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## **Branding a Social Enterprise**

### The Case of L plus H Fashion

This case study offers an in depth examination of how a social enterprise manages its branding strategies. When confronted with the decision between marketing its products and promoting its values, how does a social enterprise make the right decision? This case explores the decision making process of a social enterprise as well as the role of social media in the branding exercise.

Instructors can follow these steps when teaching the case: (1) identify the missions and values of the organization; (2) discuss the features of a Community Interest Company and L plus H's business model; (3) identify the marketing dilemma and suggest possible branding strategies; (4) evaluate the effectiveness of the branding exercise; and finally, (5) recommend future course of action and strategies.

Through this exercise, students will discover the complexities that confront a social enterprise in managing its marketing and branding activities. Students will also come to understand the importance of value alignment among stakeholders as well as having consistency in organizational values, internal identity, and external image. Finally, the role of social media in the branding process and the concept of value and iconic branding are highlighted in the case study.

### **Sketch of the Case**

L plus H Fashion (L plus H) is a social enterprise established in December 2008 at the height of the Asian financial crisis. The founders of L plus H aspire to bring the manufacturing industry back to Hong Kong and revitalize the "Made in Hong Kong" label. In the late 1970s when China opened its door to the world, many local manufacturing facilities left the city to take advantage of the lower production costs in China. In the process, Hong Kong's economy was transformed and many middle-age and less educated workers were left jobless as a result. The founders of L plus H believe that a knitwear



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manufacturing plant would not only provide jobs to veteran workers, but also serve as a training ground for a new generation of fashion designers, technicians, and managers. L plus H's factory came into operation in July 2009 and manufactured high-end knitwear products for export. Its marketing strategy at the time downplayed its social enterprise facet and focused on professionalism in service and products as well as its capacity to provide holistic solutions.

In August 2010, L plus H opened its first retail shop with the goal to increase L plus H's presence in the community and perhaps attract likeminded individuals to come onboard. At the same time, the Board of Directors at L plus H began to contemplate whether a change in marketing strategies was necessary; which direction should L plus H move towards as a brand and which branding strategy would achieve the organization's goals.

This case study examines L plus H's branding strategies, the rationale to publicize the organization's values, and how the organization realizes its vision to do good "With the community, for the community." It also demonstrates the importance of value alignment and the critical role the mass media and social media play in the branding process of a social enterprise. As such, this case study offers insight to those who wish to utilize social media in the branding process.