

Course Design of International Fashion Business

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Abstract: The course “International Fashion Business” aims to combine international business theory with the practice of fashion companies’ business, and train qualified talents for international fashion companies. This paper discusses the idea of integrating the international business practices of fashion companies into course teaching from three aspects: content instruction, extended discussions, and research assignments. It also points out the key points for designing various teaching activities to continuously enrich and improve the course content and enhance teaching effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Currently, Chinese companies actively implement the national strategies of “One Belt, One Road” and “building a new development pattern of domestic and international dual circulation promoting each other,” fully and deeply participating in global competition. The demand for international business talents has significantly increased^[1]. As the world’s largest clothing producer and exporter, China has a huge clothing production base and a complete supply chain system, making it a crucial link in the global apparel supply chain and playing an important role in the global fashion industry. Cultivating fashion talents with a global vision, innovative awareness, and professional skills and qualities in international business is an important guarantee for the sustainable development of China’s fashion industry. Therefore, offering a course that combines international business theoretical knowledge with the practical activities of the fashion companies’ international business is an innovative approach to training fashion business professionals.

The teaching objective of the “International Fashion Business” course is to enable students who are interested in working in the fashion industry to understand the characteristics of international business activities, master the basic concepts and theories of international business, and have the ability to analyze the international business environment and address complex issues faced by international fashion companies. Some studies suggest that the teaching of international business courses should highlight the international business practices of Chinese companies^[2], combining with the implementation of China’s “going overseas” strategy to enhance students’ ability to analyze and solve international business problems through case study methods^[3]. However, there is limited discussion on how to integrate corporate international business practices into course teaching, and little attention has been given to how international business curriculum can be carried out based on the characteristics of international business activities in a specific industry. In fact, the cultivation of international business talents can be carried out with targeted discussions based on the development needs and industry characteristics of various industries. With a focus on training

international fashion business professionals that meet the needs of China's fashion industry's international development, this course aims to enable students to not only master the basic knowledge of international business but also understand the characteristics of the international fashion industry and the reality of fashion companies' international development. This paper will specifically discuss the teaching design plan to achieve this goal.

2. Course Design Objectives and Basic Elements

2.1 Teaching Design Objectives

Based on the international business activities of fashion companies, designing the “International Fashion Business” course aims to inspire students' understanding and reflection on the practical activities of fashion companies' international business, enhance their awareness of international business activities in the fashion industry, and enable them to apply basic concepts, theories, and tools of international business to analyze and understand specific issues in the international fashion industry and the international development of fashion companies. This will equip students with a solid foundation in fashion industry knowledge, a broader perspective, and diverse thinking dimensions, laying a foundation for future work or related research. To achieve this goal, three objectives need to be achieved in teaching design: expanding knowledge, broadening horizons, and enhancing analytical and thinking abilities. From the perspective of course evaluation, these three objectives should guide all aspects of course teaching, complementing each other, integrating the practical activities of fashion companies' international business with theoretical knowledge of international business, combining knowledge instruction with analysis and discussion of case studies related to corporate business practices. This will enable students to gain a systematic, comprehensive, and thorough understanding of fashion companies' international business activities.

2.2 Basic Elements of Teaching Design

To integrate the international business practices of fashion companies into course teaching, it is essential to have a wealth of diverse and dynamic international business practices in the fashion field for discussion. The continuous changes in the global fashion market, the evolution of the development of the international fashion industry, and specific cases of fashion companies' international business activities constitute the basic elements for introducing fashion companies' international business practices into the design of an international business curriculum.

At present, China has become the most important production base and consumer market for global fashion industries. It is a crucial link in the global value chain and supply chain of the fashion industry. On one hand, with China's development as an export-oriented economy, Chinese fashion companies have continuously participated in global competition in the fashion industry at a comprehensive and in-depth level by engaging in activities such as foreign brand contract manufacturing, investing overseas factories through “going out” strategies, conducting international cooperation, acquiring overseas brands and marketing channels. In recent years, some companies have achieved rapid expansion in overseas markets and breakthroughs in building their own brands through the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce. On the other hand, international fashion brands have increasingly regarded China as a significant global.

3. Course Design

The “International Fashion Business” course is designed to be practical and oriented towards practice^[4]. Starting from this principle and orientation, the teaching design of the “International

Fashion Business” course must combine with the international business practice activities of enterprises, rather than simply theoretical teaching. This article discusses how to integrate the international business activities of fashion enterprises into teaching from three aspects: teaching content, extended discussion, and research-based assignments. These three aspects are complementary and indispensable for achieving the overall teaching objectives and ideal teaching results.

