

Executive Summary

The purpose of the research conducted by CLECK Research Foundation was to analyze the relationship between Vans “Off the Wall”, and the public. By making use of surveys, a focus group and as content analysis, we sufficiently measured how that relationship has been created and maintained with Vans’ target market of males and females ages 18-22.

CLECK distributed a survey to 23 different college students within the given age bracket. Ten males and thirteen females’ answers were considered. Information gathered includes demographic and socio-economic figures as well as shopping habits, consumer satisfaction and social media preferences. In addition, a focus group with a sample of six participants was conducted. The focus group greatly aided in gaining familiarity with the reputation Vans holds with its target market. The questions asked within the focus group session were targeted to shoes, the main product associated with Vans. The focus group also revealed that price and quality are major factors when considering a consumer’s brand loyalty.

All data mentioned clearly illustrates the relationship that Vans “Off the Wall” has with the public. Please refer to Appendixes A and B to further analyze these findings.

Surveys:

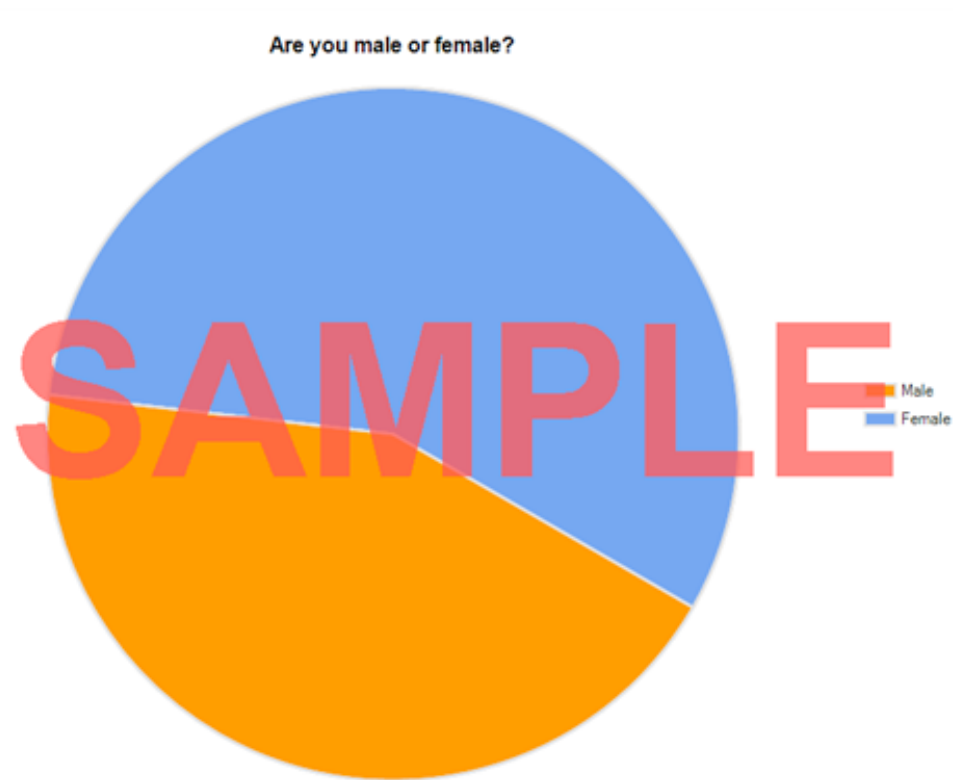
Our group distributed surveys to 23 students at random within an 18-22 age range. We analyzed 10 males and 13 females within our sample. Our results were able to give us a better idea of what the demographics of our consumer audience of 18 to 22 year olds. It also gave us a better understanding of brand recognition, the ways to reach our consumer and customer satisfaction.

Focus Groups:

