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THE SOCIETY PROJECT

A thesis project submitted in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Humanities

By

STEPHEN W. RUMBAUGH

2011

Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

May 13, 2011

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **STEPHEN W. RUMBAUGH** ENTITLED **THE SOCIETY PROJECT** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF HUMANITIES.

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ABSTRACT

Rumbaugh, Stephen W. M.H., Department of Humanities, Wright State University, 2011.
The Society Project.

The Society Project explores the concept of social entrepreneurship through the sales of handmade vegan bar soap on the website www.SocietyBodycare.com. Society Bodycare follows the “buy one/give one” business model, by which a bar of soap is donated for every bar of soap purchased by a customer. The four components which comprise this thesis project include a concise business description, a detailed branding guide, a functioning website, and a reflective essay conveying the motivations, inspirations, and historic details of the project and how it fits into the world of social entrepreneurship.

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I. COMPONENT ONE: BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

This component serves as a concise description of the basic commercial functions and requirements of Society Bodycare. Its format is based on commonly written business plans that are used as tools in securing capital from business administrations and financial institutions. Formal business plans include detailed financial information and loan requirements, but because The Society Project is not a formal corporation seeking such funding, financial data does not exist here. This document instead outlines the basic details of the business operation, and offers the same information requested by investors.

One: Profile of Society Bodycare

Business description

Society Bodycare produces vegan bar soaps for retail sale primarily on the Society Bodycare website (www.SocietyBodycare.com). As a social entrepreneurial venture, the business plan includes quarterly donations of soap equal to the amount purchased by customers. These donations are divided equally among five recipient organizations which are disclosed on page 13 and on the website.

Product description

All ingredients included in the production of Society bar soaps are vegan, nontoxic, and natural. There are no artificial preservatives, foamers, hardeners, or synthetic ingredients to interfere with the natural construction of the soap. All scenting comes from naturally derived essential oils.

Targeted market and customers

Society Bodycare's targeted market includes individuals with higher, expendable incomes, individuals interested in natural and vegan healthcare products, and socially aware consumers interested in contributing to humanitarian efforts through purchases. Sales records show that the average Society customer is female.

Growth trends

According to *Archives of Internal Medicine*, the consumption of natural and herbal bodycare products have been and currently are on a rapid and steady incline, and media exposure for these products is also steadily increasing (Kelly 281). As the American economy continues to regenerate and strengthen, the consumption of luxury items such as artisan handmade soaps will also increase. This trend allows fairly secure sales positioning for Society Bodycare.

Pricing

The profit margin of handmade soaps is reasonable from an ingredients standpoint. Labor (making the soap and packaging it) is time consuming. I am the sole "employee" involved in Society Bodycare, and to make the business truly profitable, I must constantly streamline designs, procedures, and methods to make my time usage more efficient. Some soaps contain costlier ingredients, but others are much less expensive; in the long run, there is a financial balance because the products generally sell in equal amounts.

Donation costs

Currently, Society bar soaps sell for \$12 for two bars, an increase from \$10 before the donation component began on February 20, 2011. The \$2 increase in price will assist in covering the base cost of the donated soap. Recipient soap will be packaged in glassine envelopes and sealed with simple labels for individual use. This will cut down significantly on monetary and time costs and lessens the financial and time burdens on the business. Additionally, I will formulate the donated soaps with ingredients that are less expensive. These formulas will be equally natural and will be at the same quality standards as the retail soaps, but will contain oils and herbs that cost less. To allow more people to enjoy the donations, most recipient soap will be packaged in half-size bars, meaning that for each regular sized bar purchased the recipient groups will receive two half-sized bars.

Section Two: Vision and People

Vision

My vision for Society Bodycare is for the products to become a benchmark in natural vegan bar soap, and to one day be affordable for most people to enjoy. My hope is that the giving component will be inspiring to others interested in launching a social entrepreneurship.

People

I am the sole “employee” of Society Bodycare. I am proud of this, and make it a point on the website to use words such as “I” and “my” to describe my wares. I believe this

transparency offers the consumer a true sense of just how unique and personal these soaps are, and extends the marketing possibilities of the business by making it appear less like a corporation and more like a neighbor.

Personal background and education

My strongest contribution to this project is my experience as a graphic designer and entrepreneur. I have an immense range of design experiences and many years of work and awards to back it up. Courses taken to fulfill my masters degree in Humanities have increased my awareness of the need for social entrepreneurship.

Section Three: Equipment Considerations

Computer and technology

Society soap is primarily only available for purchase through the website, so I must have a computer in order to design, update, and maintain the website. Additionally, I must have the necessary software to complete these tasks, which include the latest versions of Adobe Creative Suite and Fetch. I also use Creative Suite for designing all labeling, packaging, and advertising. A laser printer is necessary for printing shipping labels, packing slips, invoices, some packaging, and formula guides. Internet service is necessary to run a web-based business.

Soapmaking tools

All equipment for producing the actual soap has been custom made. I am currently using four molds, each holding eight-five ounces of raw soap stock, which produce twenty-

five bars per mold. Large stockpots, a battery–operated scale, various glass beakers and bottles, a thermometer, rubber gloves, goggles, aprons, and a stick blender are necessary for mixing the soap stock. After the stock has set in the molds and the soap is ready to be further processed, a bar jig, slicer, curing rack, bar stamp, logo stamp, and hammer are needed for postproduction.

Section Four: Organization

Business organization

In 2010, I filed with the State of Ohio for limited liability corporation status, under the name Stephen Rumbaugh LLC.

Licenses

I have a vendor’s license registered with the State of Ohio, and pay sales and use taxes twice a year. There are no special licenses needed to produce and sell hand made soap from the home, as long as specific labeling requirements are followed.

Section Five: Location

Current

All Society Bodycare operations occur in my home in Yellow Springs. The soap is mixed and formed in the kitchen area and finished in a small studio at the back of the residence.

Future

The future location for Society Bodycare would be a small workspace (a minimum of 500–800 square feet) outside my home. The space would require plumbing and electricity and enough room to have separate areas for production, packaging, shipping, and design work. Ideally, there would be a small reception area where customers could experience and purchase the soaps, and for locals to pick up web orders (to forego shipping charges).

Section Six: Accounting and Cash Flow

Accounting

The website's shopping cart goes through PayPal. Sales records, inventory, and order histories are all available through the PayPal account. For a fee, PayPal offers a more elaborate service that allows more detailed reporting. The size of my current operation is not such that I need to upgrade to this premium service, but upon growth, it most likely will.

Analysis of costs

Generally, base oils and lye are the least expensive ingredients and do not vary greatly between bar formulas. Essential oils (the natural oils used in scenting the soaps) and the various herbs that are used for coloring, vary greatly in costs. For example, litsea and eucalyptus oils, which are used in scenting the Yellow Springs Bar, are quite inexpensive (at roughly \$1.53/ounce and \$1.59/ounce respectively). Conversely, vetivert and juniper berry oils are the most costly at (at roughly \$9.19/ounce and \$11.38/ounce respectively).

Here are general per bar costs of raw materials as of May, 2011 (base and essential oils fluctuate slightly between orders):

Society Art School Bar	
Society Black Forest Bar	
Society Cocktail Bar	
Society Green Bar	
Society Light Lime	
Society Moon Bar	
Society Orange Bar	
Society Russian Platza	
Society Urban Mint	
Society Yellow Springs Bar	

For practicality, the retail cost of each bar is the same. Bars are sold in consistent quantities, and this system has not caused an imbalance in profit so far.

Section Seven: E-commerce

E-commerce plans

The primary outlet for purchasing Society soap is www.SocietyBodycare.com. The website has been in existence since May of 2009, and is built on a Wordpress framework for ease in updating but more importantly, allowing it greater search engine optimization. Additionally, Wordpress allows for easy updating and works well with the PayPal shopping cart gateway. I set up and designed the site upon existing Wordpress themes,

and have maintained it since it first launched. To date, I have had no shopping cart security breaches.

E-commerce budgeting

The site, as it is, requires very little cost overhead. Because I designed and maintain it myself, there is no monthly cost connected to that aspect. The hosting company charges a nominal annual fee of \$22 for server space, and I subscribe to the free PayPal shopping cart. PayPal charges a fee of 2.9% + \$.30 per transaction.

Shipping is \$5 for any order, using USPS Priority Mail. Nine out of ten orders ship for around \$4.80, while the others range from \$5–\$7. This shipping rate has not yet proven to exhibit a loss in revenue. I do not have to purchase boxes or packing noodles; these supplies (including boxes and packing peanuts) are collected free of charge from a local company and reused. The only expenses incurred for shipping are the postage, packing tape, and paper upon which the labels are printed.

Section Eight: Marketing

Marketing plan

Primary marketing has occurred through word-of-mouth, and I plan to continue this method for a while. An essential marketing tool has been Facebook.com. Society Bodycare has a Facebook page on which I announce promotionals, surveys, and generate buzz; here, customers post favorable remarks that prompt others to purchase or discuss the products.

