

Graduation Announcement & Save The Date Card Series for Asia Croson Photography

A Senior Project
presented to
the Faculty of the Graphic Communication Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to create graduation announcements cards to serve as a value added service for Asia Croson Photography. Research was conducted on the recent growth of photography, the difficulty of starting a photography business, and Asia's competitors in the area. The current trends in graduation announcements among college females was also researched before designs were made. Once designs were brainstormed and executed, approval was received from Asia Croson and files were sent to her to personalize for her clients. Clients were also sent surveys asking them what card designs they were interested in purchasing and why they chose the card they did. These cards will continue to be offered to Asia's clients throughout the summer and upcoming school year.

Chapter 1: Purpose of the Study

Statement of the Problem

A recent Cal Poly graduate and acquaintance of mine named Asia Croson has her own photography business called Asia Croson Photography. Asia specializes in photoshoots ranging from friend groups to individual graduation photos, and she is looking for a way to market herself more, boosting interest in her business among potential clients. Currently, she only does photoshoots, but if she were able to incorporate printed materials (such as Graduation Announcements or Special Event cards) with her photos, she could further expand her client base. People will be more likely to come to her for photographs during graduation time when they know they can also get affordable and beautifully designed graduation announcement cards as part of the package. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to design a series of Graduation Announcement cards for Asia's clients to order and personalize with their photos taken by Asia.

Significance of the Problem

Asia's target market is Cal Poly female students, from freshman to soon-to-be graduating seniors. Throughout her photos, she captures genuine joy and fun in her subject and her feminine style yields beautiful results. She focuses on Big Sis and Little Sis Sorority shoots, individual graduation shoots, and large group photo contests. With Cal Poly females graduating every single quarter, Asia needs a way to further expand her services to keep interest and stay competitive with other photographers. A majority of girls send out Graduation Announcements to friends and family, so she could be making the process easier for her clients by providing them a one-stop shop for photos and graduation announcements.

Interest in the Problem

Being aware of Asia's business and target market, I came up with an idea I am very passionate about that will help expand her photography business and make her more successful. I plan on designing a line of graduation announcements that mimic her young and feminine style. That way, Asia's clients can come to her for both graduation photos and then also order graduation announcements through her, making it an easier process on the client since this can all be done through one person. Asia can earn additional money through printing these announcements, and she can also add depth to the services she provides.

I have always been very passionate about design, and I have a huge appreciation for beautiful cards and stationary. My graphic style is very young and feminine, which would work perfectly with Asia's clients. I also admire Asia's drive and determination to start her own business at such a young age, and it has been fun to see how much more successful she has become due to all her work. I feel that I could learn a lot from working with her in case I find myself in the same situation sometime in the future. Not only is this a project that I would absolutely enjoy, but I think it would also benefit Asia's business very well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Photography is a popular hobby among many, whether its the recreational photo taken on a phone for social media or graduation photos taken with a professional camera. Everyone appreciates a good photo, and how fun would it be to be the one taking them? Producing beautiful works of art behind a camera lens is much different of a profession than inputting numbers into a spreadsheet or sitting in a cubicle behind a computer screen all day. However, Photography is one of the most difficult industries to not only break into, but to become successful in. According to Sanders, 60% of photographers give up their business within the first year. After that, 25% of those survivors will fail within the second year. Anyone can go buy a camera and take photos, but being a photographer means you must have very unique talent and skill, along with knowledge of running a successful business to keep yourself afloat.

The art of Photography originated from Alhazen, a studier of optics in 1000 AD. His invention of the first pinhole camera and ability to explain why images showed upside-down was a huge step in the development of the camera we use today. In 1827, the first photographic image was taken and recorded by Nicephore Niepce. Prior to Niepce, people used cameras solely for viewing or drawing purposes, but Niepce's photos of the sun were the prototype for modern photography. After Niepce, Louis Daguerre invented the practical process of photography. Using silver-plated copper and a light-sensitive surface, Daguerre printed a permanent image. The process of creating negative images and transforming them to positive images came about in 1841. Initially black and white, these film images turned into color images in 1940 with the introduction of color films. As the photography inventions progressed, George Eastman invented the Kodak Camera, which allowed

