**RMIT University**
**Learning and Teaching Investment Fund 2009**
**Final Report**
*Due date is February 19, 2010 to your LTIF College Coordinator*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project title</strong></th>
<th>“WIL in Vietnam”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project leader</strong></td>
<td>Grant Emerson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team members</strong></td>
<td>Yuping Li</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funds approved</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction**

The project required a group of students to travel to Vietnam to undertake a WIL project with an industry partner (Zone Clothing) identified by RMIT Vietnam.

The school worked with RMIT Vietnam staff (Ms Sarah Cunnian) and with the industry partner Zone Clothing (Mr Vu). During March and April the project brief and student selection process was completed.

The student group with an RMIT supervisor (Ms Yuping Li) travelled to Vietnam in May to conduct primary research for the WIL project. A range of industry presentations, industry interviews, focus group sessions and relevant site excursions were conducted in Vietnam.

The information collected formed the basis for the students to complete two courses within their degree program (Major Project A and Major Project B).

**Detailed project description and outline of what was done**

The purpose of the project was to conduct market research for a fashion company in Vietnam (Zone Clothing), in order to identify market opportunities and to make viable marketing recommendations to the proprietor of the business (Vu Nguyen - who is an RMIT Vietnam graduate), for him to implement and to improve his business operations and profitability.

The outcome of the trip was the preparation of seven marketing plans for Zone Clothing – three for a new range of yoga wear and four for the existing Ultimate (Frisbee) players uniform range.

The marketing plans covered research data providing a general overview of the markets concerned, competitive analysis, target market definitions, consumer perceptions and expectations.

This data were then analysed to form recommendations on brand identities, positioning strategies and marketing strategies, in particular, product development and distribution strategies, for both ranges of clothing.

**Attach the full and detailed report and evaluation of your project outcomes including**

**Introduction**

The project required a group of students to travel to Vietnam to undertake a WIL project with an industry partner (Zone Clothing) identified by RMIT Vietnam.

Seven students from the Bachelor of Applied Science (Fashion & Textiles Merchandising) program were selected through an interview process and the trip was made in May 2009. One teacher from the program went along as the Mentor for the students; the information collected
evidence of the impact the project has had. Also make reference to how the outcomes address the five key objectives:

- Improved student learning experiences, outcomes and employment opportunities
- Innovation
- Strategic alignment
- University wide application
- Value for money

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The outcome of the trip was the preparation of seven marketing plans for Vu – three for a new range of yoga wear and four for the existing Ultimate (Frisbee) players uniform range. The marketing plans covered research data providing a general overview of the markets concerned, competitive analysis, target market definitions, consumer perceptions and expectations. These data were then analysed to form recommendations on brand identities, positioning strategies and marketing strategies, in particular, product development and distribution strategies, for both ranges of clothing.

This report reviews the processes students undertook in completing the project and makes recommendations for similar programs in the future.

### Students’ expectations before the trip

All seven students were excited about the trip; it was an opportunity for them as well as a challenge. A pre-visit was made by the Program Director, Mr. Grant Emerson in March 2009 to establish the initial contacts and develop a WIL project brief.

Overall the expectations were (as stated by the students):

- To learn more about Vietnamese culture
- Getting more information about the Vietnamese economy
- Developing a better understanding of the Asian fashion and textiles markets
- Visiting the factory to see how it operates, the scale of the factory, employee conditions, the machinery and processes used, to learn about the manufacturing and technical side of the business as well as the processes involved within the overall business
- To have the opportunity to gain knowledge from guest speakers in the fashion and textile market; these resources are extremely exclusive to our study tour and will be a useful source of information for our assignment, as well as information we could use in the future
- We expect this project to be very exciting and rewarding, especially because our work will be applied to a real life company
- We are curious to see how easy (or difficult) it will be to communicate with the Vietnamese people (it probably won’t be very easy)
- We expect that information gathering will be challenging and we will need to be very organised and pro-active with our research over there. Our notes will need to be reviewed each night to ensure that there are no gaps
- We expect this week in Vietnam will be fun, exciting and a real eye opener
- We expect that everyone will become great friends (unless someone has a snoring problem)

### Learning activities in Vietnam

Prior to the trip country specific information was collected through secondary research and three
brain-storming sessions were organised to come up with questions students believed they needed to ask.

Staff at RMIT (Ho Chi Min City) provided valuable assistance to the research tour, through helping to organise an industry speaker and a focus group. However, students were encouraged to take the initiative in finding more people for their research: they approached RMIT Vietnam staff and students on campus for interviews and focus groups studies; they went to yoga studios and interviewed the instructors on the spot; they followed some yoga practitioners after class and invited them to have coffee so another focus group study could be conducted, (in a cafe); and they not only observed Ultimate (Frisbee) team playing but also joined in the games. Some of them even participated in a tournament.