Early in 2009, I purchased ad space on Google. This turned out to be a very costly expenditure, and its return on investment was abysmal. I spent nearly \$300, and gained one \$20 sale from it. I purchased similar ad space through Facebook as well, but this investment still was not as cost effective as the free word-of-mouth advertising generated from the Facebook page.

Consideration will be given to promotional websites such as Groupon, Living Social, Deal Swarm, and the like. The pricing schemes are often very expensive on one hand, but on the other, can lead to increased sales. If I decide to try one of these marketing avenues, I will need to build up additional inventory as many sales at one time often result from these social media-based promotion sites.

Advertising and promotion

I am able to do a small amount of paid advertising and promotion. I have contributed to several charity silent auctions with donations of soap, and have awarded soap prizes for various blogging contests. This blogging exchange has been very helpful in promoting the site and brand. I have made many sales as a result, and have paid for this promotion with product instead of cash. I will continue to develop relationships like this with a broad variety of bloggers.

Surveys

In an effort to see what consumers are thinking, I have promoted several surveys to capture a snapshot of opinion. I have found these surveys to be very useful, and have taken to heart the comments and suggestions. In one example, I redesigned the Society Bodycare logo and offered a survey to see if people preferred the redesign or the original. Overwhelmingly, people wanted the original. So I decided to shelve the redesign.

Recipient partners

A prominent page on SocietyBodycare.com about each of the recipient partners displays their logo, details the organization, and provides a link to their website. I will use these relationships to generate publicity and human interest style newspaper articles, and as much “free advertising” as possible. Currently, I have secured the following partnerships:

1. AIDS Resource Center Ohio
2. Artemis Center
3. Friendship Food Pantry at Wright State University
4. The Hospice of Dayton
5. Pet Advocate League

As business increases, I will expand this list. I choose small, secular organizations that have some connection to my own experience and share my system of values.

Purchasing and inventory

I am always aware of inventory because I only have 10 products to choose from. The soap is stored for easy visual tracking. When stacks get low, I make more. This system

has worked well and I will continue to use it. On certain items, such as limited editions and promotions that are made in limited quantities, I am able to set up the shopping cart so that when the last item sells, further sales are halted. An alert is sent to the customer explaining that there are no more units in stock, and returns them to the site to purchase an alternative.

Section Nine: Growth

Expansion

I do not plan to intentionally expand Society Bodycare within the next year. This is not my main source of income, and I am currently able to handle production and sales in a reasonable fashion. If business begins to increase dramatically in the future, I will reevaluate business expansion goals, or possibly consider selling the business outright.

Product line

Society Bodycare will continue to add new soaps and remove those that are not good sellers. Keeping fresh, interesting inventory is paramount to the success of the company. There are loyal customers who enjoy trying new formulas, and look forward to various holiday and limited edition promotions, such as the Society Valentine Kit. Society Bodycare is unique in that the formulas are based on my personal preferences in scent, texture, and color, and I am not restricted by mainstream trends in soap scents, Society Bodycare takes a much more cultish approach to business, focusing on devoted fans, word of mouth advertising, and the unexpected.

Section Ten: International Business

Society Bodycare is currently not available to international markets, primarily because of shipping complications. Within the next year, I plan to incorporate sales to Canada as an experiment, and if it goes smoothly, will find ways to efficiently and cost effectively ship around the globe.

II. COMPONENT TWO: BRANDING GUIDE

Branding guides are not commonly used in small businesses, but instead by medium and large companies that advertise heavily, are nationally and internationally involved, and have an important need to protect and promote the integrity of the brand. Branding guides are documents that showcase the evolution or history of the corporate brand, and in the case of The Society Project, serves to visually communicate the possibilities of the Society Bodycare brand if the company existed in a much broader capacity.

This branding guide serves as a tool to define the company brand, outline the uses and misuses of the brand, and assist in keeping the brand consistent internally and externally. In the case of The Society Project, the branding guide serves as a connection between the project and my Visual Culture and Theory humanities focus. This document is a pictorial archive of the look and feel of the Society Bodycare brand, and illustrates the manner in which the brand should be portrayed.



Branding Guidelines

May, 2011

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(Horizontal Orientation)



(Vertical Orientation)

A.1. Brandmark

The Society Bodycare brandmark consists of the name “Society”, in all caps, derived from the typeface Helvetica Neue, but containing stylized features involving the “o,” “c,” and “t”. A black line runs the length of the name at the top.

The logo has been designed to work either vertically (with the “S” positioned at the bottom) as it appears on the package, or horizontally as it appears on various collateral pieces. The brandmark may be used in either orientation, whichever best utilizes the space.

A.1.a. Black and White depiction

The brandmark is 100% black, regardless of printing or pixel mode.

A.1.b. CMYK depiction

When printing in CMYK, a cool rich black is preferred, such as the formula of:

C: 70%

M: 35%

Y: 40%

K:100%

A.1.c. RGB depiction

In RGB mode, the black used is:

R: 0

G: 0

B: 0

A.1.d. Hexidecimal depiction

000000



(Society Bodycare wordmark)

A.2. Wordmark

When instances occur that prevent the use of the full logo, the Society Bodycare wordmark may be used.

A.3. Signature

The signature for use on emails and similar electronic messages should include three lines, as such:

Stephen Rumbaugh

www.SocietyBodycare.com

facebook.com/SocietyBodycare

A.4. Tagline

The tagline "*Bodycare For The People*" can be used with the logo or separately.



(Horizontal Orientation)



(Vertical Orientation)

A.5. Brandmark used with URL

The Society Bodycare brandmark may be used with the URL "SocietyBodycare.com". Do not include "http://:" and/or "www" before the URL.

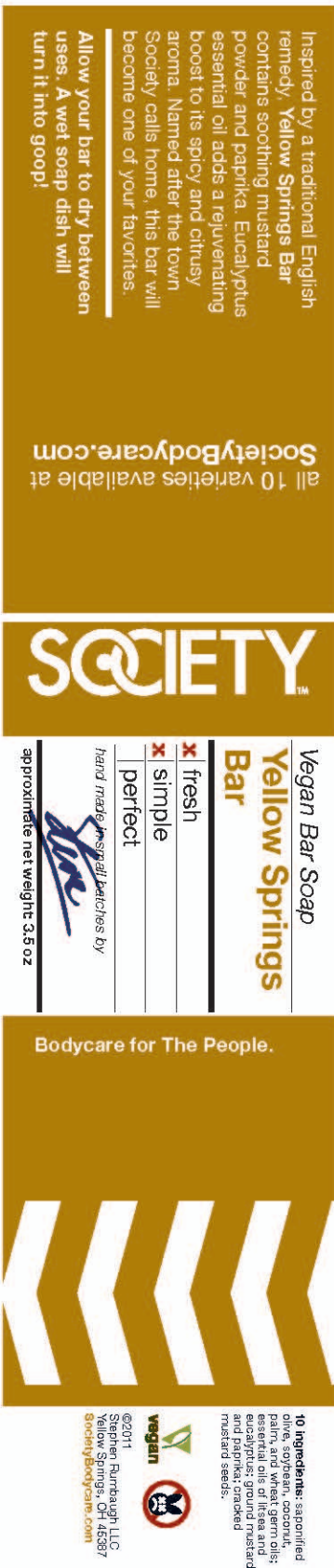
The logomark, now incorporating the brandmark and specified typography, appears with the URL above the black line of the brandmark, using the typeface Mrs. Eaves Petite Caps, with the "S" and "B" taller than the rest.

B.1. Brand color system

The Society Bodycare brandmark always appears in black, or in white reversed out of a substantially contrasting solid color.

B.1.a. Bar wrap

The outer wrap of the bar appears in two colors including black and a solid color from the specified pallet which designates the bar formula.



(Typical Bar Wrap)


Society Yellow Springs Bar

C0 M33 Y100 K35

R153 G102 G51


Society Black Forest Bar

C20 M50 Y100 K68

R102 G51 B0


Society Orange Bar

C11 M80 Y96 K2

R204 G102 B51


Society Russian Platza Bar

C31 M30 Y98 K34

153 G51 B51


Society Urban Mint Bar

C50 M25 Y0 K55

R51 G51 B153


Society Green Bar

C65 M32 Y97 K18

R51 G102 B51


Society Moon Bar

C0 M0 Y0 K80

R102 G102 B102


Society Cocktail Bar

C21 M63 Y65 K42

R153 G51 B51


Society Art School Bar

C55 M77 Y32 K0

R153 G102 B153


Society Light Lime Bar

C40 M0 Y90 K24

R153 G204 B51

(bar label differentiation)

B.1.b. Bar label differentiation

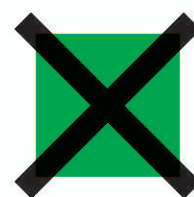
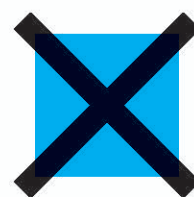
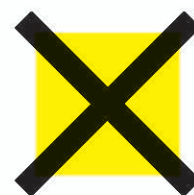
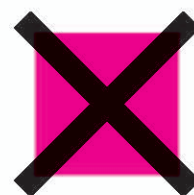
Currently, the following color pallet is designated to represent each of the ten available Society Bars, with its CMYK and RGB values.

