

SLO Coffee Co.

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GrC 462: Senior Project

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March 20th, 2023

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Abstract

My project focuses on the creation of the fictional brand SLO Coffee Co. Specifically, the creation of a comprehensive, intentional brand that includes a logo, the designs of three coffee bags, and an Instagram page, all emphasized by grounding a brand through beautiful and deliberate graphics. A local coffee brand based out of San Luis Obispo capitalizes on the demographic of the city. With the abundance of cafes around SLO, along with people's general widespread love of coffee, it is evident that there is substantial community of coffee drinkers. In fact, California state boasts the "highest percentage of adult coffee drinkers," the "highest rate of home coffee maker owners," and "people living in California spend the most on their coffee consumption per household" (Viscosoft, 2022). A study in *Clinical Nutrition* that researched caffeine intake by college students found that "caffeine, in any form, was consumed by 92% of college students in the past year," with "coffee [as] the main source of caffeine intake in male and female consumers" (Mahoney et al., 2019). As such, it is evident there is a market in which a coffee brand marketed to a college demographic would prosper. With the widespread love and dependence for it, Californians exhibit a particular propensity for purchasing coffee. In San Luis Obispo in particular, there are an abundance of coffee shops that attest to a local love of coffee. Localcoffeeshops.org lists a whopping 26 different local coffee shops around San Luis Obispo.

SLO Coffee Co. branding will target a younger demographic than other coffee brands, setting the brand apart from competitors. Specifically, the implementation of brighter colors, fun and playful typefaces, and graphics that communicate the essence of SLO and beloved local spots. A study researched the liking and purchase of intent for factors of shape and color in coffee bag packaging design, as well as taste expectations. The study found that "participants expected the coffee associated with the pink label to taste sweeter than the green labelled coffee,

whereas the coffee associated with the green label was expected to be more acidic than the pink labelled coffee” (Sousa et al., 2020). Additionally, “the angular shape increased the expectation of acidity when compared to the round shape” (Sousa et al., 2020). Lastly, researchers concluded that “the coffee associated with the angular/green or the round/pink labels received higher liking and purchase intent ratings than the angular/pink and the round/green ones, respectively” (Sousa et al., 2020). With evidence that the colors and shapes present in the design of both graphics and packaging of coffee bags directly influences the liking, intent to purchase, and associated tastes of consumers, I intend to design SLO Coffee Co.’s products accordingly. Regarding the design of the package itself, I want to make one simple change to the structure of the standard coffee bag packaging. As a longtime habitual coffee-drinker, the most prominent issue I’ve found in the design lies in the pliable tabs for closing the bag. These are inconsistently produced, liable to spillage, and ultimately not user friendly. For SLO Coffee Co., I propose an alternative sealing method of simple zip locking seal. In this way, the potential to spill is eliminated, along with the user error and finicky nature of plastic tab closure. Ultimate success criterion includes a comprehensive and standout brand with beautiful graphics that reflect the city of SLO. Additionally, more efficient sealing mechanism of a zip lock rather than pliable tabs.

The production plan for SLO Coffee Co. follows a strict, successive schedule. Beginning with research in week 2, I have researched to better understand my market and the designs that will prove most effective in such a market. Next steps are branding. This begins week 3, where I will determine typefaces and a color palette for SLO Coffee Co. With these selected, by the end of week 3 I will have hand drafted logo thumbnails and graphic ideas for the three coffee bags: light, medium, and dark roast. Week 4 will see a finalized logo and initial packaging design. Weeks 5 and 6 will involve finalization of mockups and package and graphics design. In week 6,

I will meet with industry professionals Ken Macro and Colleen Twomey to discuss my project and receive valuable feedback. This is the first step in achieving meaningful evaluation of SLO Coffee Co. Towards week 6 and 7, I will expand the brand into social media, specifically with the creation of an Instagram page and various social media posts and campaigns marketing SLO Coffee Co. Then, I will meet again with the same professionals to receive a secondary round of feedback after making changes and finalizing my deliverables to complete a comprehensive evaluation of my project.