3.1 Teaching of the Course Content

The teaching content of the “International Fashion Business” course includes aspects such as economic globalization, international business environment, international market entry strategy, international enterprise strategy and organization, and international enterprise operations. Based on the positioning of focusing on the fashion industry and enterprises to teach international business issues, the teaching of the above content should cover, reflect, and highlight relevant content of the international fashion industry, market, and international fashion enterprises’ international business operations.

3.1.1 Instructional design in the teaching of course content

The teaching of each part of the “International Fashion Business” course can be based on the fashion industry, reflecting the industrial characteristics, market structure, and most prominent and attention-grabbing aspects of fashion enterprises’ cross-border business activities.

For example, when teaching the content related to “globalization”, examples from the evolution of the international division of labor in the textile and apparel industry and the formation of the global value chain in the textile and apparel industry can be used to explain the globalization of production and markets, and then the division of international labor can be explained. Additionally, further discussion can be added on how Chinese fashion enterprises have achieved value chain upgrading and development. From the perspective of enterprise international business operations, a case study can be conducted on the successful overseas expansion of Chinese cross-border e-commerce fashion brand Shein, analyzing how it has achieved brand and channel breakthroughs in overseas markets, becoming a global unicorn company once valued at hundreds of billions of US dollars^[5]. When teaching how to measure the internationalization level of an enterprise, some international fashion brands can be selected for analysis and explanation. For example, taking the Inditex Group as an example, its global market store distribution, sales distribution, employee distribution, and global supplier distribution can be used to illustrate the internationalization degree of foreign fashion enterprises and the dominant position of European and American brand companies and retailers in the global fashion industry value chain.

When teaching about specific country business environments, examples should be used to enhance students’ understanding and awareness of international business environments in addition to conceptual teaching, so that students can realize the importance of business environments for enterprise international business operations and have the sensitivity to identify potential risks. When giving examples, they should focus on the political, economic, cultural, legal opportunities and risks that fashion enterprises face in the process of international development, highlighting the practical environmental problems faced by international fashion enterprises and solutions. For example, the impact of economic factors on overseas sales can be explained by using examples such as global fluctuations in the textile and apparel market during the pandemic and significant increases in logistics costs; the impact of sudden events on global supply chains can be illustrated by using examples such as the Turkish earthquake’s impact on the global textile industry supply chain, emphasizing the importance of supply chain safety for enterprise international operations. When

teaching about legal environments, examples such as China's clothing companies being impacted by attacks in Myanmar can be used to emphasize that host country social security and protection for overseas investors' rights are important factors for enterprises to consider when choosing overseas markets. Cases such as Huawei's trademark dispute with Chanel or Supreme's trademark cases can be used to illustrate international fashion brands' awareness of protecting their own intellectual property rights and their importance for enterprise international business operations. For cultural factors, positive and negative examples of fashion brands dealing with cultural conflicts can be used, as well as examples of successful integration of Chinese elements into modern fashion by brands such as Li Ning, to illustrate the significance of cultural factors for fashion brands going abroad.

3.1.2 Key points for instructional design in teaching course content

Integrating international business practices of fashion enterprises into classroom content requires teachers to constantly pay attention to and track changes in the international fashion industry and market, stay up-to-date on the development trends of fashion brand internationalization, invest a lot of time and energy in collecting and organizing materials, and even develop teaching cases themselves. This poses high requirements for teachers who provide instruction. If a teaching team can be established, especially a teaching case development team, it will greatly facilitate accumulation of teaching resources.

In addition, due to a large amount of materials in actual teaching, it is difficult for students to read or view them in their entirety during limited class time. Therefore, it is recommended to fully utilize online teaching platforms to pre-publish various materials and require students to pre-view them before class so that better interaction can be achieved during class.

3.2 Extensive Discussion

Students should be able to express their own opinions on some practical and hot issues in the field of international fashion business, while also being good at listening to others' views, so as to learn to analyze and understand problems from different perspectives and gain new insights and a deeper understanding of related issues through discussion. Therefore, in addition to the teaching of basic theories and knowledge, it is necessary to organize extensive discussion in classroom teaching arrangements to enable students to actively learn and exchange ideas, and improve themselves.

3.2.1 Teaching Design of Extensive Discussion

The most suitable chapter for extensive discussion in the course of "International Fashion Business" is the section of International Business Ethics. In teaching design, the issue of international business ethics can be introduced through one or two leading cases, pointing out that the huge differences between countries in politics, law, economic development, and culture are the root of the international business ethics issue. Then, a series of real incidents from fashion enterprises' international business activities can guide students to discuss specific issues related to international business ethics. For example, in response to the labor protection and environmental pollution issues that are most concerned about in the fashion industry, some well-known clothing brands' "sweatshop" problems and people's attention to fashion industry environmental pollution and environmental responsibility issues can be introduced. Let students discuss: Should international enterprises be responsible for the working conditions and environmental pollution of foreign factories that do not belong to them but produce products for them? What should international enterprises do when faced with specific problems? Imagine yourself as a manager of a company, when facing the above specific problems, what kind of moral view will you hold?