B.2. Supporting color options

As colors are needed, they must be chosen as naturally-occurring, earthy, and muted.

B.3. Incorrect color usage

When designing labels, signage, collateral, environment, etc., never use bright, candy-like colors.



(Examples of incorrect color usage)

(primary typography)

Helvetica Neue Ultra Light: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

Helvetica Neue Ultra Light Italic: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

Helvetica Neue Light: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

Helvetica Neue Light Italic: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

Helvetica Neue Regular: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKk

Helvetica Neue Italic: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKk

Helvetica Neue Bold: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKk

Helvetica Neue Bold Italic: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKk

(special display faces)

Helvetica Neue Condensed Bold: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

Helvetica Neue Condensed Black: AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMm

C.1. Primary typography

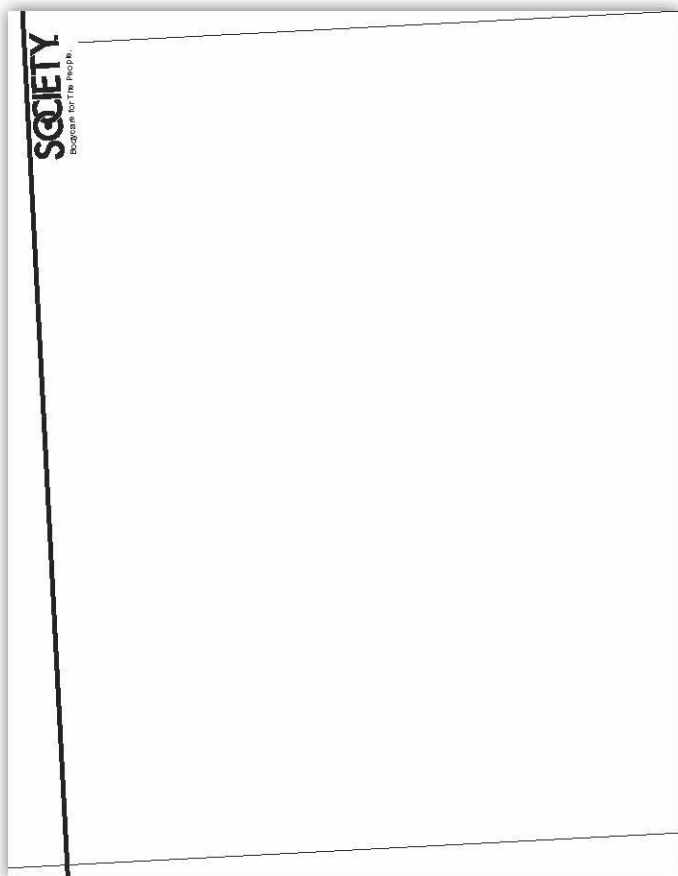
For all Society labeling, advertising, and correspondence purposes, use the full Helvetica Neue family.

C.2. Special display faces

When a need arises for special display faces, use Helvetica Neue Condensed Bold or Helvetica Neue Condensed Black.



(letterhead)

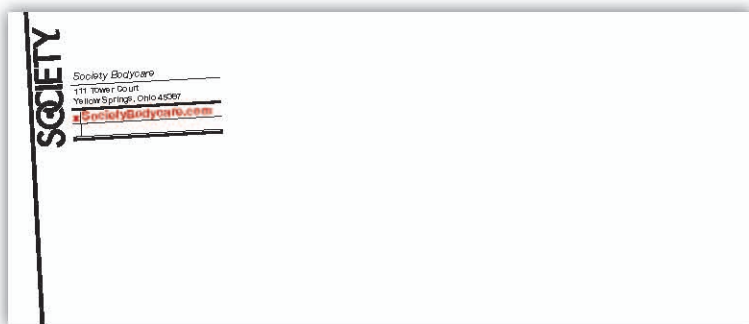


(letterhead second sheet)

D.1. Letterhead

Use this layout for any general communication. If an individual's name is needed on printed letterhead, it should appear in place of "Stephen Rumbaugh" with a similar descriptor replacing "hand made in small batches by".

D.2. Second sheet



(#10 commercial envelope)



(business card)

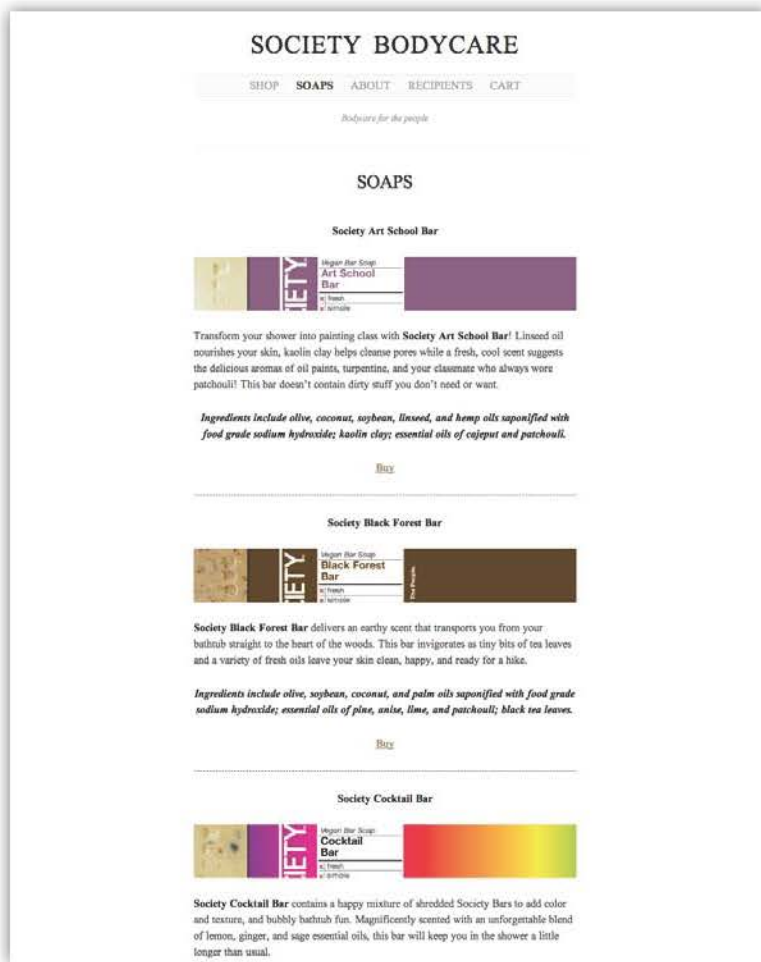


(news release template)

D.3. Commercial #10 envelope

D.4. Business card

D.5. News release template



(typical web page layout)

E.1. Website

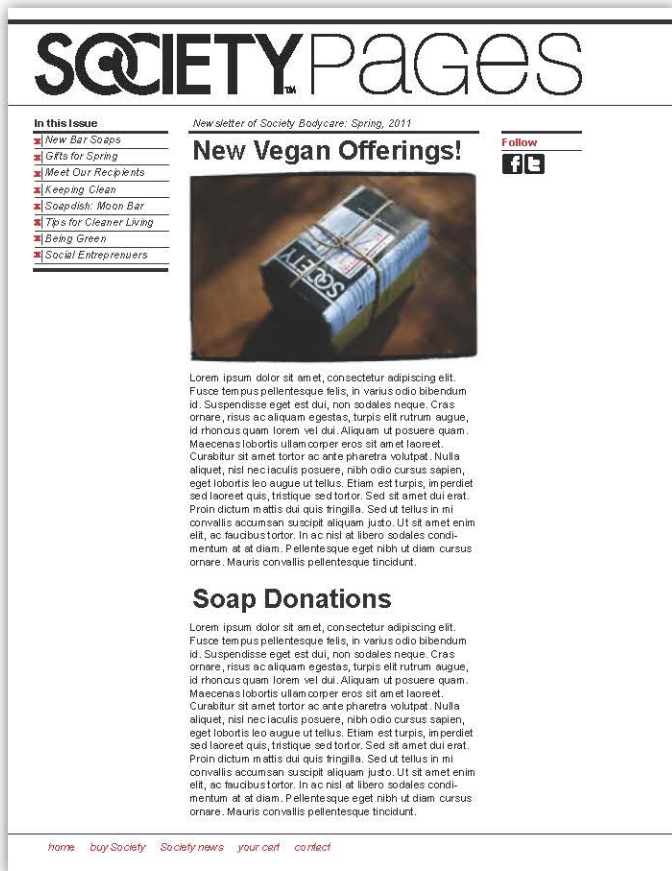
The general look of the website is austere, minimalist, and utilitarian.

E.2. Favicon

This design is derived from the logo and may be used as a favicon.



(favicon)



(online newsletter PDF)

E.3. Online newsletter (PDF)

May be printed onto letter-sized page

E.4. Imagery

Society Bodycare products should be photographed in deep focus, rich colors and with a sense that the product is in use or about to be used.



