Cookbook for Young Adults

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Graphic Communication 462

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March 15, 2024
Project Abstract Proposal

As a young adult, specifically a college student, finding the time, effort, and money to cook delicious and nutritious meals can be extremely difficult. The stereotypical young adult will gravitate to the frozen section of grocery stores simply because of how efficient they can be. However, eating solely frozen food is not satisfying or very healthy. Because young adulthood is the first time most are living on their own, it is also the first time they only have themselves to rely on for cooking meals. With little to no experience, it can be daunting to enter the kitchen and try to cook something as well as one might be used to while growing up at home. A great helper for learning how to cook is cookbooks, but there are few to almost none that are geared towards a younger audience. A cookbook with the intended audience being young adults could provide a product where there is a big gap in the market.

According to the Education Data Initiative, the average cost of groceries for a college student ranges around $250 while the average cost of groceries for any random given individual is $356 (Hanson, 2023). This $106 difference makes it extremely difficult to cook out of books that are created based on the average individual. A specific cookbook focused on that lower budget would be extremely beneficial to young adults who don’t have as much money to spend on groceries. Another issue with current eating habits of young adults creates issues with overweightness and obesity (Sogari, G., Velez-Argumedo, C., Gómez, M. I., & Mora, C, 2018). Designing a cookbook for them to use would enable them to cook rather than live off of frozen food.

For this project, the first step is to compile the recipes and cook them. From there, photos will be taken and then edited within photoshop. Finally, these edited images can be taken into InDesign and incorporated into an aesthetic layout that would catch young audiences' eyes. While the gap in the market is already present, the design of the cookbook will be the final touch that allows for the cookbook to thrive and ultimately be a successful project.
Literature Review

In order to support the importance of my project, I used Eving Goffman’s theory of framing. In general, the “framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called “the frame”) influences the choices people make about how to process that information.” (Mass Communication Theory, 2014). This means, depending on how you present an idea, people will either be more or less likely to accept the information. For my cookbook, I want to present cooking as being accessible and easy for everyone to do, including young adults in and out of college. My goal was to frame the concept of cooking in an aesthetic and simple way to allow many people to understand it. When making something for a target audience, you have to frame the product specifically for them. Depending on how you display your product, they can “encourage or discourage certain interpretations” (Communication Studies, 2022). In terms of my project, I want to encourage the interpretation that cooking can be easy, fun and not expensive for anyone. By creating a cookbook with inexpensive but delicious recipes while still having the book be aesthetically designed, I can encourage this interpretation.

While working on my cookbook, I had to decide what to include that would encourage people to actually cook the recipes. In some ways, that meant I had to choose simpler recipes because my target audience was for people who don’t know or like how to cook that much. The theory of framing suggests “simplifying the message to mobilize people and garner support” (Amis, 2022). Making the overall aesthetic of the cookbook and the recipes itself simpler makes the book more approachable. The overall goal is to make cooking more accessible and therefore framing it as being simple is the best way to do so. Having a simplistic but fun design aesthetic is not only abiding to the theory of framing but also to current design trends. Many trends these days are very clean and simplistic, I tried to stick with this trend while designing my cookbook as well.

While framing has the ability to help market my product the way I want, it doesn’t always work. Many people come with their own biases already formed and therefore it can be difficult to persuade them
to believe anything else. This is because “media frames interact with existing knowledge and attitudes.” (Zamith, 2020). You cannot completely change the way someone thinks using the framing theory, but you can influence them. Marketing using the framing theory will plant a seed in someone’s thoughts but they can’t completely convince someone to believe something. Their own biases have to persuade them as well. And even when you persuade a person, they can still choose to not fully believe in the framing. For example, “one’s overall attitude…might consist of a combination of negative and positive evaluations of the project on different dimensions” (Chong, 2007). This goes to show that while framing can mostly do the job, people’s own biases and beliefs will only allow it to go so far. But that’s ultimately not the point of framing anyways. Framing is to influence people, not to completely change their minds automatically. With my cookbook, the way I frame it will be to show how cooking is easy, but that won’t completely change the target audience's minds until they try it for themselves.

Framing theory can be used in a multitude of ways and projects. For my specific project, I will be using framing as a way of marketing and designing aesthetics. According to the article from Communication Theory, “Framing can be used for effective communication in all fields of media and other organizations” (Communication Theory, 2013). This goes to show that framing can be used in a multitude of ways. However, marketing and presentation of a product is a big way that framing can be used specifically in the graphic communication field. Marketing is essential for any product, and framing goes hand in hand with marketing. Framing has the capability to see “how media draws the public’s eye to specific topics” (Arowolo, 2017). Which ultimately allows marketing to be pushed one way or another in order to make a product successful. Frames can be used in marketing to further a product's agenda, or just influence more consumers to buy the project. According to the article by Carla Franco, “Marketers can incorporate “frames” to present information that will activate certain mental triggers to make shoppers receptive to products and services.” (Franco, 2021). By using the frame theory in marketing, products can become more successful because of these mental triggers that are reached. By using frames in the marketing and design of my cookbook, I am able to better understand the audience I’m trying to
reach and ultimately be more successful in “selling” my product. With marketing framing, there are two ways to focus your argument, “gain (or positive outcome) or a loss (negative outcome)” (Schoen, 2023). This means that a product can be marketed as either having a positive or negative outcome. With my product there is a positive outcome of not only enjoying cooking but making delicious food. By marketing a product with a positive outcome frame, marketers are more likely to be able to sell the product to more people. Ultimately, a positive frame will push a product further than using a negative frame.

There are four main types of framing, visual, auditory, body language and propositions. (Dolan, 2023). In the field of graphic communication, there is a heavy emphasis on visual framing. Similarly, in my senior project, the majority of the framing I use is visual. I have based the typography, sizing, and coloring based on what I think my target audience would be most drawn to. Ultimately allowing the product to be more successful. Framing visually is so important in graphic communication because it allows design to be more profitable when trying to sell a product. By focusing the visual aspects on ideas that the target audience would be attracted to, it allows you to frame your product for that audience and ultimately be successful.

Ultimately, framing influences how audiences react to the product based on how it’s presented. This is so vital in graphic communication because design/presentation is of the utmost importance within the field. While framing can have a positive or negative affect on people, by framing my senior project as being approachable yet aesthetically pleasing to young adults, I will be able to have a successful product that not only allows people to learn to cook but enjoy cooking while doing it.

**Reflection**

After completing my project, I am extremely proud of my results. In the 10 week course I was able to cook, photograph, and design a fully functioning cookbook that is perfect for young adults. When starting my project I was worried about time restraints but ultimately was able to complete all the goals I set out to complete besides printing the book. I knew that it was a bit of a stretch to be able to have the
book designed and printed out in such a small time frame, however my steps that I could take next would be printing it out. I would love to print copies for my friends and family to enjoy and be able to have a real version to show potential employers. This cookbook ultimately shows my well rounded skill set of product photography, photo editing and design skills that I have learned throughout my four years in Graphic Communication.

Going further with the project could not only include printing but continuing to build out the cookbook with even more recipes. I could continue to add more recipes until it is a much larger cookbook and would be a perfect tool for many young adults to have. Ultimately, I am extremely proud of the work I put into my senior project and believe my skills show through with the work I did. I think this senior project will be a great piece for my portfolio and make me a better candidate for any design job I end up applying to.
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