Literature

The theory of identity is particularly applicable to my project. Specifically, I will primarily focus on a subset of identity theory, social identity theory, and how its primary elements apply to SLO Coffee Co. Identity theory works to explain the meanings and relationships of people's various identities, as well as how these identities influence behaviors, emotions, beliefs, and society as a whole (Burke & Stets, 2022). Social identity theory was introduced in 1979 by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. Social identity theory is defined as a concept which explains that "people derive part of their identity—their social identity—from the groups to which they belong" (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Scheepers and Ellemers describe in *Social Psychology in Action* how these social identities vary in degrees of strength and content and have the power to dictate people's emotions and behaviors. I contend that the three major elements of social identity theory as they relate to my project include categorization salience, behavior (specifically consumer behavior), and limitations.

The process of categorizing people into groups is a very prominent element of social identity theory. These categories are important because they naturally involve salience. Salience

essentially indicates importance, and in reference to people's identities, they "get ranked in a hierarchy. Identities that are higher on the salience hierarchy are more likely to be enacted."

(Morris, 2013). Evidently, the salience of the category or group to which people belong is a very important facet of social identity theory. Understanding that a hierarchy exists among these identities and how that influences people's mentalities is crucial. A chapter in *Handbook of Research on Identity Theory in Marketing* titled "Identity salience: understanding when identity affects consumption" discusses how the salience of people's various identities is an extremely significant aspect of identity theory, especially in relation to consumption (Reed & Forehand, 2019).

Behavior is also an incredibly large element of social identity theory. Naturally, the groups with which we associate and the identities we personify play a pivotal role how someone behaves. *Handbook of Research on Identity Theory in Marketing* discusses how social identity theory involves a degree of egocentrism, which ultimately influences one's consumer behavior (Reed & Forehand, 2019). More specifically, Reed and Forehand describe how "our self is the center of our reality," and as such, our consumer behavior is driven by this "centrality of self." They explain, then, that "current research suggests that by linking a brand or product with oneself, positive feelings toward that brand or product will automatically be formed in memory" (Reed & Forehand, 2019). It is evident that social identity theory is involved in the relationship between consumer and product. Additionally, with the social categorization of social identity theory, people are constantly interacting and evaluating their own perceived identities, which "in turn, influences their behavior" (Treppe & Loy, 2017). More succinctly, people behave differently depending on the setting. Additionally, as I discussed, people also behave differently

based on the salience they place on their various identities (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Ultimately, social identity theory plays an irrefutable role in explaining the way identity influences behavior.

Limitations are another important facet of identity theory to consider, specifically in examining social identity theory. Most notable is the stereotyping that results from categorizing people into groups based on specific factors of their identity. In explaining how social identity theory prompts self-categorization, authors Tabussum and Nayak describe how “stereotyping takes place when people have expectations that because of some characteristics such as colour, race, age, nationality, marital status, education or upbringing, individuals will have particular norms, values and modes of behaviour” (Tabassum & Nayak 2021). As social identity theory is based in the categorization of people, stereotyping is ultimately somewhat inevitable. However, stereotyping is also somewhat inescapable in developing personas and understanding one’s target market. I expect the key is discovering a thoughtful balance, which I have exercised and will continue to exercise in my project.

Synthesis

Social identity theory is a very central and fundamental philosophy to my project. The first element I examine, categorization salience, is absolutely related to my project. In crafting a brand, as well as engaging in consumer research, marketing, and sales, heavily involves the categorization and grouping of people. For example, I am presently and have been for the past few months, working on designing and developing a product with particular groups in mind. I categorize college-aged students as people around my age with majority having similar tastes as Generation Z. I categorize my market as residents of San Luis Obispo and make strategic design decisions based on that category of people. It is similar to the process of creating personas,

rather, I am using certain groups as my personas. Social identity theory includes a social categorization process, with categories maintaining respective degrees of salience. I apply the concept of salience to my grouping as well. I focused more heavily on incorporating elements of San Luis Obispo into my branding than Generation Z trends. However, incorporating two identities of my consumer increases my chances of making a connection with them, because people may experience varying degrees of salience between being a resident of San Luis Obispo and being a member of Generation Z.