(typical imagery)

[illegible]

(retail PDF order form)

SOCIETY Bodycare for The People	Vegan Bar Soap
	plant based mild sulfate free glycerin body soap
	fresh
	lemon
	perfect
	hand made in port landore by Stephen Rumbaugh
	SocietyBodycare.com

Invoice

date:

ship to:

bill to:

order details

Payment due upon receipt
of this invoice.

Thank you for your order.

Making soaps 111 Tower Court, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387

(wholesale or private label invoice)

F.1. Retail mail order form

In the case that a customer would rather pay by check, this form may be downloaded, printed, included with payment, and mailed.

F.2. Invoice

This form is used in the occasion of a wholesale order, private label, or miscellaneous need.

Copy voice and tone

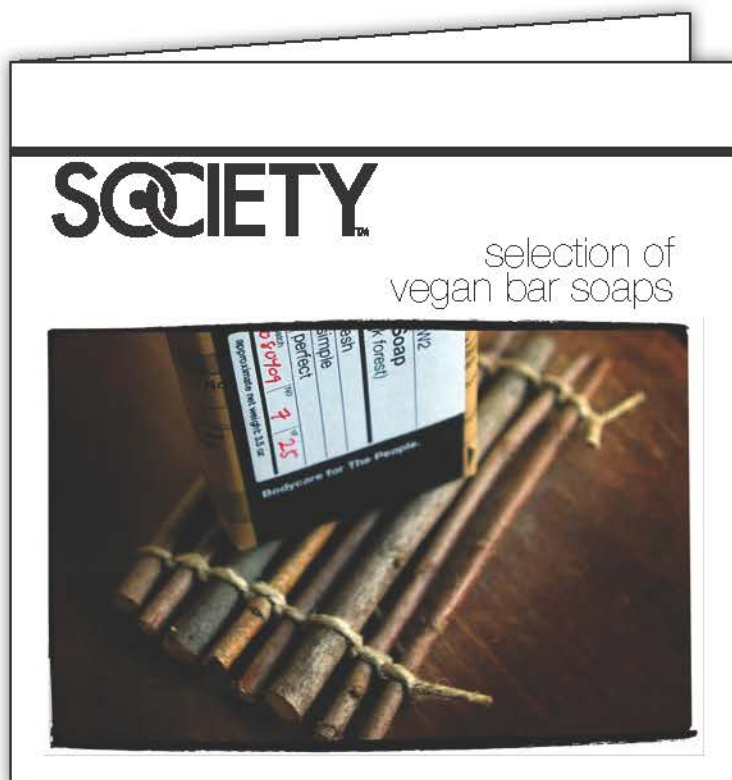
Label descriptions of soap all have a very frank but descriptive tone, and reflects the general tone of all Society copy:

This bright green bar is colored with parsley and scented with refreshingly clean spearmint, lime and tea tree oil. Great for the shower, this bar preps you for the day ahead or refreshes you after a tough workout at the gym. Minimal ingredients make this bar a healthy bathtub companion.

Copy should be informal and light-hearted. Additionally, copy should be written in first person when applicable, to reflect the fact that this is a singular organization (do not use words like “we” or “our”).

G.1. Copy voice and tone

G.2. Brochure sample



(brochure sample)



G.3. Sample kit

This is a portfolio of soap samples to be distributed to bloggers and other media. It consists of a card printed with the 10 styles of bar soaps and a small envelope containing a sample.

(Sample kit)

G.4. Product sheet

G.5. Print Advertising

Shown is an example of a small black and white ad that would be suitable for print media. It is simple and reflects the feel of the Society packaging and reinforces the brand.

SOCIETY™

Society Gift Set



Description:

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Integer semper nunc ac lectus consectetur imperdiet. Aliquam euismod enim nec lorem scelerisque malesuada. Aliquam nec risus lectus. Phasellus molestie tortor vitae urna elementum tempor.

Ingredients:

Suspendisse interdum, arcu et, diam, bibendum, eget, vehicula, turpis, sollicitudin, nullam est, purus, varius.

Contact Information:

stephen@SocietyBodycare.com
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(product sheet)

SOCIETY™

Made in Yellow Springs

COMPLETE LINE AVAILABLE AT
SocietyBodycare.com
Vegan Bar Soap

x	fresh
x	simple
	perfect

hand made by

Natural, minimalist soaps
crafted locally by hand,
available only at
www.SocietyBodycare.com.

Like Society on facebook:
facebook.com/SocietyBodycare

(print ad example)

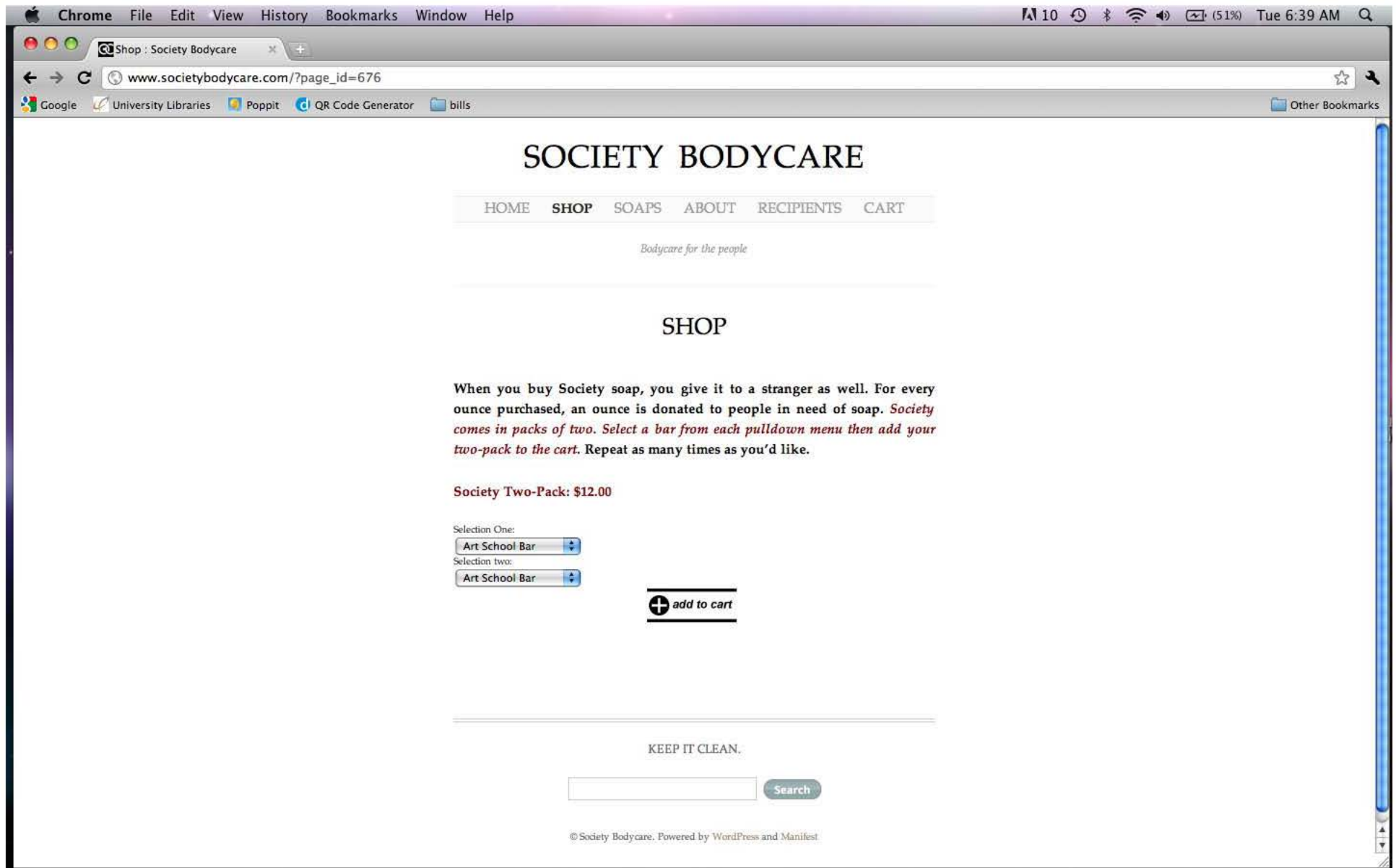
III. COMPONENT THREE: WEBSITE SCREENSHOTS

The following pages depict the upper half of each of the main web pages that comprise The Society Project website. The site can be viewed in its entirety at www.SocietyBodycare.com.