Industry speakers:

Two industry speakers (Valerie McKenzie from a French fashion brand “Song” and Johnny Brooke from Asia Life Magazine) provided in-depth information on Vietnamese culture, the economy, society, consumer behaviour, advertising and promotions, government regulations, and benefits from and difficulties of doing business in Vietnam.

In-depth interviews:

Four in-depth interviews were conducted to gain insightful information on the local fashion and manufacturing industries, as well as on both the yoga and Ultimate (Frisbee) markets. The interviewees were: Vu Nguyen (the proprietor of Zone Clothing), David Jensen (Founder of the Ultimate (Frisbee) game in Ho Chi Min City), Louise Hadley (RMIT teacher who practices Yoga), and Andrew (Surname unknown, Director of Yofi Centre).

Focus group studies:

Four focus group studies - two with yoga practitioners (both local and expatriates) and two with Ultimate (Frisbee) players) were conducted to obtain information on both yoga and Ultimate (Frisbee) consumers. The questions focused on their personal information, their lifestyles, buying habits, the important factors affecting the selection of yoga wear and Frisbee uniforms, as well as their product perceptions and expectations.

Factory visit

To the students, the visit to Vu’s family manufacturing business was the most valuable side of the trip, especially given that some of them work in the fashion industry in Australia. It was revealing to see what foreign manufacturing is really like (without any facade or pretence in terms of cleaning up or ensuring safety practices, etc) and the visit made it easier to understand the process of manufacturing Ultimate (Frisbee) uniforms.

Observations/participation

Observations were conducted for both sports, ie at Frisbee games and yoga studios. It was instructive for the students to be able to play Frisbee and practice yoga alongside the local practitioners, to observe the movements, the intensity of the sports, which body parts needed more protection and their wear. The information collected through observation was enhanced through participating in the Frisbee games and by practice at yoga studios. This participation provided first hand information to the students.

Mekong River Delta trip

The trip to the Mekong River Delta was a necessary escape from the city and an extremely busy research schedule; it was an adventure for the students and enabled them to see more of the country, the rural areas, to experience more of the culture and traditions of Vietnam.

Fabric testing

During the trip some fabric samples were collected from Zone Clothing and tests on the samples were subsequently performed at RMIT Brunswick. The tests included: colourfastness to washing.
colourfastness to alkaline perspiration; colourfastness to artificial light and determination of snagging resistance – ICI Pillbox; moisture management – Wicking. These tests assisted students in making decisions on fabric choice and care instructions for their recommend ranges of clothing.

Surveys

After the trip students conducted email surveys using Zone Clothing’s customer database. This enabled them to collect primary research information on countries such as Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia and Australia, as Vu is considering distributing his Ultimate (Frisbee) uniforms to these markets.

Learning experiences

Students were required to write about their experiences after their return. Overall the evaluations were very positive.

Research methodologies

Although the students were trained in designing questionnaires and conducting surveys, it was the first time they conducted primary research using in-depth interviews and focus group studies. Questions were written before the trip as part of the preparations, but when the time came conducting the research was challenging.

As student Alex Connors wrote after the trip:

“The focus groups and interviews conducted were certainly a learning curve. Our first focus group didn’t go so well, we got the information we needed, but it was easy to point out the flaws. We were definitely too business like – this could have been due to our lack of preparation and lack of knowledge about the locals. Also could have been pin pointed to. In previous studies we have always been taught to act as professionally as possible, we know that we should be friendly but not casual and calm but to relaxed. This kind of training leads us to behave in a manner that could have intimidated our respondents and resulted in a very mechanical focus group rather than a free flowing discussion. The subsequent review session with the Mentor helped us to learn what we did wrong and how to improve our research skills.”

Student Helen Diomides said:

“Some of the focus groups had pre-organized participants. This was a nice way to ease into the situation and we now have a better understanding of how a focus group is structured. Three of the focus groups were up to us to organize, which involved dropping all insecurities and getting in a taxi to a local yoga studio, standing out the front waiting to ask any yoga students if they would be willing to participate. I think that this was good in regards to making us all work as a team, but did prove to be challenging at times”.

Student Kate Davis wrote the following comments in her evaluation:

“I was under the impression that with ultimate Frisbee that we would be there to watch and observe, I had so much fun participating in the sport as they were all so welcoming, fun, and encouraging. I played in a SUC ultimate Frisbee tournament and I scored two points, I found this very beneficial as a way of communicating with players (which are Vu’s clients) but also to have a better understanding of the sports and all of the needs required.”

