

Case Briefing

Product



The Situation

Marketing professionals play a key role in defining a company's products. Nowhere is this more important than in the fashion business. After several poor seasons, Via21, a large fashion retailer, which sells under its own brand, is looking for a change. An important category, women's dresses, needs a product overhaul.

Your Role

You have been brought in as the Marketing Representative to the design team. Your task is to make sure that current trends are being incorporated into the Spring/Summer lineup for women's dresses.

Learning Phase

In this phase, you will practice research and design at 'Practice Wear.' Step-by-step instructions will guide you through simulated fashion blogs showing both runway and street trends for the upcoming season. Using simplified design tools, you will be shown how to create a garment that meets one of those trends. You'll also monitor garment costs as you create your design. A fast-forward mode will let you speed through the season and see customer reactions to your design as well as sales data.

Challenge Phase

The Spring/Summer season is rapidly approaching and Via21 needs your help. Your goal is to meet a specific target for sales of women's dresses by May 30th. To succeed, you will guide the design of multiple garments within the category. Garments will be priced for you based on cost, so you should keep costs in check.

At the option of your Professor, you may be able to retry the Challenge Phase multiple times. Only your best grade will count.

Product in the Simulation

This fashion simulation contains a design interface to let you create products -- clothes that meet consumer demands. In the simulation, consumers base their purchase decisions on popular trends. Each consumer is modeled with different preferences for garment attributes, color, fit, etc. Although each consumer differs, their tastes tend to follow the overall trends. These trends are revealed to you through posts to an Instagram-like website. Posts include both runway shots and street images. As you create your designs, garment costs are shown so that you can keep your clothing line affordable.

Discussion Questions

Should marketing play a strong role in product design or should designers be given independence to create things customers may not have even imagined? How do you think the iPhone was designed?

If product development or engineering wants one design and marketing favors another, how might the conflict be resolved?

Clothing stores often find that white shirts surrounded by many other colors of shirts sell better than white shirts alone. Explain why this might be and what it means for product design.

Discuss how two of the four P's, Product and Price are linked in the design phase.