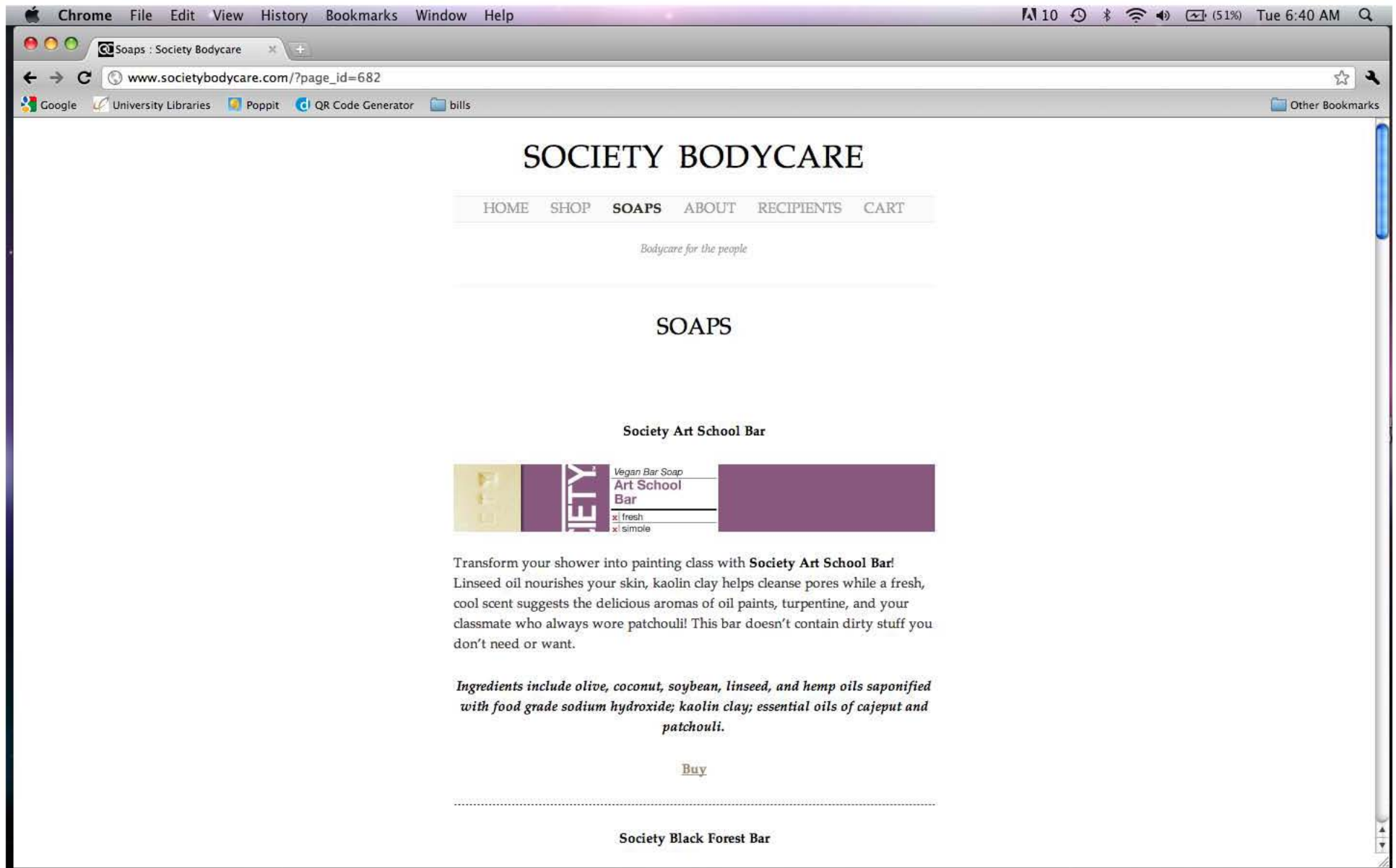
The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(Home)



The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(Shop)



The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(Soaps)



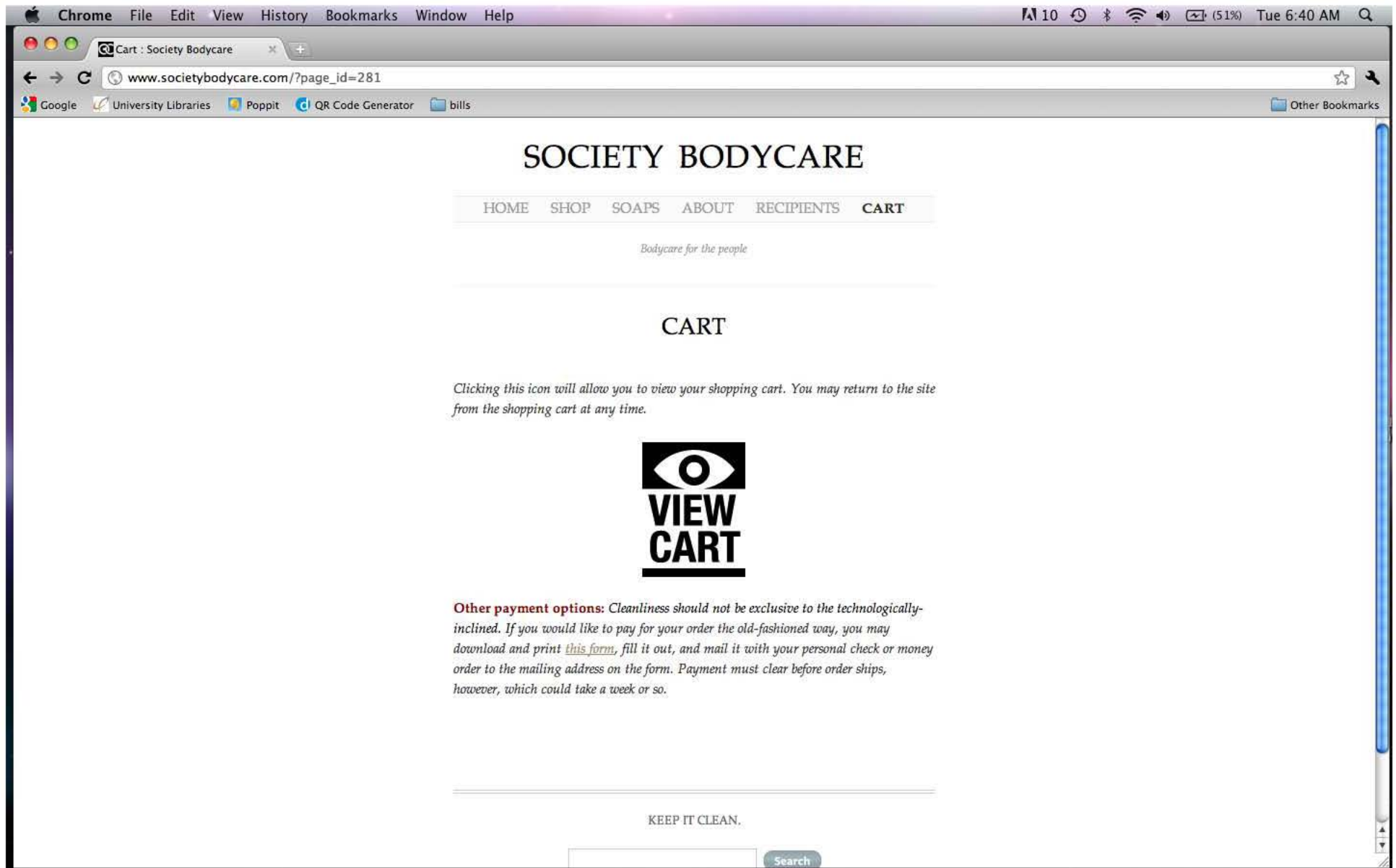
The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(About)