Consumer behavior as described by social identity theory is quite central to SLO Coffee Co. While the categorization process element describes the grouping of people, the element of behavior can be applied to understand how those groupings influence and dictate how individuals behave. As I am focusing on marketing to a college-aged and young adult demographic, I use two identities of my target demographic in my design to spark and more a more personal connection with consumers. First, I employ typefaces, colors, and graphics that are trending and popular among Generation Z, which encompasses my target market. I intentionally styled my product to appeal specifically to a younger generation. As such, I am using knowledge of one of my target market's identities to reach them. Reed and Forehand's argument, which links ecocentrism and consumer behavior, is particularly applicable. The concept is rooted in the assumption that people generally like themselves, and this liking transfers to the product, as well as the group with which they associate. In this case, the group is Generation Z, and the individual consumers of my product will associate the color, type, and graphics with their generation and themselves. In this way, the ecocentrism which Reed and Forehand describe becomes vital, as my target market associates themselves with the aesthetic and style of SLO Coffee Co.'s branding.

In addition to capitalizing on color, type and design trends which encompass my target market, I also heavily employ San Luis Obispo sentiments and visuals to appeal to a second identity of my target market. As my product targets San Luis Obispo residents, it can likely be assumed that their place of residence is meaningful. Regardless, San Luis Obispo is an integral “identity group” of my target market. As such, my product features a variety of graphics that relate to San Luis Obispo, and by extension, consumers. A paper titled *Oppositional Brand Loyalty in Online Brand Communities* discusses social identity theory and its influence on consumer-brand relationships, explaining how “research based on social identity theory indicates that brands with images consistent with an in-group enhance consumers’ self-brand connection” (Hou & Kuo, 2017). Alternative coffee grounds bags will simply not hold the same appeal as SLO Coffee Co., because they lack an image that personally relates to their social identity. A study in *Consumer Behaviour in Hospitality and Tourism* examines social identity theory in relation to customer brand identification, which they found “is either defined as the extent to which the consumer sees his or her own self-image as overlapping with the brand’s image or as a customer’s psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand” (Rather et. al, 2021). This further enforces the relationship between social identity theory and my project.

The limitation of social identity theory, namely stereotyping, is something I intend to remain very aware of as I complete my deliverables. As marketing involves the creation of personas to gain a realistic understanding of one’s target audience, I hope to effectively develop this understanding of my target market without making harmful and broad generalizations about my audience. Social identity theory is, as I’ve discussed, beneficial for understanding people and their mentality and actions, but it also serves as a warning of sorts. The theory certainly flirts

with stereotyping. I believe that understanding its limitations as a theory will help me remain cognizant of the dangers that accompany categorizing people into groups. Specifically, in my designs, I have speculated that my audience is likely comprised of more people who identify as female, but in some instances, I reminded myself to dismiss any stereotypes I associated with the social identity of a college-aged woman.

Ultimately, it is evident that identity theory, specifically social identity theory, plays a large role in the branding and marketing of my product, which is, of course, arguably the most important factor to consider in product and brand creation.

Schedule

In order to successfully self-manage my time, I created a Gantt Chart detailing each of my tasks and/or deliverables and the time frame in which I would complete them. Starting in Week 1 and ending with Finals Week, below is my final schedule to which I adhered. I did need to revise my schedule slightly during Week 8, where I added my rounds of evaluations and feedback. However, I completed all my initially scheduled deliverables on time.

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	FINALS
	Proposal			Package Design					Digital Commons
	Branding					Package Mockups			Final submission
			Logo finalized				Presentation(s)		
	Research				Evals/Feedback			Evals/Feedback	
						Social Media Deliverables			

Design Process

I began my process by making several iterations of logos for SLO Coffee Co. I gathered various typefaces and colors with which to experiment in Illustrator. I wanted the logo to communicate affability and playfulness, which I strove to achieve with bright and inviting colors and types. These also feature my original name for the company, Slo Roast, which I changed to SLO Coffee Co. to eliminate potential copyright infringement on a company called Central Coast Brewing Inc. who sells a “SLO Roasted Coffee.” I wanted the logos to ideally conceptually incorporate San Luis Obispo, which can be seen in the Bishop’s peak graphic, map of California (with the heart over San Luis Obispo), and the logo in the style of the street signs in San Luis Obispo. I also experimented with more simplistic designs and a wide variety of colors, but ultimately opted for the street sign logo because I felt that it uniquely embodied San Luis Obispo and I also liked that it could be incorporated as its own graphic element as an image of a street sign. As such, this design resonated most with me.