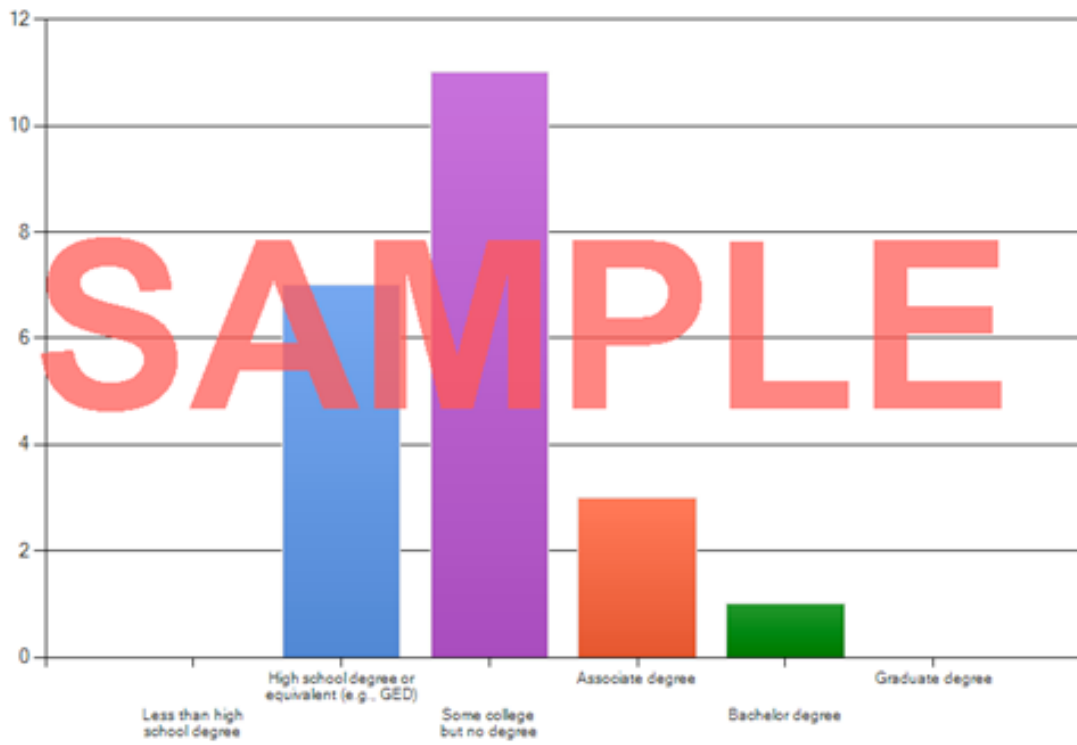
We then conducted a focus group with a total of 6 participants. The focus group took place on the Flagler College campus in order to determine the best way for Vans to strengthen its brand name and how to associate the brand with being more than just clothing or shoes. Our focus group concluded that our participants felt the best way to strengthen the brand name and establish brand loyalty is by making Vans more visible on the Internet and appeal to the consumer by presenting Vans as a quality brand. We also concluded that by associating Vans with activities such as surfing, music and snowboarding we could make Vans a brand that is not only just clothing and shoes but also representative as a lifestyle.

Results

According to the results of our research, we found that Vans does have brand recognition among the 18-22 year old audience, they were familiar with what Vans was and who mainly used the brand. We also learned social networking is frequently used among this audience which gave us an opportunity to utilize networking sites such as twitter, Facebook, tumblr and YouTube. Because of pressing college budgets, most students gravitated toward this brand because of the loyalty and how long lasting shoe it is. Females in this study seem to overpower men in who wears the brand. Our study showed that the college educated students wear vans the most. This study benefits our plan to market Vans since it gives us a specific audience to target that will take advantage of getting a quality shoe and something of style that appeals to our age groups.



What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?



Content Analysis

Vans: Content Analysis

Type: community outreach

Type of publication: magazine publication

Summary: Vans has put full page ads in magazines such as snowboarding and skateboarding magazines. In these magazines we have put full pages ads showcasing our products and have put tour dates from the Vans tours that travel worldwide.

Type: Marketing

Type of publication: TV Broadcast

Summary: Tried to raise awareness for the 2012 year. To do this we had celebrities appear in commercials to endorse the products. Some of the celebrities were Shaun White, Ryan Sheckler, Tony Hawk, etc.

Type: community outreach

Type of publication: web publication

Summary: Vans has created a Facebook account as well as a Twitter account. With the Facebook account they post pictures of Customers and Models wearing our product to raise awareness and show potential customers what the product would look like on them. With the Twitter account we tweet future Tour dates and also announce release dates for future products.

Content Analysis of Social Media through Online Research

We can define through online research using websites such as www.quantacast.com , www.forrester.com what 18-22 year olds market in the United States. There are different kinds of audiences such as Spectators, Joiners, Critics and Creators.

Spectators: are those who monitor social media sites frequently, reading blogs and reviews, as well as watching podcast and YouTube videos.

Joiners: those who have their own social networking profiles and frequently visit them.

Critics: those who frequently comment and rate things as they do or Do Not like.

Creators: those who are generating our content so we can use it for charts online.
A webpage, blog uploading music or videos.

In the twitter world we have access to follow whomever we want and at our convenience. Vans shows in the chart below its followers, how many tweets it has made and who it follows.