anyone to purchase a camera for \$22 and take 100 shots with it. This soon led to the invention of polariod cameras and disposable photos, which allowed anyone to take a photograph.. And finally in 1984, Canon introduced the first digital camera, which is widely used through society today. As technology continues to progress, it seems that everyone has a camera at the touch of their fingertips, especially since most cell phones in today's day and age are equipped with a high quality camera lens. This technology has become much more accessible, and its making it so simple to take a photo from your phone, add some filters and effects, and produce a beautiful image. With this complex technology, it gives anyone the ability to take a photo, but it is crucial that the professionals set themselves apart from the recreational photographers in some way.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Photographers held just over 61,000 jobs in the US. This number is a sharp decline from 130,000 in 2002. The Photography business has become much more specialized, and today over half of these photographers are self-employed (Photography Schools). Although the focus for these photographers is on taking photos, there is also a very large business aspect to these companies that cannot be overlooked. According to Dickson, the biggest challenge is understanding that “many standard business principles apply to this industry, but to a degree, business principles take on a customized spin to photography” (as cited in *So You Want To Enter The Photography Business?*) Photography Schools also states that those skilled at operating a business, who are creative, and who have a unique skill or talent in electronics or computers have the most promising job prospects. Therefore, in order to be successful as a photographer, one also needs the business background and experience in order to successfully run their own business.

The Photographic Industry has also seen a lot of change over the years regarding who is behind the lens. Previously, the photography business was one dominated by male photographers, but recently the number of female photographers has increased. Today, forty percent of female photogra-

phers are part time, and 28 percent are full time age 45 and younger (Rangefinder). This is due to the fact that Photography has acquired much more of a feminine connotation in society, where females enjoy both taking photos and having photos of themselves taken. This is beneficial for Asia's Photography business since her target market is focused towards females specifically.

The city of San Luis Obispo has quite a large amount of self-employed photographers, which means that each of their work has a large affect on each other. There are already many photography businesses that are located in SLO in addition to Asia Croson Photography, which is the photography business I am focusing my project on. Some of the big businesses include: Studio 101 West Photography, Proimage Weddings, Nakamura's Photography, J.C. Winter, Kiwiashby Photography, McLain Photography, and SLOtography. While a majority of these companies specialize in Weddings, a few of them have a wider target market. Studio 101 West also specializes in engagements and family photos, while Kiwiashby focuses on maternity, newborns, and high school/college grads. McLain focuses on portraits, while SLOtography does anything from families to formal events. While there are a couple businesses that cover college graduates, there doesn't seem to be one that specializes in this market. This is where Asia Croson's business would really come in; with this large pool of college graduates from Cal Poly, Asia has a large pool of potential clients that she would love to gain to keep her business going.

Many photography businesses in SLO overlap as far as what they specialize in, weddings and family photos being the most prevalent. Although there is a very large population of college students, there seems to be a lack of college student photographers to contribute to graduation photos in particular. And among those that exist, there is fierce competition over acquiring clients. Graduation photos are a common practice at the end of either high school or college, and the demand for College graduation photos has recently been increasing. The demand for personalized graduation cards

has also become much more popular, but most photography business are segregated from graduation card businesses. Some common websites to order graduation announcements from today include: www.minted.com, www.shutterfly.com, www.tinyprints.com, www.snapfish.com, www.zazzle.com, www.peartreegreetings.com, and many more. These websites allow for one to upload their own graduation photos and edit their own text in order to get personalized graduation announcements to send to friends and family. Most photography businesses and graduation card businesses seem to be segregated, but a market for a combined company exists and could be capitalized on.

The photography industry is one that is cutthroat, intense, and includes much more business principles than it seems to from the outside. Often resulting in failure, a professional photographer is always looking for ways to expand their business and stay successful. With the analyzation of incorporating graduation announcements into an existing photography business, there is hope that this will expand the current business by connecting with a wider target market.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this project was to create a value-added service for Asia Croson's Photography business by designing a series of graduation announcement cards for her existing clients during the graduation photo season. Brainstorming and sketching out card designs took place, and communication was done back and forth with Asia on design elements to see what styles she liked and didn't like. Work continued back and forth with Asia until a series of cards was created showing the variety and personalization that mimicked her company's style.

The objectives of this project were to:

- Expand services that Asia Croson Photography provides by gaining clients through this new product offering
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these graduation announcements based on number of graduation photo clients received and number of clients who order announcement cards

For this project, the audience is specific; the target market for Asia Croson Photography and these graduation announcements are high school and college females that are graduating soon. Once these announcements were created and integrated into her business, feedback from her clients was collected regarding reasoning behind why certain designs were chosen and how many they planned on ordering.

In order to test the success of these products, the number of clients who both took graduation photos with Asia and ordered graduation announcements through her was measured. In addition, surveys that were sent out to Asia's clients ordering announcements asked for feedback regarding what was done well with the announcement designs, what could be improved, and what

they might like to see next time. This allowed clients to give more of their own personal input and thoughts on their experience.