With my logo idea finalized, I then moved on to the package design and graphics for the three coffee bags. The street sign concept as my logo actually lent itself my ideas for the coffee bag graphics. I expanded this idea to my various blends naming them Madonna Road blend, California Boulevard blend, and Higuera street blend. I chose these street names as they possess iconic scenery around San Luis Obispo which I drew in Illustrator for each blend. Between the naming references, graphics, and logo design, I hoped that my product would resonate well with San Luis Obispo residents.

I then selected my final colors and typefaces. To allow for potential expansion in the future and ensure uniformity, brand guidelines are a crucial part of any company. The strict and direct design rules detailed in brand guidelines are also paramount to reach products of those who may not possess inherent design knowledge. The color specifications is also hugely important to note on brand guidelines, because they play a central role in proper color management.

Slo Coffee Co. Brand Guidelines

primary colors



madonna pink
cmyk: 0, 7, 2, 0
rgb: 254, 238, 239
hex: FEEEEF



sun yellow
cmyk: 1, 0, 29, 0
rgb: 254, 251, 223
hex: FEFBDF



downtown blue
cmyk: 8, 0, 0, 0
rgb: 230, 246, 253
hex: E6F6FD

secondary colors



hills green
cmyk: 67, 0, 72, 0
rgb: 83, 187, 119
hex: 53BB77



ocean blue
cmyk: 45, 24, 0, 0
rgb: 35, 31, 32
hex: 8AACDA



sunset orange
cmyk: 0, 41, 70, 0
rgb: 249, 165, 94
hex: F9A55E

type

use for titles, headings

Butler Regular
Butler Medium
Butler Bold

use for text, H2, H3

Monserrat Regular

logo

slo coffee co.



street sign green
cmyk: 88, 27, 100, 14
rgb: 13, 125, 63
hex: 0D7D3F

graphics



slo coffee co.



For my final coffee bag designs, I incorporated scenery from each street/blend name. On Madonna Road, I created a graphic of the Madonna Inn sign and one of their iconic pink lampposts to use as an accenting graphic. For California Boulevard blend, I designed palm trees to mimic those that line the road. Higuera Street is one of, if not the main street in downtown San Luis Obispo. As such, I designed and placed graphics featuring buildings downtown and a tree that line the sidewalks of downtown on the front of Higuera Street blend. Each bag also features Bishop's peak in the three secondary colors in my brand guidelines to complement the primary-colored backgrounds.



Evaluations

As with any lengthy and novel project, feedback proved critical to my project. To obtain these evaluations, I met with several industry professionals at two different points the course of my schedule. The first round of evaluations I received from professors who are experts in various applicable fields in the Graphic Communication department at Cal Poly. I first met with Professor Hocheol Yang around Week 5 to discuss progress work and receive feedback on where to go and improvements to make in the future. He guided me on how to obtain meaningful feedback for my project specifically by suggesting I meet with the two individuals whose feedback I will discuss next as a means to effectively evaluate my progress and project as a whole. I next met with Dr. Ken Macro, who is an expert in the realm of management and sales and marketing. He helped me pick my final bag design, as, at the time, I felt torn between two. He suggested I go with the design that resonated more with me and incorporated more San Luis Obispo imagery, describing it as more “localized.” Dr. Macro also emphasized focus on a well-developed Instagram and potentially other social media platforms, as this will prove vital to reaching my target audience of Generation Z. Lastly, we discussed the importance of personas and market segmentation research to understand how best to reach my target market. While I did not make literal personas, I absolutely had several in mind for which I spent time considering their preferences, habits, likings, etc. Finally, I met with Professor Colleen Twomey who is the head of the Graphic Communication department at Cal Poly. She gave me several specific points to fix, like enlarging some type and enlarging my street sign posts to make them appear more realistic. She also suggested that I scrap my original name of “Slo Roast,” which, as I previously explain, arguably competed with company called Central Coast Brewing Inc. who sells a “SLO Roasted Coffee.” Additionally, she suggested that I incorporate interactivity into the packaging. I

added a QR linking to SLO Coffee Co.'s Instagram on the back of the packaging to meld social media presence with the physical packaging. Ultimately, each of these meetings generated beneficial feedback. I also felt that I gained more clarity explaining my concept and ideations to fresh eyes and minds.