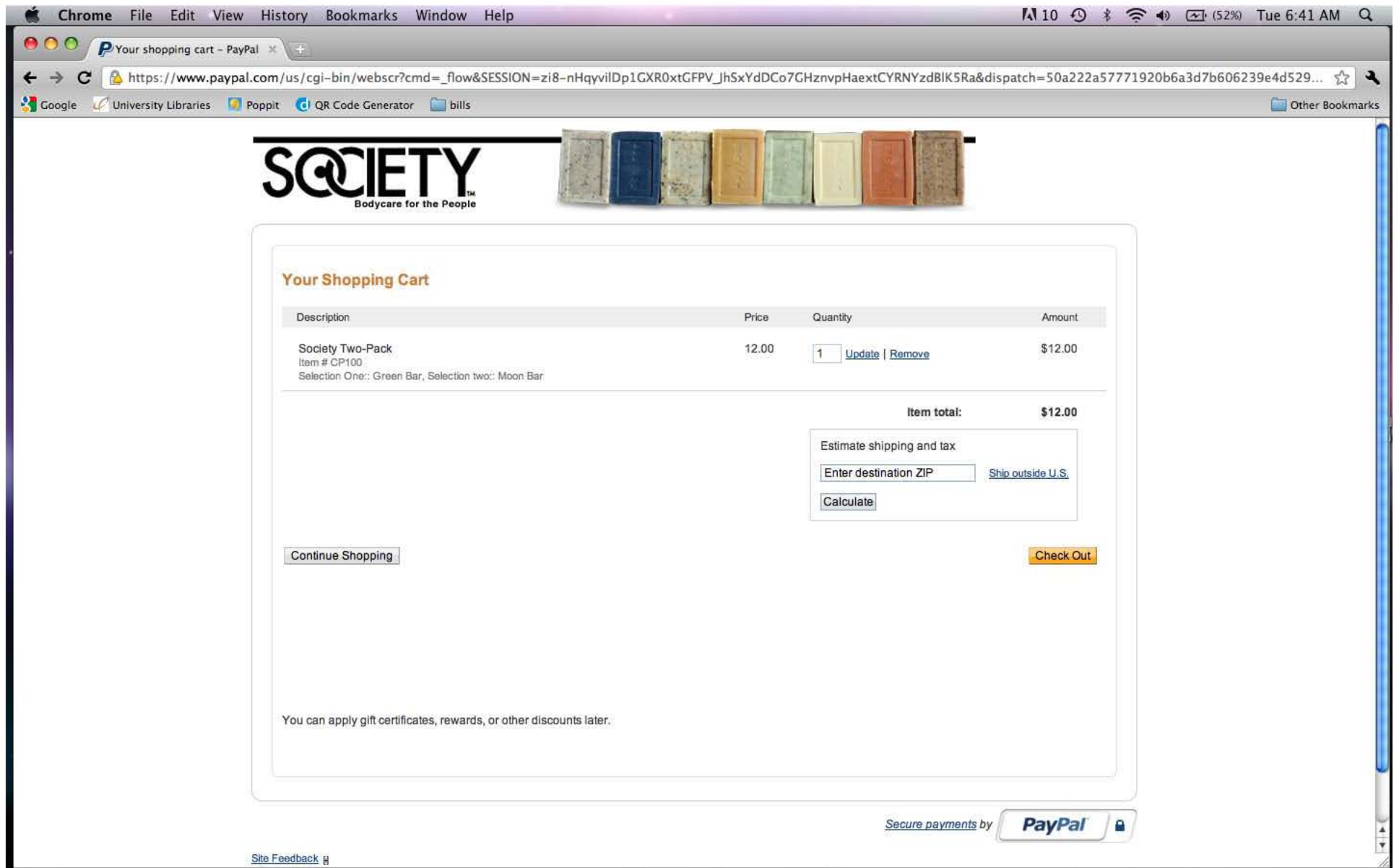
The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(Recipients)



The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(View Cart)



The Society Project: Society Bodycare Website
www.SocietyBodycare.com

(Shopping Cart)

IV. COMPONENT FOUR: REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Society Bodycare is a web-based, for-profit business venture that originated in April 2009, dealing in the retail sales of handmade vegan soaps. During the past two years, Society Bodycare has evolved into and coexists as *The Society Project*, representing the final thesis project requirement for my Master of Humanities degree. The following essay embodies the nature of the project, its inspirations, its evolution, its current state, and its possible future.

The most notable change in Society Bodycare, as a result of *The Society Project*, is its transformation into a social entrepreneurship (SE). SE is and has always been a global movement (Kerlin 1), and has become very popular in the U.S. in the last decade (Kerlin 94).

Defining Social Entrepreneurship

SE can be described as a “phenomenon [that] can be explained by the strengthening requests from various stakeholders to the...for-profit sector to encourage the adoption of socially responsible behavior” (Perrini 58). More practically defined, SE provides some sort of mechanism that allows the sharing of profits, services, or some other extension of the business with an agency, organization, or group in need, while allowing the business to remain stable, healthy, and profitable. In his 2008 book, Tim Sanders refers to the most recent wave of SE popularity as “The Responsibility Revolution,” and states that the revolution “...demands that companies make a difference to society—not just indirectly, by producing jobs and profits, but directly, through their

products, manufacturing methods and operational systems, through their environmental efforts and community outreach” (3).

It is difficult to precisely describe SE because its conceptual boundaries have never been formally determined. More importantly, the modern incarnation of SE is so new that a sufficient amount of research, data, and literature does not yet exist in forming a thorough representation (Cho 34). A more cynical argument comes from those who claim that the SE aspect can be viewed as a marketing ploy, and that the retail prices are inflated so the consumer is absorbing most if not all financial burden away from the company, yet the company gets all the credit (Ippolito). This may or may not be the case, but one must consider that perhaps the end result is really more important than the means by which it came: SE is a mechanism of capitalism (not a charity) and must remain profitable in order to survive. Therefore it seems reasonable and necessary that the SE’s humanitarian element be utilized for marketing and advertising purposes.

Society soap originally sold for ten dollars for two bars, and prices raised by a mere two dollars, a nominal amount that demonstrates the customer and the company are fairly sharing in the burden. At this point, Society Bodycare is a study in SE, not in hardcore capitalism, so I want to focus more on distributing recipient soaps and less on profits. If the business grows and becomes successful, the financial focus will undoubtedly shift toward profits.

There are many forms of SE in corporate practice, running the gamut from simple to complex. Selling homemade baked goods to raise funds for a church group, for example, was as popular a century ago as it is today, and is considered a simple form of SE. More complex forms exist as SE incubators, paid for through grants and

memberships, that exist to mentor, provide seed money, and assist in marketing and promoting social enterprises (Kerlin 100). The Society Project has adapted to a simple, popular format that I will refer to as Buy One/Give One (BO/GO).

The concept of SE has been around since the beginning of business (Kerlin 94) but has come into prominence most dramatically in the U.S. within the last ten years for a variety of reasons. Economic and political structures that once hindered the germination of SE have rapidly declined within the last two decades. The replacement of authoritarian governments by partial or full democracies, surplus wealth, scientific breakthroughs that have extended and improved human life, and political breakthroughs like gender, racial, and ethnic rights (Bornstein 6–9) are all factors that have contributed to the expansion of social enterprise. As with all trends, a driving force is certainly increased media exposure, an exploding global economy, the popularity of internet-based commerce, and the transformation of communication by technology (Willmott 140). Basically, the world is continually becoming smaller and SE is thriving as a result.

Three key elements are common in all SE ventures: “A problem, a sustainable solution, and social change” (Sinha). For *The Society Project*, I attempt to tackle the issue of personal hygiene, providing high-quality soap to financially limited groups and individuals who might otherwise purchase cheap, synthetic, low-grade soap. *The Society Project* is sustainable as a business model and the product is sustainable as well by leaving a minimal environmental footprint during production and final use. On a small, local scale *The Society Project* promotes social change in the lives of people—its recipients—who otherwise do not have easy access to soap or have it lower on their list of basic needs. This change results in better personal hygiene, which may lead to better

health, a boost in confidence, and stronger social interactions (Heatherton 220).

Regardless of definition or business model, SE is changing the face of business and ultimately reducing the financial burden of some social responsibilities from the taxpayer. As more and more government funds and programs dry up, this shift in social investment becomes more imperative: the absence of tax dollars does not mean the problems have gone away, simply that the source of funds must shift. SE is filling this need, and its encouragement and promotion are essential.

So why is SE so important? For hundreds of years, greed, for better or worse, has been the driving force behind capitalism (Niskanen 559). But as a result of increasing skepticism of capitalism and more informed consumerism, SE and businesses with (or appearing to contain) a socially conscious element are on the rise; Sanders claims that the information boom, a threat to safety, corporate scandal, and the environmental crisis are all instigators of the acceleration of SE (31–33). A decline in donations has pummeled many nonprofit groups as a result of the current hard economic times. After the 2008 Wall Street catastrophe that led to mass bankruptcies, foreclosures, and other economic calamities, contributions by individuals declined, and then declined again the following year, in addition to a major drop in foundation giving as well (Hall 22). This has forced many groups and nonprofits to rethink their sources of income, and many have turned to corporate America for inspiration, specifically those corporations involved in SE.

Buy One/Give One Examples

The Buy/One Give One model works well for *The Society Project* on two levels: it is a fairly simple and straightforward business, focusing on donating a product instead

of money. Success of this model can be demonstrated with two examples, TOMS Shoes and Warby Parker eyewear.

TOMS Shoes calls its business model One for One™. This trendy, California-based shoe company “gives a pair of new shoes to a child in need” (“One for One”) for each pair purchased by the consumer. The company, founded in 2006 by Blake Mycoskie, focuses on shoeing the 40% of the world Mycoskie claims is without shoes (Weilheimer 50). TOMS Shoes has become extremely popular, and at the time of this writing, has donated over 60,000 pairs of shoes to children in Africa and Argentina, and has plans to donate to children here in the U.S. (Allen 19). That is a lot of social change blossoming from the mere 250 shoes that Mycoskie started his business with (Schechtman 50). TOMS Shoes are available through websites and high-end retailers like Nordstrom, where they sell in the \$30–\$50 range and above.

Warby Parker, an eyewear company founded by Dave Gilboa and Neil Blumenthal, has provided over 30,000 pairs of glasses to recipients around the globe (warbyparker.com). The group designs and manufactures their own eyewear at a fraction of the cost charged by many eyewear retailers. For the base price of ninety-five dollars per pair (including prescription lenses), an additional pair is given to a recipient. The company has solidly defined its social problem to tackle; its website claims that “one billion people around the globe do not have access to glasses which means that 15% of the world’s population is unable to effectively learn or work because they can’t see clearly” (warbyparker.com). The company distributes glasses to recipients in 18 countries around the world, to adults and children.

