

University of Notre Dame Library Research Award

As an athlete for over a decade, wearing athletic clothes was no stranger. Brands supposedly focused on creating attire for solely athletic pursuits have changed their business direction towards creating comfortable, casual attire for everyday settings which led to the birth of athleisure.

So when Dr. Cronin of my Business Writing class asked us to write about a trend through the eyes of a company of our choice, my mind immediately jumped to athleisure. After choosing lululemon, I began my research journey. My goal was to get to know lululemon so well that I could give them recommendations on how to respond to the athleisure trend, in the format of a business memo. This memo results from great research and analysis to get it to parallel an actual business memo, which is what made this task so interesting yet challenging. My work for this task would not have been successful without the resources and support provided by the library.

Upon embarking on my research journey, I realized I had never even written a text in the form of a memo before. I refrained from going straight to Google to find quick answers to my questions because I knew how dangerously misleading online information could be. Because I did not want to retrieve inaccurate information, my first stop was the library. Our class had Business Librarians Pete Pietraszewski and Kim Ferraro show us all the online resources that are most helpful to our research. From citing sources to finding websites on the proper format of a business memo, they took us through the steps of a successful research journey. Using Market Research Databases made available to students by ND such as Mintel and Statista, as well as Company and Industry Databases like Mergent Intellect and Factiva, I dove deep into the realm of the athleisure trend. Whenever I wanted to look for articles, I used OneSearch and the ND

Catalog to find articles relevant to my topic. I took note of key statistics and their corresponding sources. This part of my research journey took several days of hard work.

When I finally gathered sufficient data and information for the task, I headed to the Reading Room. As an individual who focuses best in quiet environments, it was the ideal place to be. Typically, my research journey entails writing a rough draft of the task, and constantly improving it as I learn more about the topic. That being said, I wrote the Introduction and Background sections of my paper in the Hesburgh Library Reading Room.

Having “completed” a large chunk of the task (with completed in quotation marks as I had written a lot, but was not nearly done with my research journey), I then dove deeper into research as I now had to plan my analysis of the data I had gathered. I browsed the ND Catalog once again and came across many articles that helped me form a strong analysis of the relationships between the industry, the factors behind the trend’s growth, and other factors affecting the athleisure trend. After categorizing the research I had found based on significance to the task’s goal, I head to the library’s collaboration spaces. I thrive on visuals when it comes to generating ideas, so I made use of the large whiteboards whilst I discussed my ideas with a friend. My friend and I bounced ideas off of each other, and I narrowed down my discussion to three key points: 1) Athleisure’s future market growth, 2) The 18-35 year-old market, and 3) The rapid expansion of the athleisure trend today.

My next step was to come up with recommendations for lululemon. Given all the research I had gathered from the library, I now had to put on my creative-thinking hat. I wanted to be in a space that would allow me to reflect deeply, and I knew where I wanted to go. I stepped into the elevator and clicked on the 10th floor. I found a desk right next to the large

windows overlooking Notre Dame's picturesque campus, and there I wrote my three recommendations for lululemon athletica.

At that point, I was (in theory) done with the task. I had written all sections and cited my sources properly. But I knew I could improve my memo, and I was several days ahead of the deadline. So I paid the Mahaffey Business Library a visit to seek help from the librarians. They gave me advice on how to further expand some ideas, and cut down on others. I took their advice, put in hard work into my paper for several more days, and I knew I was nearing the end of my research journey.

In finalizing my memo, I wanted to ensure that the memo I would submit would be my best work. The Writing Center has always been my go-to since freshman year. However, because I live in Pasquerilla East, sometimes I do not feel like walking to the other side of campus in the freezing cold. Thankfully, the Writing Center is also made available through the Hesburgh Library and I was able to work with a fellow undergraduate to further improve my memo. By the end of that night, I felt confident in my work and knew that it was my best, due to the help of the librarians and other available resources made available to students. I learned so much about the various steps of a research journey, and I realized how difficult it can be to write concisely such that it best suits the specified format provided by my professor. A life lesson I learned from this experience: longer essays aren't necessarily much easier than shorter ones! Various tasks require skills necessary for that given task, and I am fortunate enough to be a student of Notre Dame and to be a part of such a wonderful community -- teaching me skills that are sure to be applied beyond the walls of a classroom.

My research journey in a few words...

