1. Define the key theories underlying the concept of sustainability

1.1. Differentiate ethics, social responsibility, green and sustainability theories
1.1.2. Explain framework of sustainability

1.2. Demonstrate the concept of "sustainable lifestyle" as an individual
2.1.1. Explain the drivers of sustainable lifestyle
2.1.2. Learn to communicate sustainability

2.2. Consider the new opportunities and risks for sustainable development
2.2.1. Identify possible impact of globalization
2.2.2. Determine market response to sustainability

3. Recognize sustainability issues in the industry
3.1. Assess possible market response to sustainable business models
3.1.1. Explain the concept of "sustainable business"
3.1.2. Identify opportunities to integrate social and environmental development in competitive retail and product development strategy

3.2. Learn to use sustainability analysis system
3.2.1. Apply various sustainable business models
3.2.2. Demonstrate decision making skills in the development and application of sustainable development strategies and tactics

Sustainable Strategies in Merchandising: Experiential Learning in an Online Class

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Student Projects Sustainable Self, Society and Business

1. Experience Sustainable Self: Sustainable YOU project

Through this individual project, students make two personal commitment of their choice to be mindful of sustainability on the personal scale: one commitment focusing on the social aspect of sustainability (i.e. to enhance the power of social network within the society), and one commitment focusing on the environmental aspect of sustainability (i.e. to reduce one’s environmental impact). Students will be asked to submit their personal commitment at the beginning of the semester and will keep posting their experience on course website.

2. Engage in Sustainable Society: Society Outreach Project

Students will develop a plan to educate consumers and society of sustainability, the issues, and misconceptions. Each team will have a target audience of their choice and it will determine when, where, why and why of the campaign. The teams will research the target audience and the methods that will be appropriate to reach them. It can take on a form of a website, special event, educational session, training, advertising, or other that will meet the objective of the campaign.

The outreach project and the activities should be based on the course concepts and theories they learn not only in this particular class but in other classes as well – promotion, communication, consumer experience, etc. For presentation, the teams will need to post tangible elements to class website so that it is beyond typical power point presentation. After the team presentation, there will be an evaluation session when other teams will be able to provide feedback for the improvement of the project.

3. Build Sustainable Business: Triple Bottom Line Analysis

In order to achieve the goal as a sustainable apparel or home furnishings business, a manager should be aware of the three interrelated dimensions economic, social, and environmental, which are commonly referred to as the "Triple Bottom Line".

- Profit: Economic aspect of understanding the current status of capitalism, including opportunity and limitations
- Planet: Environmental aspect of understanding technical, physical and natural realities in which the world exists
- People: Social aspect of understanding the importance of personal leadership and interpersonal awareness within and outside the business.

Based on the understanding of the Triple Bottom Line, team of students will identify specific fields in different business sectors in order to analyze their current practices and to propose a new strategy to more fully accomplish the 3BL concepts and potentially create additional business opportunities.

Multiple online discussions will be held to present team’s research result. After current practices are identified, teams will start their research by using secondary research as well as primary research in order to learn the target market’s perception towards sustainability and the business’ current sustainability practice. Based on their research, teams will develop a business strategy that enhances the 3BL of the business and will present their plan to other teams.

Expected Outcomes

Through “sustainable YOU” individual project, students will be able to read each other’s posting and follow up on the progress. This will get students emotionally engaged in the subject matter and will also let them understand how the concept of sustainability is closely related to our daily lives.

Through “society outreach project”, students will not only work on their own project but also will have an opportunity to broaden their scope of study by interacting with other teams and getting engaged in other’s projects.

“3BL project” will allow students to apply the course concept to real business context, to experience the process of developing a sustainable business strategy, and to engage in cooperative learning.

The entire process will not only facilitate discussion within each team, but will also benefit other teams while they observe and give feedbacks.

Conclusion

The definition of sustainability involves the understanding of environmental, social and economic demands, which are overlapping concepts that are not mutually exclusive and can be mutually reinforcing. The scheme of sustainable development is possible at the confluence of three constituent parts.

Sustainable development is a dynamic process that can be used in the development and execution of plans and strategies at multiple levels – individual, community, society, business, nation, and global.

The course schedule will follow the strategic framework for sustainable development process and will develop understandings of the role and responsibilities of each level. Three proposed course projects will not only provide an opportunity for students to engage, experience, apply and learn the subject matter but also will stimulate active student engagement to the topic.

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