Application of SE Model

When deciding upon an SE model for *The Society Project*, I needed one that would fall under the criteria of simple, sustainable, and practical in order for me to be able to make it work. I reviewed a number of companies participating in some sort of socially oriented commitment, and found that many offer monetary donations to various causes, based on revenues generated by their products. It is very common, especially with non-SE businesses, to “disguise” a marketing campaign as social contribution. A recent example is the explosion of pink packaging and pink ribbon logos adorning products that promise proceeds for breast cancer research. Some of these donations are automatic just by purchasing the product; others require the consumer to perform some action, such as going online to enter a code found on the packaging (not unlike a rebate that requires submission of a receipt and UPC code). Some companies, such as TOMS Shoes, subscribe to a model that automatically gives a product when one is purchased. In the planning stages of *The Society Project*, BO/GO seemed to be an ideal approach that I could reasonably manage for three main reasons.

First, I am not a natural businessperson, so complicated financial schemes and sophisticated formulas would not work; as the sole proprietor of Society Bodycare, I do not have the intellectual interest or business knowledge to practice a model that would require a lot of bookkeeping, forecasting, and data retention. The BO/GO model is simple and straightforward: an order comes in for a two-pack of soap, and the same amount of soap goes into the pool of donations to be split among the five recipient groups for quarterly distribution. Sales records are automatically kept in the shopping cart system, so this method does not even require additional recordkeeping.

Secondly, I believe BO/GO is sustainable from a financial standpoint. I do not specify that the donated soap is the same bar as the purchased soap; this gives me the flexibility of several cost-cutting options. Donated soap is made with the same high standards of all Society soap, but will be formulated using the least expensive ingredients. Cocktail Bar is an ideal formula for this, as half of its recipe is grated soap that cannot be used otherwise (loaf ends, poorly stamped or misshapen bars, and older stock), and will be the starting point for donations. I will also use bars that have older labels—for example, discontinued bars, special edition bars (such as those made for holidays but that did not sell). To further ease the financial burden, I raised the price of a soap order by two dollars, which is still in keeping with average market pricing on handmade soap. I predict that the extra two dollars will basically pay for the “non-recycled” ingredients of the donated bars.

Finally, BO/GO is practical in that it does not require additional work outside of the usual soap production. The donated soap, in fact, will require less production, because the most time-consuming steps will be eliminated. Bars purchased by consumers have certain aesthetic features that will not be incorporated into the donated soap. Although donated soaps will be stamped with the Society name, they will not be cosmetically finished with the same detail, and will be packaged in simple glassine envelopes with a single label wrap. This will save on production time immensely, while still providing a top-quality product.

In order to allow agencies to serve more clients, I have designed the donated soaps as half bars (1.75 ounce minimum). For every unit of two (full-size) bars sold, I will donate four half-size bars. Societybodycare.com states, “For every ounce of soap you

buy, an equal amount will be donated...” (societybodycare.com), which allows me the flexibility to do this sort of packaging, or use full bars depending on what is available for donation.

Influences

When reflecting on the inspirations for *The Society Project*, I tap into the past and look at behaviors and principles I have developed over the past 40 years. In early childhood, I had a strong sense of empathy. I was never really bullied, but I have memories from as early as grade school of defending certain classmates who were being picked on. I was not an aggressive kid, and certainly not a good fighter, so my solution was to go in after the bullying and offer an ear or emotional support to the victim. I took pleasure in offering this comfort, and today it is no different; I am happy to provide a small gift to brighten the day of a stranger with a simple bar of soap.

My mother, Suzanne, has been quite inspirational as well. A stay-at-home mother who (with my father Jay) raised four children, she always found time to regularly volunteer for various organizations that cared for other women and children. From an early age, I was aware of Planned Parenthood, battered women shelters, and various social services through her volunteer work. This awareness was passed on to me “through osmosis” as I rode along on many of the errands she ran for the shelters during my times off from school. Additionally, I can credit her with the contempt I have for the organizations that focus on disrupting and legislating against the humanitarian work that these organizations do and try to do.

My father, Jay, has influenced my creativity and resourcefulness. Growing up, we worked together on countless projects in his wood shop, and from these experiences I learned a sense of practical analysis. I would present him with an idea or sketch for something, and he would figure out the best way to create it. Specific to *The Society Project*, my father built my soap molds, bar cutter, bar debosser, and drying racks based on rough drawings I made.

I can point to technology as a major influence on this project, mainly, the Internet. In fact, I am so inspired by technology that the project would not exist without it. The dot-com boom of the nineties revolutionized the way Americans shop, and today, business people are launching careers from Internet-based concepts every day (Beer 30). Shopping cart technology has made the use of credit cards much safer than before (Wilson 83). Tracking technology makes it possible to keep tabs on a customer order from the minute it hits the shipping stream until it ends up on the front porch (Verlyn 16). Search engine optimization has become an industry of its own, and has revolutionized marketing and advertising by allowing more specific product targeting than ever possible (Clapperton 129).

Opening a retail store has become as easy as buying a domain name, setting up a website, and securing a payment system. No rent, no shoplifters, and the business is open 24 hours a day, every day. It is a pipe dream to open up a brick and mortar retail shop to sell Society soap, but technology has allowed me to realize at least part of this dream. I have been able to create a product that I am proud of and offer it to anyone with an Internet connection in the United States. After a year and a half of practical experience running Society Bodycare, I can take this business a step further to become a catalyst

between the customer and the donation recipient—a *changemaker*, as social entrepreneurs are now called (Bellows 32).

My education and coursework has been very inspirational as well. I had an opportunity to take a service-learning English course *Creative Writing for the Community*, taught by Dr. Erin Flanagan, chair of my project committee. During the quarter, students were paired with an outside organization in need of help with a writing project. We were required to spend at least four hours weekly on location, working to complete the assigned project. I was partnered with the Dayton International Peace Museum, and was assigned to write a history of the building the museum calls home. The experience made me see the passion of volunteers able to make a little go a long way, and the importance of giving time and talent instead of money. This course came at the end of my degree coursework, and I have applied to *The Society Project* things I have learned in a very practical way. This course helped point *The Society Project* in the direction of the BO/GO model because it made me understand that by giving time and labor, the recipient sees the passion and effort firsthand.

Recipients

SE is a very personal venture, and is comprised of both altruistic *and* selfish motivations (Willmott 34). *The Society Project* at this point is *primarily* self-serving, as it is the capstone of a degree I have worked quite hard for the past two years. But secondarily, the project is laced with altruistic intentions. I really do want to help people. With an endless supply of perfectly valid charities that could use the soap, deciding upon an initial list appeared overwhelming at first. But, because the soap I create is entirely

based on my own personal taste in scent, color, texture, and ingredients, it only made sense to choose recipient groups with an equal amount of personal connection. I thought about criteria to help me decide.

First and most importantly, I considered groups without discriminatory language in mission statements, vision, or general message, primarily concerning gays, women, and other minorities. This pared down the list rather quickly, eliminating many religion-based organizations. To simplify, I only considered secular groups, and groups that minimally associate with religion-based charities. I am aware there are exceptions, and will never rule out certain considerations.

Secondly, I chose small, local organizations. This requirement underscores common SE values in several ways: immersion in community (Sanders 159), and the limiting of the business' environmental impact (Willmott 23). Although Society Bodycare is a web-based business selling soap to anyone in the United States, I will localize the donations to Dayton-area agencies to impact the people who share my personal community. Additionally, the delivery of the donated soaps is also localized, preventing the need for excessive shipping methods.

Finally, I want to help groups that coincide with my own values and belief systems. I want to assist in the support structure of people who believe and work for these shared values, primarily those who support the respect and empowerment of minorities, women, the impoverished, and in general, the “underdogs” of society.

I initially contacted five recipient organizations and secured partnerships within hours of emailing them. They were each very appreciative and happy to be included in *The Society Project*. On February 20, 2011, I launched the redesigned website and began

the BO/GO model. Included on the initial list are ARC Ohio, Artemis Center, Wright State University's Friendship Food Pantry, Hospice of Dayton, and Pet Advocate League (Rumbaugh).

ARC Ohio is a nonprofit, community-based organization whose mission is to provide services to those infected, affected, and at risk of HIV/AIDS. I support this group for its excellence in fighting a seemingly unwinnable war and the help it has provided for so many infected individuals, including a close, HIV+ friend of mine who cannot say enough kind words about the organization and the help they have provided for him.

The Artemis Center provides support and information for victims of domestic violence and their children. When I was a child, my first exposure to humanitarianism revolved around a battered women's shelter for which my mother volunteered. I have memories of riding along in the car with her during summer vacation to pick up women and drive them to appointments with doctors. Whenever I asked about these women, her response was usually something vague like, "some people have much more complicated lives than others." I chose Artemis Center to represent the spirit of my mother and the sense of citizenship she instilled in me.

