

American Marketing Association International Collegiate Case Competition : Cotton Inc.

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The American Marketing Association International Case Competition occurred over a duration of time, from September to December of 2019. UT's AMA Collegiate Agency took on Cotton Incorporated as a client and dedicated efforts towards thorough research aiming to help Cotton Inc. achieve its overall objectives to increase 30% of un-aided awareness of cotton as a preferred fiber, and a 40% increase in label-checking behavior for cotton fiber. The demand for cotton is higher than what is being produced right now, even though the United States is the third leading country in the production of cotton in 2016 and 2017; so supply chain issues are a concern. The current target market for consumer marketing is 70% women and 30% men, 18 to 49 years old. The Seal of Cotton trademark and The Fabric of Our Lives®, Cotton's trademarked tagline, have been instrumental to the success of promoting cotton to consumers for more than 40 years. This case study focused on the marketing aspect of Cotton Incorporated's Consumer Marketing Division whose responsibility is to position cotton as the fiber of choice among end consumers primarily in the United States.

Relevant information and secondary research data were gathered for this case study through University of Tampa's online library (ESearch). The secondary information was then analyzed and summarized into key learnings which led to generating overall insights. Furthermore, the insights were used to collect primary research data through focus groups and surveys. Those findings and insights were transferred to the Marketing Strategy Team and from there to the Creative Team respectfully. An overview of the primary and secondary research concluded that (1) younger generations' behavior does not match their expressed sustainability concerns or intentions. (2) Natural products satisfy both environmental and self oriented desires (more than environmental alone). (3) Plastics (as made from petroleum) have become a symbolically bad product/material for the environment (and people). (4) Fit and comfort are highly relevant, valued, and tangible benefits for younger consumers. (5) Thrift and retro are popular cultural themes with younger consumers.

The Collegiate Agency was challenged to drive awareness of cotton (as a preferred fiber) against a primary target market of 15- to 18-year-old Gen Z consumers, assuming there will be some spillover to 13 and 14 year olds. The ultimate goal was that the favorable awareness will lead to label checking and purchase of cotton products. Our industry analysis suggests that the cotton industry is rapidly growing and continues to stand alone as the most well-known fabric. Rising consumption has increased, however research projects that fabric blends with other fibers will replace 100% cotton fabrics in the future.