as necessary marketing tools for the business. Our classroom project explores the disruptive learning process found with transformative learning to brand anthropomorphism. Developed from the bases of the pet rock, students are asked to apply consumer behavior concepts (i.e. personality, life styles, self concepts) into a brand that will create value for the consumers. Across three years of consumer behavior research courses the authors have explored the application of taking an ordinary rock and developing a digital marketing campaign. This portion of the project includes the development of a brand personality, YouTube Video and Hashtag Campaign. In this position paper we will discuss the pedagogical concepts derived from transformative learning and apply these strategies to brand anthropomorphism.

Anthropomorphism refers to the individual tendency to perceive inanimate objects as humanlike entities (Guthrie, 1993). For example, watches are sold telling the time, 10 after 10 displayed on the face of the watch in order to signal that the watch is smiling back at you. Further, automobiles are thought to resemble a smiling face when looking at the front headlights as the eyes and bummer as the mouth. Epley et al (2007) described this phenomenon as the inference process of attributing external characteristics, motivations, behaviors and underlying states that are typical of humans to objects and non-human agents.

Research on anthropomorphism has developed around the concept of the branded product. Brand anthropomorphism is defined as the extent to which a branded product is perceived as an actual human being. Specifically, an anthropomorphic perception of branded products might occur through two different, but not mutually exclusive, processes. First, it might occur by means of a perceived similarity between the external appearance of such products and some human physical attributes (for example, a product package that resembles a human body; Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Epley et al, 2007; Puzakova et al , 2009). Furthermore, an anthropomorphic perception of branded products might occur through a perceived congruity between such products and some aspects of consumers' self-concept (Fournier, 1998; Aaker et al, 2004).

Basing this project on a simple everyday rock and then providing instruction on humanizing the inanimate object is a disruptive learning process. Similar research to anthropomorphism includes widely accepted humanization of the brand personality for the entire product or collection of products (i.e. Aakers 1997). We further this discussion in the classroom and specifically through experiential learning. Therefore, we lean on the pedagogical transformative learning theory that works towards evaluating this disruption in the classroom.

Transformative Learning Rock Exercise

Transformative learning centers around changing the students frames of reference (Mezirow 1997) based on past experiences that encompass cognitive and emotional components (Cranton, 1994) through critical reflection. 1997, p.5). The disruptive learning format allows students to see beyond the obvious purpose of the rock in order to evaluate associations, values, feelings and concepts that shape their beliefs and behaviors as a consumer. Students apply consumer behavior research including the continuum of hedonic and utilitarian benefits, consumer perception process, emotions, lifestyles, psychographics, message appeal, social power, reference groups, and many more. The process encourages learners to question their assumptions and contemplate successes and challenges.

Often students walk into a consumer behavior class thinking they already know everything. They are consumers, aren't they? The disruptive learning process encourages the reflective learning and allows students to apply the concepts explored throughout the semester. In addition, the use of social media engages the student with the most modern marketing tools to promote their anthropomorphism concepts. In addition, the development of the YouTube video enables the student to apply basic iMovie strategies. The students are encouraged to create YouTube accounts for the group, upload the video and post comments. Students continue to express the value of putting together the videos and bringing the simple rocks to life.

<center>References Available Upon Request</center>