The Friendship Food Pantry at Wright State University provides emergency food and personal hygiene items to students in need. As a graphic designer in the Office of Communications and Marketing at Wright State, I created the logo for this food pantry. Additionally Dr. Sarah Twill, who serves on my *Society Project* committee, was instrumental in setting up the pantry. Dr. Twill described to me the lack of personal hygiene products at food pantries, and that food assistance programs such as food stamp

programs exclude the purchase of nonfood items such as soap (Ohio), so I did not hesitate to add the pantry to my list.

The Hospice of Dayton contacted me in the winter of 2010 about producing half-size bars of Society. Their new director was interested in “greening up” his supply chain by purchasing as many locally made products as possible, and offering a more holistic approach to hospice care. At present, we have not yet finalized a business agreement, but I have added Hospice of Dayton to my list of recipients. The supply of donated soap will not meet the daily patient needs of this large facility, but might be used in gift baskets offered to out-of-town family members who might be in the facility overnight, for example.

The mission of Pet Advocate League (PAL) is to end the euthanasia of adoptable pets and ferals by providing low-cost spay and neuter services to Dayton and the surrounding area. A close friend of mine, Becky Schindler, founded PAL in the mid-nineties, and it has grown impressively since then. According to Schindler, the veterinarians and assistants wash their hands many times a day between procedures for which good soap is desperately needed. The inclusion of PAL in *The Society Project* represents the respect and love for animals that I have had all of my life.

History of Society Bodycare

The evolution of *The Society Project* has run parallel with the progression of my master’s degree program. Although Society Bodycare originated as an experiment based on a personal interest in creating a brand of handmade soap, I quickly realized that it had potential, in some capacity, to be a part of my degree.

I chose the Humanities program at Wright State first because it offers the flexibility of coursework based around a theme that I proposed, and second because there was an option of creating a final project in lieu of writing a thesis. Wright State does not offer a graduate-level art degree, but the Humanities program allowed me to devise a schedule of classes that could give me a scholarly background in the work I do as a graphic designer. I call this focus *Visual Culture and Theory*, and it has given me insight into the way we communicate with each other through spoken, written, and visual language. As a professional in the advertising industry, this knowledge base has been essential in expressing myself as a commercial artist whose ultimate goal is to provoke the consumer into some sort of action, most obviously to *buy* something. Consumers are sophisticated, and to more clearly understand the way humans convey and respond to various forms of communication has been invaluable.

Naturally, Society Bodycare became *The Society Project*. As I worked through my coursework full time, I managed to also run the website, make soap, market it, and sell it. All along, I knew that the soap would somehow become the final project, and after several conversations with Dr. Ava Chamberlain, Director of the Master of Humanities program, I saw how I would be able to tie the business to my degree with the addition of the humanitarian/SE element.

I defended my prospectus on October 8, 2010, to a panel of seven faculty members, and with the help of my master's committee, have completed the elements required for the project. The project has been the subject of an article in Wright State's *Community* magazine (Halberg 18–19) as well as a cover story in a *L!fe* section of the local paper (Margolis 11).

Society Bodycare Products

All ten varieties of soap currently available on the website have some personal connection. Each scent is carefully designed specifically after my own preferences of scent, texture, and appearance. I love earthy, saturated aromas that smell familiar and real. The scents I concoct come from true essential oils; many handmade soaps use cheap synthetic oils and blends that attempt to cheaply reproduce nature. I am not interested in creating soaps that offer strange combinations of smells like “vanilla butterscotch” or “april rain”... there are countless soaps in every shopping mall and retail store that offer these unnatural scents. I aim to provide unusual, exclusive products that customers will remember and look forward to.

There is a story inside every bar of Society soap. The first usable batch of my soap was Society Black Forest Bar (which is still a good seller). Its rich, woodsy scent comes from a variety of essential oils, most prominently anise, giving it an unmistakable sassafras aroma. It is one of my favorite smells (and flavors) and I was quite pleased when I finally perfected the formula. I was ecstatic after realizing that all the experimenting had panned out: I had just made a nice hard bar that smelled terrific, lathered well, and left my skin feeling great. I had done it!

I began searching for unique ideas for other bars. I had come across some information about a common spa treatment practiced in the Soviet Union for centuries known as *platza*, during which a client is coated in olive oil, lightly beaten with a broom made of oak leaves, then plunged into a pool of very cold water. I was intrigued by this, and developed a bar inspired by it. I formulated the soap with 90% olive oil, and then incorporated crushed leaves picked from an oak tree in my parents’ back yard, the very

tree I used to play in as a child. Society Russian Platza Bar, as I call it, is scented with a foresty mixture of pine and cedarwood, and makes an excellent lather in soft water.

I wanted to create a soothing bar that would attempt to relieve itchy skin without any sort of medication, and some research uncovered an old English remedy that uses ground mustard seed and eucalyptus. It seemed perfectly interesting, so I formulated a bar using ground mustard and paprika, cracked mustard seed, and for a scent, combined the citrusy zing of litsea and the woody smell of cajeput (extracted from an Australian tree). After seeing its lovely golden color when pulling the first batch out of its mold, I had to name it after the town where I have lived since 1994, and where Society Bodycare first began. Society Yellow Springs Bar is no less exotic than its namesake.

Components of *The Society Project*

Most successful companies begin with a concise business plan, containing detailed information about the people involved, their backgrounds, a thorough description of capital, profits and losses and other financial data, and other business-related minutia such as supply chain management and accounting systems (Friend 75). *The Society Project* is more of a hybrid venture, therefore I have adapted the traditional business plan to more of a business *description*, omitting much of the usual financial, partner, and employee information that does not exist. At this time Society Bodycare primarily serves as a master's degree project, not a formal business.

The second part of the project is the branding guide. This serves as a tool that defines the company brand, outlines the uses and misuses of the brand, and assists in keeping the brand consistent internally and externally. Branding guides are not

commonly used in small businesses, but instead by medium and large companies that advertise heavily, are nationally and internationally involved, and have an important need to protect and promote the integrity of the brand. In the case of *The Society Project*, the branding guide serves as a connection between the project and my *Visual Culture and Theory* humanities focus. This document is a pictorial archive of the look and feel of the Society Bodycare brand, and illustrates the manner in which the brand should be portrayed. Throughout my career in design and advertising, I have created and produced a number of these guides and have always found them intriguing. Branding guides are documents that showcase the evolution or history of the corporate brand, and in the case of *The Society Project*, serves to visually communicate the possibilities of the Society Bodycare brand if the company existed in a much broader capacity.

The third element of *The Society Project* is its portal to the world, the website www.SocietyBodycare.com. This website debuted in August of 2009 and received its first sale within a few hours. Its original design had a much more retail feel, with rotating images and graphics that urged consumers to buy, buy, buy. It served its purpose at the time, but I knew I wanted to go a different route when launching its redesign. A clean, simple, user-friendly design with elegance and utilitarianism is what *The Society Project* needed in a website, so I switched gears and found a Wordpress theme to which I adapted code to fit my specific needs. I beta-launched the site, created an online survey, and invited customers to give feedback. The new, simple design went over well, and after making the changes I found valid (based on the survey), I launched the official site and began tracking sales for donations. The first shipment of donated soaps will go out to my recipients in June 2011. At this writing, I have over 80 bars of soap to donate.

Conclusion

The Society Project shows promise of continuing far after its initial intent has passed. I do not know the full extent of its future, but I have enjoyed creating it, maintaining it, and talking about it. The products are strong, high-quality soaps that have brought enjoyment to most of my customers, which can be seen in the large number of return buyers. The additional SE element I have added to the business has only improved the experience for me, and will be a wonderful tool to use in the future as far as marketing, public relations, and a way to open doors that may be more tightly shut to a small business.

Social media has made a tremendous impact on the way business is conducted, is perceived, is marketed, and succeeds (Clapperton 26–27), and Society Bodycare is no different. I owe a lot to social media, specifically to Facebook, through which I have sold to many customers. The Society Bodycare profile I have set up contains a bevy of wonderful testimonies that future customers can read. It serves as a living bulletin board on which I can announce new soaps, sales, tips, and anything else related to the business and project. I will continue to market my wares using Facebook and other social media because it seems to fit so perfectly with my product, the SE element, and the way I do business. Facebook's return on investment is extremely high...I pay nothing for the Society Bodycare profile.

The experience of developing *The Society Project*, achieving my master's degree, and meeting all of the people along the way has improved my life tenfold. I have learned a tremendous amount about myself through this project, and I feel it has changed my perspective on many levels. I have fulfilled a personal goal in creating, packaging, and

selling products that customers want and like and I have been persuaded to participate in an exciting and cutting-edge form of business. Much of this project has been difficult and tested my sense of discipline like never before, but I have no regrets. An improved Stephen Rumbaugh has come from the labors of this project, and I will continue to improve on the mechanics of the project, on myself, and on my contributions as long as I am able. *The Society Project* will not go away; it will most likely evolve and change, but its roots will remain firm. It has been my pleasure to create this project knowing that my work will have some sort of impact on a stranger's day.

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