Chapter 4: Results

A survey was created to send out to Asia Croson's clients that were interested in ordering graduation announcements. The purpose of this survey was to reveal which graduation announcement designs were the most popular, why they were most popular, and any other additional comments about the cards that reflect what clients like or think should be changed. Because these graduation announcements are offered to both graduating college students and graduating high school students, it was important to create designs that could span this large age gap and appeal to the wide range of ages.

The following graduation announcement card designs were laid out in the survey, and respondents were asked to choose their favorite design or the design they were planning on ordering.

Figure 1A



Figure 1B



Figure 1C



Figure 2A

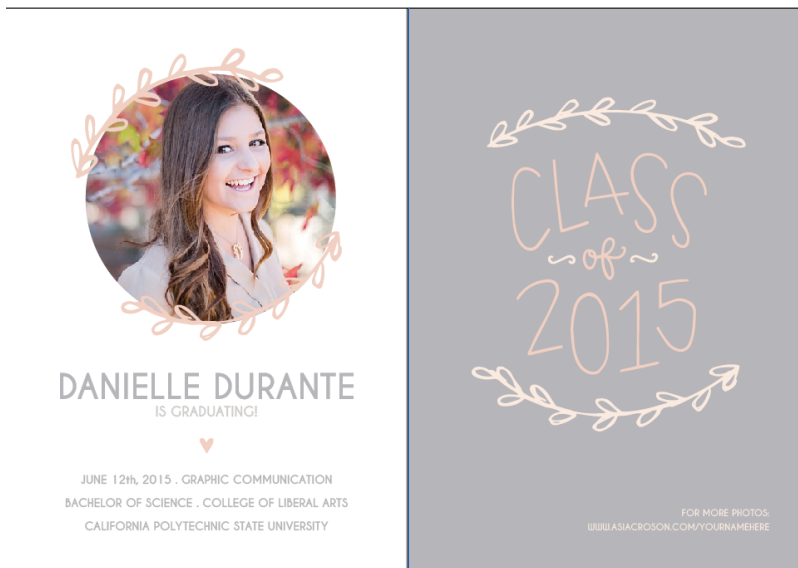


Figure 2B



Figure 3A

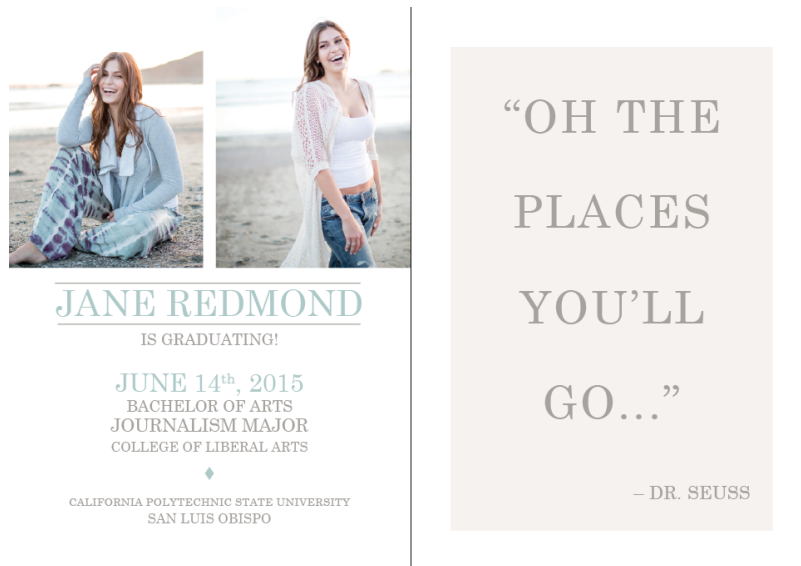


Figure 3B



Figure 4A



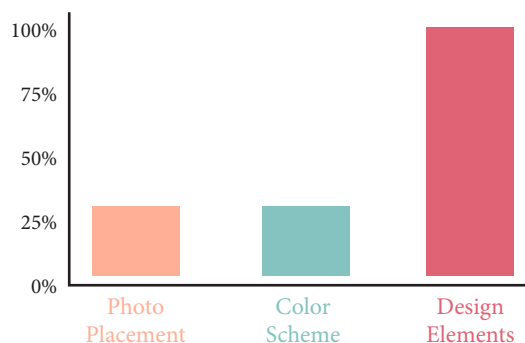
Figure 4B



* All photos, names, and information are placeholders and serve as an example for clients

After the first round of collecting survey data, results showed that the most popular card design was card #4 (Figure 2A) with 43% saying they prefer this design over the others. Card #9 (Figure 4B) came in a close second, with 29% of participants saying this option was their favorite. Survey participants were also asked whether they were a high school or college graduate, and it is interesting to note that every participant from the first round of data collection was ordering for college graduation.

