

## **Urban Outfitters Bloody Mess**

*Bradley W. Brooks, Queens University of Charlotte*

*Steven M. Cox, Queens University of Charlotte*

### **Abstract**

Urban Outfitters, as part of their vintage line, came under severe criticism for selling a sweatshirt with a Kent State University logo that included red splotches that resembled blood stains. The outrage stemmed from a Vietnam era shooting on campus by National Guard Soldiers that left ten students wounded and four dead. The criticism was generating significant attention for the product and for the brand, albeit universally negative attention. The issue for Urban Outfitters was whether/how to respond to the negative outcry against the brand for offering a sweatshirt deemed to be making light of such a horrific tragedy.

### **Learning Outcomes**

In completing this assignment, students should be able to:

1. Identify the risks and rewards of a controversial product design.
2. Identify and evaluate risks to brand equity from a controversial product offering using Keller's Brand Equity Model.
3. Propose a course of action to respond to a controversy regarding a product offering.

### **Application**

This decision critical incident is suitable for undergraduate courses in Principles of Marketing, Marketing Management, Branding, Advertising, Public Relations, Promotion Management, and/or Integrated Marketing Communications.

### **Key Words**

marketing, advertising, Keller's Brand Equity Model

### **Contact**

Brad Brooks Queens University of Charlotte, McColl School of Business, 1900 Selwyn Ave, Charlotte, NC 28274. Phone: 704-337-2326. Email: BrooksB@Queens.edu.