



Branding to Compete: Applications to Textiles and Apparel

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The objective of this paper is to briefly review competitive strategies that are relevant to the U.S. textile and apparel industry, focusing specifically on differentiation and branding methods. The various approaches and strategies are then applied through specific examples and illustrations.

Methodology: A comprehensive review of secondary data sources, both research and trade combined with primary data sources (via industry interviews) are reviewed. Results are presented as the differentiation typology proposed by Barney (2002).

Findings: Numerous competitive strategies can aid textile and apparel firms in preserving and/or improving their current market position. A specific strategy used, branding, aids in the differentiation of product throughout both the textile and apparel industry.

Practical Implications: The compilation of literature on differentiation and branding will be useful in further research and studies that focus on textiles and apparel or those that are concerned with product differentiation. Direct applications to both textile and apparel firms are made and a potential structures by which they may develop brands is introduced.

Value of Paper: The paper will aid both academia and industry in the development of textile and apparel brands through the introduction of literature on the topic, as well as recommendations on brand strategy and creation.

Keywords: Competitive strategies, Differentiation, Branding, Private label, Textile and apparel industry

1. INTRODUCTION

The textile and apparel industry, due to its low barriers of entry, is one of the most highly competitive manufacturing sectors in the world [1]. As obstacles to trade among nations have declined due to improved transportation systems, technology transfer and government cooperation, the industry has seen a rapid increase in globalization and competition. A common marketing trend seen throughout the 1970s was price competition as a means by which

firms would compete for sales. Such measures, however, were found to lower margins, create a lack of customer loyalty, product imitation and inadequate profitability.

As a result of this trend, competitive strategies have been an imperative subject of study throughout academia and industry for the past thirty years [2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9]. A specific area of concentration has been on branding as a means of textile and apparel differentiation. This strategy has become