

Design of an innovative and/or sustainable product range in textiles

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DCW, 'Deze Combinatie Werkt', meaning this combination works in Dutch (DCW, 2021), is a social development company of the municipality of Enschede that employs and provides work experience to people who cannot work at regular companies. Currently, they are a company to which other companies outsource work. DCW manufactures many different kinds of goods for other companies, from assembly to packaging, to manufacturing textile goods. The textile department wants to expand and start designing, producing and selling its own products under its original brand. Thus the assignment of designing an innovative and/or sustainable textile product range was set up.

The assignment's objective is to have three to five completed designs with prototypes and instructions so that DCW can immediately start producing the products if they wish. Furthermore, brand name and logo ideation is also performed to provide a starting point for DCW's original brand.

The main research question is as follows:

"How can a social development company like DCW produce a range of textile products that are innovative and/or sustainable?"

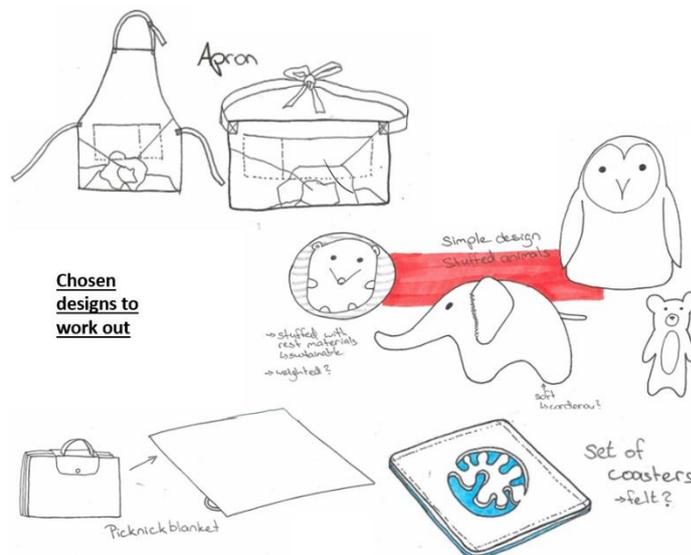
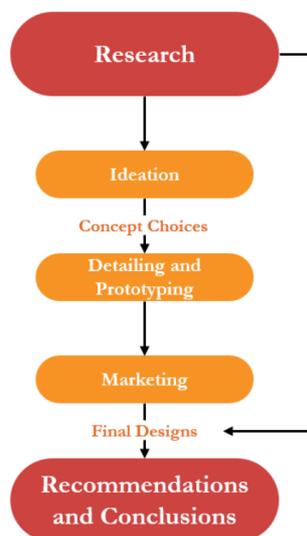


Figure 1- Approach

Figure 2 – Chosen ideas

First research is done on the topics of sustainability in textiles, the manufacturing capabilities of DCW, the struggles and possibilities of transitioning from an own equipment manufacturer (OEM) to an own brand manufacturer (OBM) (Chyr, 2011) and how to incorporate emotion into design. To portray DCW's values and the feeling of pride that each employee feels when successfully completing a product, emotional design is used to incorporate pride in and to associate this feeling with the products. From the research, requirements are made, and the design directions are defined. The ideation phase yielded about 55 different product ideas. Together with the textile department supervisors, the following ideas were chosen to work out: an apron, coasters, a picnic blanket and a soft toy. (See Figure 2.)

The next step was the prototyping and detailing phase followed by the marketing phase. The final results were then compared with the research results and the requirements in order to give recommendations and make a conclusion.

The final designs can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3 – Final results



Figure 4 – Branding and storytelling

In Figure 4 part of the logo and name ideation can be found. The effects of storytelling are also explored, and it is determined that storytelling can be essential in making the consumer understand the feeling of pride which is incorporated in the product and it is a chance that allows the consumer to connect to the individual producer (Kaiser, 2019), which can make them want to purchase one product over another.

Interviews are conducted to evaluate the products. The interviewed employees state they would be proud to manufacture these products, and the interviewed third parties agree that the fact that the products are handmade makes them special and that they are products one could be proud of. However, each prototype has some limitations which need to be fixed before entering the market. For example, the soft toys should be tested according to EU standards if they are safe for children. Furthermore, although in theory, these products are relatively simple in design, it has not been tested if the employees of DCW are able to manufacture them. Also, the sellability and the product's ability to penetrate existing markets should be tested before starting large-scale production. Succinctly, although the prototypes do not yet meet each requirement, with the help of the suggested changes and recommendations, the requirements will be met.

In conclusion, the results of this project showcase that DCW could, in theory, successfully produce a range of textile products that are innovative and sustainable by staying true to its values and focusing on its and its employees' feelings of pride. Now DCW needs to start teaching their employees how to make the products. Further, the sellability and the successfulness of the products in the market have not been properly tested yet and need testing.

References

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