Lesson Plan for Teaching Module

Title: Ethics and Consumer Protection in Fashion Marketplace

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Introduction and Rationale

This three-hour ethics module (Title: Ethics and Consumer Protection in the Fashion Marketplace) is integrated into my FMD 451: The Fashion Customer course, which is a core course for all fashion merchandising majors (about 500-550 students) in the Dept. of Family and Consumer Sciences. Just like any other industry, the fashion business functions within the greater framework of society, subject to the rules and standards of behavior that govern both individual and corporate entities. Therefore, understanding 1) how ethical issues shape consumer behavior and fashion buying decisions, 2) how fashion businesses address their social responsibilities, and 3) how the government and other organizations play a role in developing laws or programs to help protect consumers of fashion from harm, as well as to help them make more informed purchase decisions would be important. By highlighting complex ethical issues related to fashion consumers and business professionals, this module helps students gain an ability to critically analyze ethical aspects of consumer decision making and decisions made within the business. Students explore ways to approach ethical dilemmas to achieve appropriate and optimal outcomes.

While ethics has always played a role in decision making in the fashion marketplace, recent public ethical dilemmas experienced by major fashion retailers and industries, and growing consumer awareness, have brought ethical issues to the forefront of content important for future fashion professionals. Therefore, the main goal of the ‘Ethics and Consumer Protection in The Fashion Marketplace’ module is to prepare students to 1) think more profoundly about what is ethical decision making as a consumer and fashion professional and 2) gain insight into how to be an ethically responsible leader in the fashion marketplace. This ethics module introduces a variety of ethical issues that arise in the fashion marketplace and prompt students to consider the myriad ways ethics impact their personal and professional lives. The module is begun with an overview of ethical issues found in the fashion marketplace and present real and potential ethical dilemmas related to particular aspects of the fashion consumers and businesses.

The ethics module consists of three major parts:

1) **Consumer ethics**: various types of consumer fraud, fur consumption, consumption of counterfeit products

2) **Business ethics**: counterfeiting, consumer privacy, ethical advertising, fur & animal testing, equal opportunity, labor issues, environmental concerns

3) **Consumer protection**: role of federal and independent agencies, government regulations and programs.
Lesson Plans

Detailed lesson plans including applied learning objectives/outcomes and instruction/assessment methods are described below. Topics are presented and instructed using various tools and resources: PowerPoint lectures, video clips, readings, interactive in-class discussions/activities, group activity, and case studies.

1. Learning Objectives

- To understand what the concepts of consumer and business ethics encompass.
- To identify ethical standards established in different cultures.
- To explore the various issues in which ethical situations arise in the fashion marketplace.
- To understand ethical responsibility as consumers in the marketplace and business’s responsibility to consumers.
- To identify roles of government and federal agencies in enabling fashion consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.
- To learn regulations that protect consumers from buying harmful products.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

- Students are able to understand the concepts of consumer and business ethics and identify how its standards differ by cultures.
- Students are able to identify and critically analyze major ethical issues related to fashion consumers and business practices.
- Students are able to identify possible consequences of ethical or unethical behaviors as fashion consumers and business professionals.
- Students are able to employ positive decision-making processes when faced with various ethical dilemmas in the fashion marketplace.
- Students are able to identify how government rules, regulations, and standards enable fashion consumers to make informed purchasing decisions and protect them from buying products that could be harmful.

3. Classroom Instruction and Assessment

This ethics module consists of the following:

- A PowerPoint lecture illustrating three major parts: 1) Consumer ethics, 2) Business ethics, 3) Consumer protection
  - Assessment: Exam questions related to this module are developed and included in the exam following this module.
• A series of discussions and group activities after watching video clips or reading recent newsletters addressing ethical issues related to fashion consumers and major retailers.
  o After watching a short video and/or reading a short newsletter highlighting ethical challenges confronted by major fashion retailers and consumers, students are assigned to small groups and asked to discuss a series of questions related to major ethical issues addressed in the media.
  o Topics include ethical issues related to consumer theft, hiring issues in fashion retail stores, ethical advertising issues, employee discrimination
  o Assessment: Each group needs to submit a short reflection paper. In the paper, students need to identify ethical issues addressed and discuss questions related to each issue. They need to discuss how government and independent agencies can improve fairness and ethics in the fashion marketplace and answer how each ethical issue influences consumers’ perception about the particular fashion retailer and their decision making in fashion consumption. In the report, each group needs to discuss the roles of consumers, retailers, and government in relieving controversial ethical dilemmas.

• Case study (Small group activity): using real life examples involving ethical issues
  o Students are assigned to small groups (groups of 4 or 5). Real-life case studies on the most critical ethical issues in the fashion marketplace are distributed to each group to analyze.
  o Topics include: Ethical advertising, Counterfeiting, Fraudulent returns, Social Responsibility
  o Assessment: Each group needs to develop a short PowerPoint presentation analyzing a specific case assigned and lead the discussion in class. As students analyze decisions and the decision-making processes that have been made by others who have faced ethical dilemmas in the fashion industry, they will be familiarized with the situations in the case and engage in the process of ethical decision making. In the presentation, each group needs to identify ethical dilemmas confronted by the retailer or consumers in the case and suggest possible solutions to resolve the problems. The quality of the presentation and analysis will be assessed by peer students and the instructor.
**Resources for this Module**