The next question that was asked was “Why did you choose the invite you did?” Given the options of Photo Placement, Color Scheme, or Design Elements, most people chose Design Elements as the main reason behind their decision (100%). Respondents were allowed to pick more than one reason if it applied to them, so 29% also chose both Photo Placement and Color Scheme as factors in their decision. The breakdown of these responses is portrayed in the chart below:



Survey participants were next asked how many graduation announcements each of them were planning on ordering, and 86% said they would be ordering between 25-50 cards. This is an important aspect to know regarding the printing of the cards and the overall price for each client. The final question that survey takers were asked was if they had any additional comments about the designs. Here are some of the responses gathered:

“love them all, but something about 2 and 3 I really like. They are simple and I like the typography”

“So fun, feminine, and exciting. They will go so well with Asia’s photos in them because they both share the same style!”

Figure 5A



Figure 5B



For the “Save The Date” Wedding Announcements, business owner Asia Croson and I decided that these 2 card styles would be offered to clients on a more personal basis, due to the fact that there are less card design options and Asia also does less Wedding shoots than she does graduation shoots. The Save The Date card announcement designs are seen below:

Although survey responses were not extremely high, it is important to note that Asia will continue to offer these cards to her clients not only throughout the summer, but also throughout next year. Asia stated that she also now offers “mini sessions” for those students who want last minute photos towards the end of the year within a small time frame. She said that many students do not plan for their graduation photos as far in advance as they should, so these mini sessions should help her please her clients while also allowing her to take the photos, edit them, and provide them to her client.

One addition that is featured on these graduation announcements that you do not usually see is the link to see additional photos online. Each of Asia’s clients receive a personalized url which holds a gallery of all their photos taken during their shoot. Recipients of their graduation announcements not only see the photos printed on the card, but can also be led to Asia’s website and additional photos of the sender of the card. When asked if this was a favorable feature to the graduation cards, 100% of survey respondents said “Yes!” Asia also expressed her approval over this addition by saying it would be something to “set her apart from others”. She hopes that this url will not only be a fun extra feature on these cards for recipients to explore, but also help expand her business by getting her name out to others outside of San Luis Obispo.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The purpose of this study and design project was to evaluate how to enhance Asia Croson Photography as a business through the addition of graduation announcement card services. Photography is a very difficult business to be successful in, especially in a college town where budgets are tight among students. There are a large amount of photographers in San Luis Obispo, so it was important for Asia to find a way to expand her services and expand her client base as well. Printed graduation announcements were a way to help her do that.

An initial meeting with Asia, the business owner, was done during winter quarter to sort out what exactly she wanted to offer to her clients. It was decided that 4 different design series for graduation announcements would be offered, as well as 2 different “Save The Date” cards for upcoming spring and summer weddings. Besides specific document sizing, free range was given as far as card design, as long as it was fun, feminine, and styled towards Asia’s high school and college female client base. Websites such as Pinterest & Minted served as great sources for inspiration.

Before design work was done however, research was conducted on photography businesses and the difficulty that comes with keeping them afloat. This discovery led to adding the personalized photo link onto the announcements that Asia offers in order to help advertise her business more, allow her cards to stand out, and give card recipients access to more photos on her website.

Design work began with sketches of potential graduation layouts, as well as handlettered titles and artwork for these cards (see appendix). The handlettered style is currently very popular and is already included in much of Asia’s branding, so this seemed like a good fit. Artwork was then scanned and edited in Illustrator before being placed on cards. The next step was researching color

schemes that scanned a wide variety of options based on personal preferences. Consultations with friends and roommates helped to scale the amount of options down to a more reasonable amount.

A difficult task for this project was building these announcements in Photoshop. They were originally built in InDesign, but because Asia only had Photoshop and would need to personalize each of these cards for her clients, they had to be re-built in Photoshop, and some things did not translate as well into the program. But difficulties were worked through, and Asia can more easily edit these designs depending on her clients photo choices and design preferences.

If time permitted, I definitely would have liked to get more survey responses from clients interested in ordering them. Although Asia has a fairly small client base to start, it would have been nice to see if these graduation announcement offerings would expand her client pool in any way, but this is something that would require data collection over the next few quarters.