Cultural knowledge

Student Kate Davis wrote:

“Although there were several hurdles we had to conquer over there as certain things did not go to plan, we managed to overcome them and I believe we gained the necessary information to confidently and proudly write Major A and B project. We also made various contacts over there, so if further information is required will be able to gain it when necessary. I now have a better understanding of Vietnam and have realised how a country
can be so far behind developing without realizing, but I got the impression the Vietnamese people don’t care, they get by with what they need by being sustainable and living each day as it comes. It also made me realise how many opportunities exist in a country that doesn’t rely and expect things that are a necessity to other countries and in the market place as they are still learning about new technologies etc.”

Student Nicky Burt said this in her evaluation:

“I can honestly say that Vietnam is a great country to visit and there wasn’t a dull moment during the whole trip. We all wanted to make the most of it while we were there in regards to gathering as much research as possible whilst also experiencing some of the culture and gaining an appreciation of the social aspects of the city”

Student Alex Connors wrote:

“I visited the history museum to gain a better understanding of the history of Vietnam, I was amazed at how the history is not discussed between locals or there are not more references or sights, it was all contained within the 4 walls of this museum. After visiting the museum I now fully understand why.”

“The one thing I noticed about the economy was that the country had opened up to allowing American/Australian chain stores to trade i.e.: KFC and Gloria Jeans. I found this shocking at first because to my knowledge the communist viewed this as unpatriotic also the amount of KFC stores that had been distributed throughout the city was enormous! After asking some locals I summed it up to being both a battle to survive (the need for capital support) and also the infiltration of media penetrating the market of the western standard of living and the desire to be ‘white’ and ‘western’ through advertising slogans and eateries”

Understanding the fashion/retail industry

Student Helen Diomides reflected:

“The trip allowed us to undergo a unique journey and to view the industry through global eyes. It was such a pleasure to see the retail industry from the other end of the spectrum and opened it up our eyes to the possibilities that await us! Overall I had a fantastic time in Vietnam; I was pleasantly surprised with the people and the culture. Everyone was very nice and willing to help us with anything we needed; they welcomed us into the country with open arms which made it a lot easier to settle in the first few days. It was great that we were able to achieve so much whilst we were over there, not just school related things but being able to experience another culture first handed”

Student Rosalie Durso said in her evaluation:

“Overall I loved the experience!!! I love the culture, the food and the people. I find it comforting that the Vietnamese people are so friendly and giving when their country appears to have so little. I’d like to see the country progress and grow – which it so evidently is on its way to doing. I think the textile industry needs a little bit of help specifically in education (it appears that commerce, tourism and technical training is most prominent) the creative scene is hidden neatly in small boutiques or backstreet bars. Quality fabric is hard to find and is most often imported from China (Vietnam does not grow cotton well) and machinery/work place practises seem outdated.”

Encouraging inter-campus exchange

Student Emma Smith wrote:

“The campus at RMIT looks more like a resort in Bali. It has a wide selection of cafes with great seating areas. There is a games room where students can play billiards, play station games, etc. There are even plans to build a swimming pool on the large, lush, green campus. It was really beautiful to see such an abundance of green grass and trees. I was really surprised to see that the campus also had tennis courts. Overall, I was expecting the campus to be a lot smaller and poorer, with very few facilities available to students, but I was
(and we all were) really impressed.

Student Natalie Postruzin said:

“I really enjoyed meeting all the RMIT (Vietnam) students. They all spoke very good English, were social and fun, and were very willing to help us out with our research. They offered very deep insights about the “Ultimate” sport and encouraged us to experience the game as much as possible. They were enthusiastic and encouraging. “

Internationalisation of Curriculum

Student Alex Connor wrote in her evaluation:

“The trip allowed us to undergo a unique journey and viewing the industry through global eyes. It was such a pleasure to see the retail industry from the other end of the spectrum and opened up our eyes to the possibilities that await us! We knew that the TCF industry is changing in Australia and many companies moved their manufacturing offshore, this trip helped us to understand the reasons and reinforced our knowledge of the industry.”

Student Helen Diomides discussed her favourite learning activity:

“My favourite speaker was by a French fashion designer by the name of Valerie McKenzie. She creates seductive and unique home wear and fashion wear for her brand, “Song”, produced in Vietnam and sold in over 30 countries around the world. This inspiring designer is conscious towards the environment and uses eco-friendly fibres such as bamboo and organic cotton in her range. She is also setting up an environmental management system for her business to improve water and waste management, and improve the energy efficiency of her Hanoi factory. Valerie also believes in strong ethical production methods. She spoke to the group about how her company set up workshops in rural areas of Vietnam to prevent so many women leaving rural areas to work in the city. Her garments are beautifully embroidered by women using skills which have been passed down through generations. This has allowed women to continue their rural lifestyle and to grow rice in the field, whilst also gaining a second income. Sustainability is something we learnt back in Australia, but I can see a real business is practicing it in every possible way, this really enhanced my understanding. I am going to apply for a job with her when she opens her new store in Melbourne next year”.