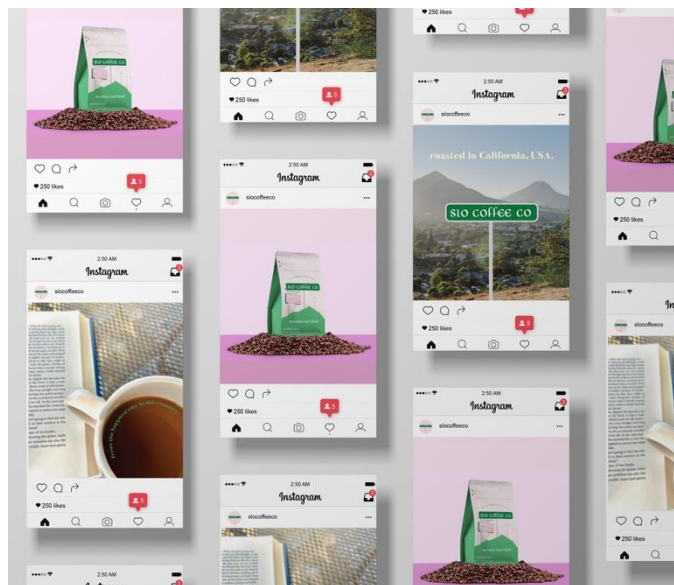
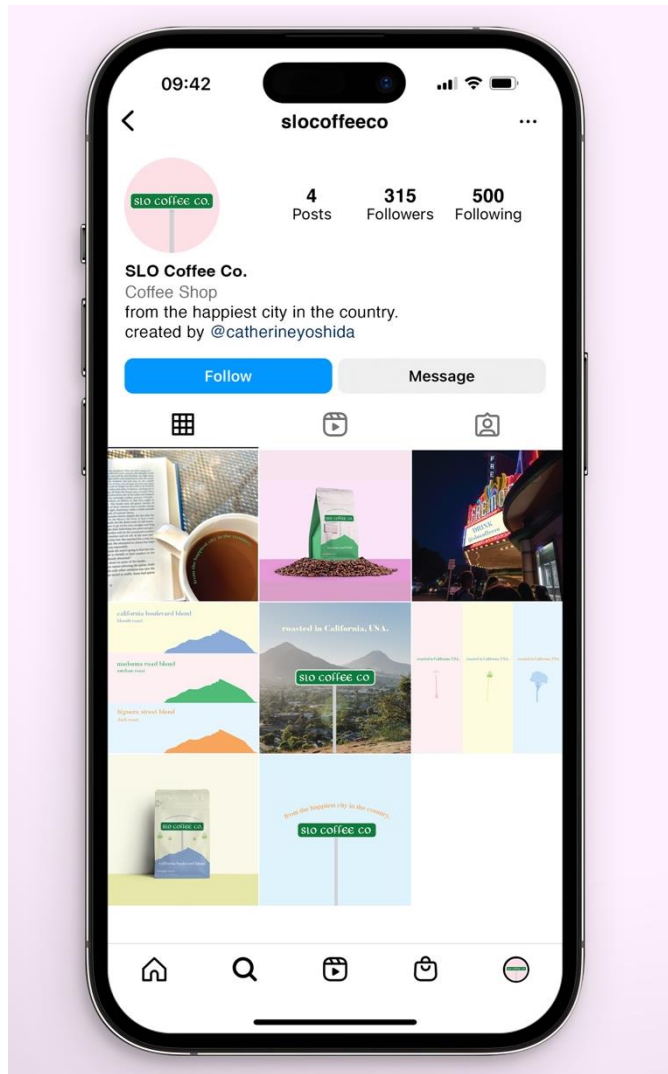
In my follow-up meetings during Weeks 9 and 10, I met with Hocheol Yang and Ken Macro for a second time. With my completed designs and mockups to review, Professor Yang suggested that I add a roast date and expiration date to my packaging, a recommendation with which I absolutely agreed. He also suggested that I make a comprehensive and detailed brand guidelines document. While I had swatches of the colors I used and the typefaces at the ready for my own personal use, I had not yet created official brand guidelines. As such, I completed a document with all my brand guidelines and graphics which could be used by anyone to produce material on brand with SLO Coffee Co.