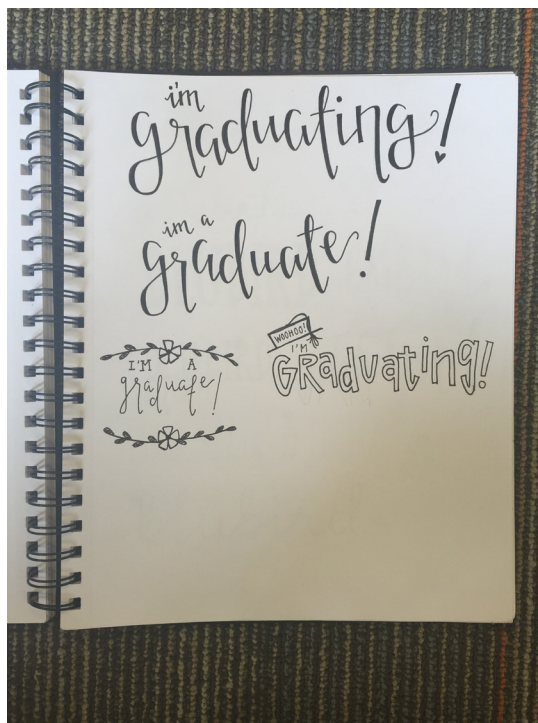
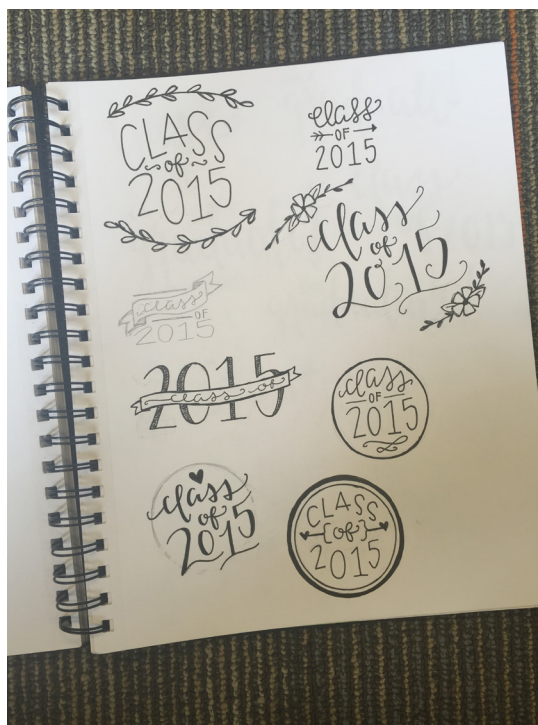
Using graduation announcements as a value-added service for Asia Croson Photography has given Asia a way to expand both her services as a business and her client base. Graduation announcements are not only for High School seniors; they are also becoming popular among college graduates as well. With Asia being in an area with high volumes of high school and college students, it is a great area to launch this service. Because of these designs, Asia's photography business can continue to grow through products that showcase her photography in many different lights.

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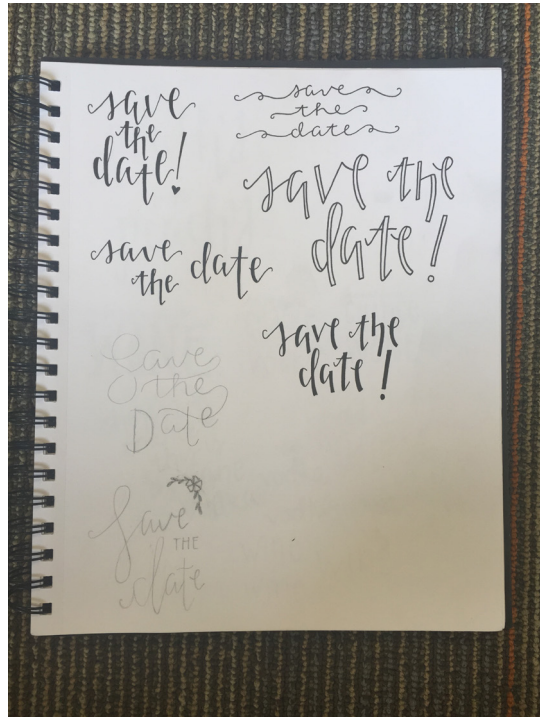
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Appendix

Handlettered pieces for Graduation
Announcements; pages were scanned
and edited in Illustrator



Handlettered pieces cont.



Sketches of potential Graduation
Announcement card layouts &
combinations