Personal growth

Student Alex Connors said:

“This trip was so amazing, fun, and educational. I feel confident that I walked away from Vietnam with enough information to base my major project on and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience”.

Student Kate Davis wrote:

“I don’t feel as much pressure as I do motivation; before I left I was scared at my ability to achieve the expectations. I think that everybody has taken what they wanted from this trip, I have now gained the motivation to do my best as it both intrigues and excites me the outcome of this entire project.”

Student Helen Diomides wrote:

“This trip has been such a rewarding and educational experience for me. Vietnam is a very exciting country. It felt like there were many opportunities to be made. I’m really glad I chose to do my major project on Vietnam.”
Learning outcomes

Seven Marketing Plans were produced for Zone Clothing as students’ Major Project B theses. The Marketing Plans included literature reviews and other secondary research information on both Yoga and Ultimate (Frisbee) uniform markets; consumer perceptions and expectations for yoga wear and Ultimate (Frisbee) uniforms from primary research information collected during the trip and follow up online surveys with players; as well as major recommendations in the following areas:

- Business strategies
- Target market definitions
- Brand identity and positioning strategies
- Marketing strategies including:

  **Product strategies:**
  Fashion diaries, mood boards, range boards and range books, colour selection, fabric testing and selection, family tree for the ranges, quality manuals, specification packs, care labels, swing tags, logos and accessories

  **Price strategies:**
  Costing sheets and sales forecast

  **Promotion strategies:**
  Business card design, magazine advertisements, product catalogues, window display boards and gift bag samples

  **Distribution strategies:**
  For the distribution of yoga wear in Vietnam, Ultimate (Frisbee) uniforms in Vietnam, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines

However, most students felt that the work load was too heavy – much more than their fellow classmates who did their Major Project B on other topics. For students who participated in the Vietnam project, the length of their Project B theses was 300-500 pages (including appendix) and the work load certainly put too much pressure on them.

Conclusions

The project was a great success; it has achieved its aims and expectations; provided students with a wonderful learning experience both academically and culturally; and produced excellent results for every major stakeholder – the students, RMIT and Zone Clothing.

It is therefore concluded that international WIL projects should be continued in the future so as more students can benefit from this unique experience.

Recommendations

1. **Start earlier:**
   It is important to inform the students at the beginning of the academic year of this opportunity. This will help them to develop a better understanding of what is expected, and provide more time for better preparation before the trip.

2. **More training in research methodology before the trip**
   Training in the following areas should be completed prior to the trip so participants will be better able to conduct research once in Vietnam:
   a. question design for both in-depth interview and focus group study
   b. techniques in conducting in-depth interview and facilitating focus group study
   c. transcribing interview recordings

3. **Have the option of working in pairs**
Due to large amount of information that needs to be collected and analysed for the project, as well as the important nature of the project (as it applies to a real business), students should be given the option of working in pairs. This option could provide students with the capacity for more in depth thinking and discussions, and the collaboration should result in better quality outcomes for the stakeholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissemination of project outcomes both completed and planned. This should include both within RMIT and externally.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The final reports were distributed to Zone Clothing Management and formed the basis of student’s assessment for Major Project A &amp; B courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A presentation of the project was delivered to the RMIT University School of Fashion &amp; Textiles community.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of the project, outcomes, impacts and dissemination</th>
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4. Factory visit

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Student learning experiences

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Dissemination

The final reports were distributed to Zone Clothing Management and formed the basis of student’s assessment for Major Project A & B courses. A presentation of the project was delivered to the RMIT University School of Fashion & Textiles and it is envisaged that a presentation of the project will be delivered to the wider University community during 2010.

Conclusion

The project was a great success; it has achieved its aims and expectations; provided students with a wonderful learning experience both academically and culturally; and produced excellent results for every major stakeholder – the students, RMIT and Zone Clothing.

It is therefore concluded that international WIL projects will be continued in the future so as more students can benefit from this unique experience.
Students interviewing Valerie McKenzie from a French fashion brand “Song”
### Funds Acquitted

- 360182 Actuals $11,630
- Budget $10,000

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### Management Report

**RMIT INTERNAL ORDERS: MAN**

- **Date**: 18.02.2010
- **Time**: 09:40:54
- **Company Code**: 1001
- **Fiscal Year**: 2009
- **Current Period**: 12
- **Budget Version**: 2
- **Order/Group**: 360182
- **WIL-B: Applied Science (Fashion Merchand)**
- **Cost Element/Group**: RMIT_ALL_RPT

#### Cost Elements

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