3.2.2 Key Points of Extensive Discussion Teaching Design

To carry out extensive discussion, teachers need to prepare corresponding materials and resources in advance. For example, for the discussion of fashion enterprises' environmental responsibility issues, we can use public resources such as annual reports on sustainable fashion released by international organizations and public welfare institutions, as well as consumer surveys on sustainable fashion released by consultancies. We can also apply or develop specific cases on sustainable development practices of fashion enterprises to establish more complete and in-depth case resources. By reading or watching relevant materials, students will understand and form their views on a certain problem, so as to exchange their views with each other.

Another key point of extensive discussion lies in designing discussion questions in advance. For example, through the above materials, we can raise the following questions: what reforms have been made in enterprises or brands in terms of sustainability? What achievements have been made? What more can be done in this regard? What are the different sustainable views of Eastern and Western consumers? How should international enterprises or brands view and respond to these different views? These specific questions are the "root" of the discussion topic. During the discussion process, it may extend to "branches", which will enable the discussion to gradually deepen based on a certain discussion topic.

Extensive discussion can also be combined with news events. For example, combined with the news that a Chinese sportswear company donated 50 million materials silently after the 2021 Henan floods and donated 100 million materials to Fujian Disabled Welfare Foundation one year later, students can be inspired to discuss how enterprises should reflect social responsibility and how to achieve economic and social win-win results in business decision-making. These fresh events are easy to attract students' interest and may also be closely related to them as consumers, which will increase students' enthusiasm for participating in the discussion.

3.3 Research Assignments

College students possess a certain ability to conduct research, and therefore can be assigned with some research assignments. This strengthens students' understanding of fashion enterprises and brands, while also improving their grasp of international business professional knowledge. It can achieve the purpose of improving students' research abilities, stimulating their interest in learning, and providing ideas for further research topics.

3.3.1 Teaching Design of Research Assignments

Many parts of the course "International Fashion Business" are suitable for assigning research assignments. For example, in the section on the global value chain of the fashion industry, students can be assigned topics related to the upgrading of China's textile and apparel industry; in the section on country-specific business environments, students can be asked to conduct research on a specific country's market; in the section on international market entry strategies, students can analyze and evaluate the timing of foreign fast fashion brands entering the Chinese market, or study luxury group brand acquisition strategies; in the section on international enterprise strategy and organization, students can choose a brand of interest to analyze its strategy and organizational changes.

Specifically, taking brand internationalization research as an example, students can be asked to conduct research on how fashion enterprises establish international brands. Teachers can provide a certain research path, but leave it open to student selection of a brand of interest for study, providing guidance at different stages and allowing students to present their findings after

completing the research. Depending on the difficulty of the research topic, research assignments can be assigned as individual or group projects. Group projects can assign relatively large tasks, and after completing the tasks, compare, analyze, summarize, and refine the conclusions of each group.

3.3.2 Key Points in Teaching Design of Research Assignments

The key to assigning research tasks lies in selecting appropriate research topics. The goal of research tasks is not to require students to draw a profound conclusion, but to stimulate students' curiosity and desire for knowledge, and promote their interest in research. Therefore, research tasks often arise from teachers' inspiring questions in classroom teaching, which prompt students to think and generate the motivation for research. Therefore, an appropriate research topic must be linked to real-world issues that students are curious about but do not have an answer for. Only by fully arousing students' curiosity can research assignments avoid becoming a boring task that is completed just to get a grade.

In addition, the specific requirements and evaluation criteria for research assignments should not be too rigid. Apart from academic ethics requirements, the requirements for format and style can be relatively flexible. In the reporting and evaluation stage after completing the assignment, students should first summarize and evaluate their own work, and then teachers provide suggestions and additions for key issues. This approach encourages student creativity and cultivates their proactivity in detecting and correcting problems themselves, ultimately enabling their self-development.

4. Conclusion

As one of the early representative industries of globalization, the global pattern of fashion industry continues to develop and evolve. The international development of fashion enterprises still displays strong vitality, providing a continuous stream of rich material for teaching "International Fashion Business" courses. This article discussed integrating fashion enterprises' international business activities into teaching with initial ideas, with a view to practice and improve teaching for the purpose of providing reference for more similar courses' teaching design.

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