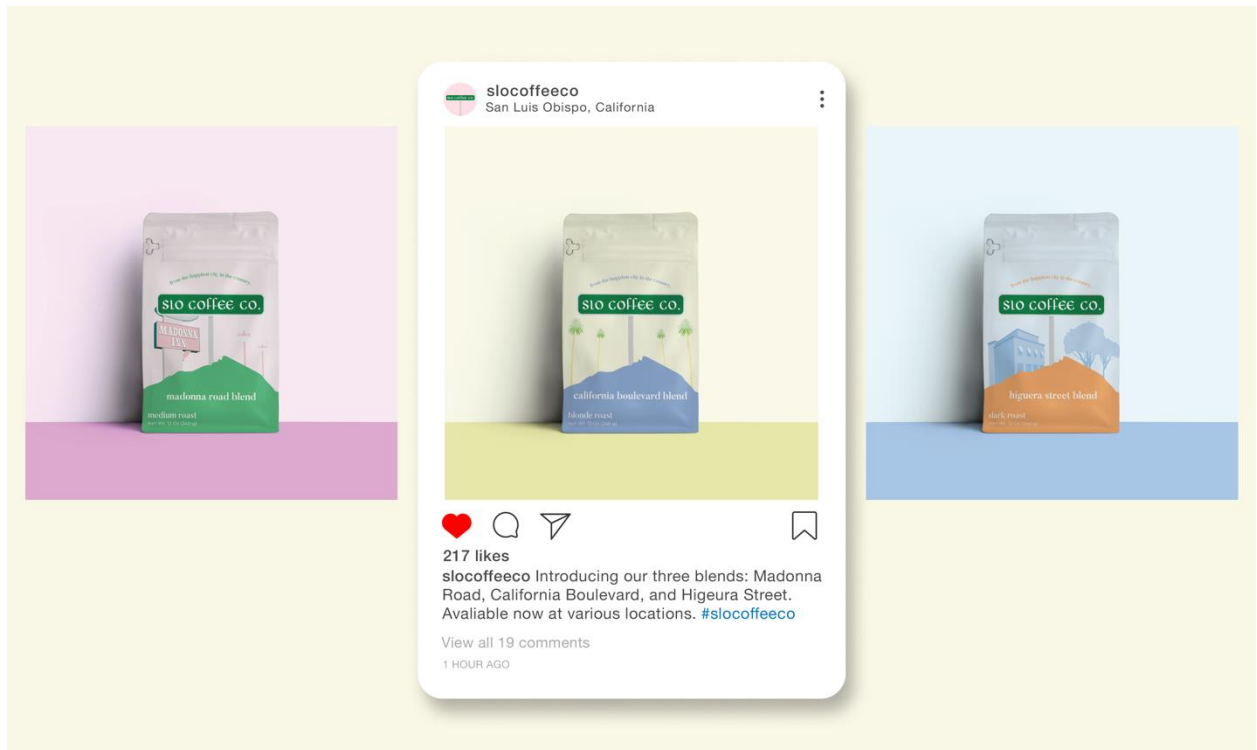
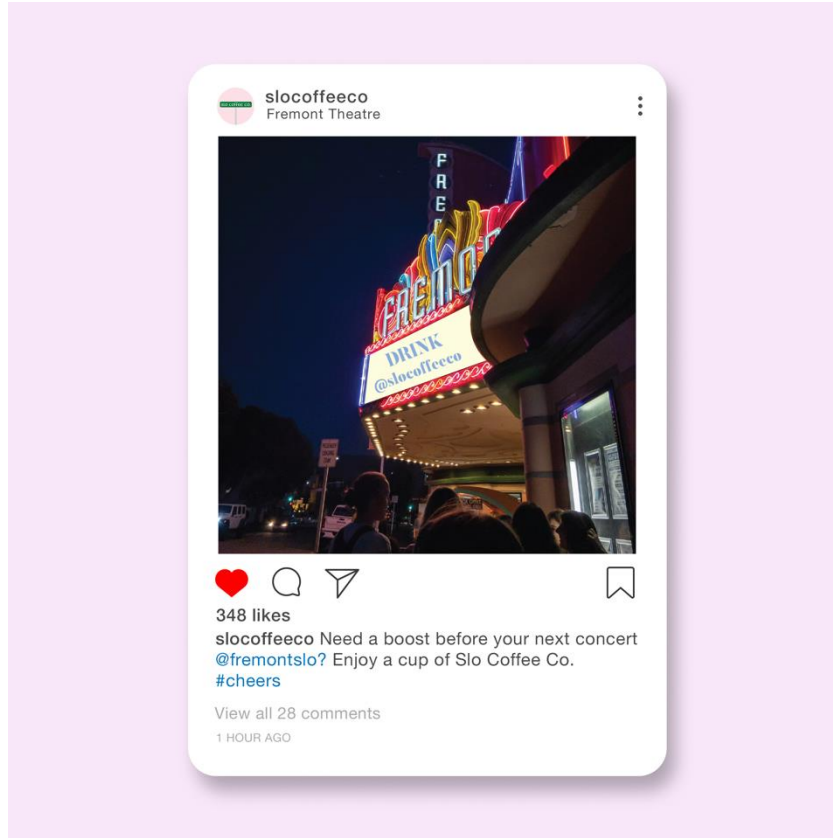
Dr. Macro also provided encouraging and helpful feedback after presenting my final deliverables. He describes the branding as "professional" and noted that he likes how the design "pulls the whole SLO environment in" and "the use of pastels and color." One suggestion he made was to add a blurb on the bag which explains the typography used on the street signs in San Luis Obispo and SLO Coffee Co.'s logo. He also said he "liked the incorporation of the mountain peak," as he recognized it on the bag.

Final Product

Ultimately, with plenty of revisions and the insightful feedback I received over the course of this project, I created numerous mockups depicting my work. My final deliverables included the three coffee bags and a dedicated Instagram page. I purchased the mockups and used Adobe Photoshop to place my designs.







Reflection

Overall, I found this project enjoyable and instructive. Expectedly, the demand of time-management in a relatively short time frame proved challenging. However, I felt that this aspect of the project was particularly important to my learning in this class. Especially entering the workforce, the ability to set and meet self-imposed deadlines is vital to success, a sentiment which frankly expands even beyond academic and work-related setting. In this regard, this project challenged me most. However, I am grateful, because succeeding with time-management proved rewarding and invigorating.

If I were to redo this project, one component that I wished I implemented would have been a website. I do enjoy web development and a website for SLO Coffee Co. would have been an excellent way to further and hone those skills. I also do believe that every brand must have a website, as it is unquestionably crucial to reaching people. As such, I think that building out a website for SLO Coffee Co. would be my next step in this project, were I to invest additional time.

In the future, I am certain my next steps would also be to investigate sustainable packaging. For this project, since I wasn't striving to execute a physical mockup on realistic material, I didn't place too large an emphasis on sustainable packaging, because it would merely be something I *claimed* as sustainable. I did quite a bit of research on sustainable coffee packaging for this project, none of which I applied. I found that is not so simple to achieve, as the freshness of the roasted coffee beans is often compromised and thus the packaging will contain a non-recyclable film that lines the inside. I could have mocked up on designs on a number of bags that were claimed to be recyclable paper, but I felt it would be more reasonable to mock them up on traditional packaging to show the designs for the time being. I think I would

potentially look to design a unique packaging with a screw cap, as I discovered in my research that this is the most effective packaging at maintaining freshness at opening (Smrke et al., 2022).

I also would look to begin on campus-outreach at Cal Poly. I would likely reach out to Quokka Brew, who organized frequent pop-up on campus. This is a great way to sell product but also spread awareness and popularity. Especially with my target demographic in mind, marketing efforts on campus would predictably be successful.

Overall, I am pleased with the outcomes of this project. My biggest hope was to achieve creative and beautiful graphics for the packaging and brand, in which I believe I succeeded. I also am grateful to the Graphic Communication faculty for their help in facilitating and evaluating this project.

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