About @VANS_66



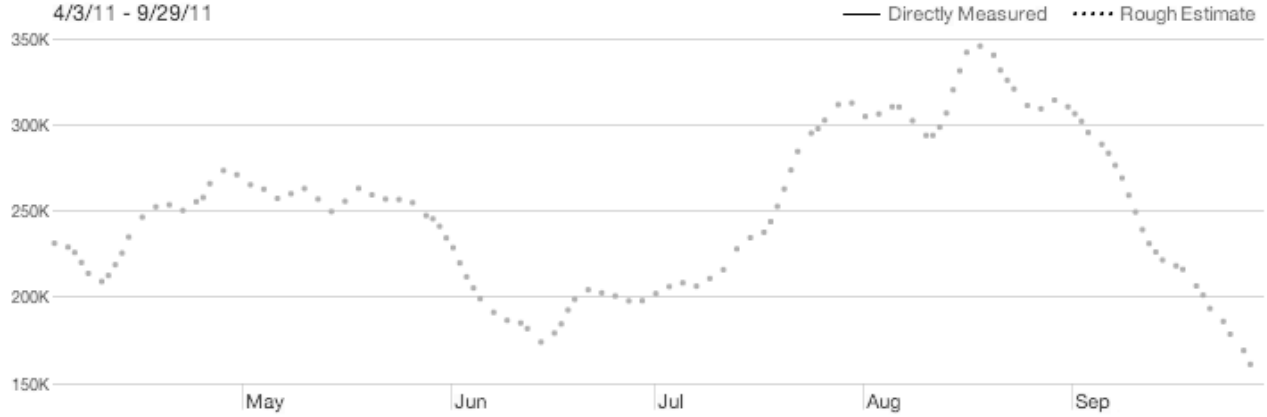
7,839 Tweets

5,396 Following

63,266 Followers

Below is quantacast.com chart on the monthly purchases of vans shoes. We see how each month differs. We are able to see measurements on Vans levels and how much customers of Vans were responding. As you see based off the chart the engagement suggest that they have online audiences that are active. In this case viral marketing is huge to catch the attention of online buyers. The online world would suggest that our target audience 18-22 year olds would be the main online target market as well as in our department stores.

Monthly United States People
4/3/11 - 9/29/11



vans.com
● US 151K Max: 346K 8/17/11
● Global global stats not yet available for estimated data

Rough Estimate ⚠️
quontcast
© 2011 Quontcast Corp.

Discussion

We initiated an online survey and conducted a focus group to help Vans better understand and measure college students age 18-22 and their attitudes and impressions of Vans. In particular, we wanted to gather feedback on the Vans website, why they prefer one brand over another and how to better leverage social media-networks to enhance the brand image of Vans.

Before we summarize the results, let's review some of the actual demographics of the students who participated in the survey and focus group. The average age of the respondent was 20 years 10 months; 56% female and 44% male with an over-whelming majority or 91% of the respondents listing their race as white. Over 70% of the respondents were actively attending college classes and all had graduated from high school with 86% of the respondents reporting that they had purchased a Vans product in the past.

In an effort to gain insight into the target market's attitude and impression of Vans, we asked a series of questions focusing on everything from how the participants view themselves to their feelings about the Vans' products. When we asked the focus group attendees to identify their clothing style, they were evenly split between: a) making a lifestyle statement vs. b) no preference at all. However, the over-whelming majority of focus group attendees identified with the "active boarding" lifestyle e.g. surf - skate - snow. This is important because if Vans wants to extend their products beyond buyers who identify with the surfer skater lifestyle, they may want to consider other avenues of promotion and sponsorship.

The focus group was also asked what attracted them to the Vans brand. The responses of the group were evenly split across three attributes: reputation, color & style and the brand itself. In the follow up question about what was most important to them in terms of giving brand loyalty, the unanimous response was "quality of the product". When asked about the quality of the product or how satisfied they were with Vans, the online survey respondents rated Vans an 8 on a 10-point scale.

While 70% of the online and focus group respondents said they have shopped online, only a small percentage had actually purchased a Vans product online. However, those respondents who had purchased a Vans product online had done so through the Vans online store or website. When asked about their experience, the respondents reported the website was easy to use, and they liked the ability to create their own custom shoe. The online respondents were also asked what social medial networks they used and while there were 5 networks mentioned, 74% listed Facebook as the primary social network followed by 26% mentioning Twitter first. In addition, 60% of respondents listed more than two networks with Facebook and Twitter the most prevalent combination.

Recommendations

For a retail clothing company, brand recognition is absolutely critical to a company's success, and for Vans, there was 100% immediate brand recognition with our online survey and focus group respondents. However, the brand recognition did not seem to extend beyond shoes. Vans is to successfully extend their brand from their core shoe product to clothing and accessories, they will need to explore ways of highlighting more than just shoes to this target audience. Because half of the focus group respondents had no specific view of their clothing style vs. identifying with a specific lifestyle, there clearly is an opportunity for Vans to reach out and extend the Vans product line to more than the traditional "boarder" lifestyle purchaser.

Our research also indicates that the Vans brand has a unique position in the market. When the focus group participants who purchased a Vans product were asked what attracted them to Vans, the responses centered on comfort, color and style. Furthermore, when asked what other brands they considered before purchasing, many participants responded that Vans "were unique" and there were "no other brands to compare to." Given what we heard from our online and focus group participants, Vans enjoys a good brand image and given their current brand position, Vans has an opportunity to appeal to a much broader target market, many of who, did not identify themselves with a particular group or lifestyle.

From an online perspective, our online survey and focus group participants appear to shop online at about the same rate as the general public. That means that 70% of our participants regularly go online to either research before they buy or to buy a product or service. While 86% of our respondents have purchased a Vans product, only a relatively small percentage of those were purchased online and fewer yet through the Vans online store.

Although the experience reported by the respondents using the Vans site was good, there is no question that the online site has not been widely used by Vans customers. Perhaps one way to encourage more online traffic is to leverage social media more effectively. As mentioned above in the discussion summary, the vast majority of our respondents use at least two social media sites with Facebook and Twitter being the most popular.

When we asked the focus group participants if they followed companies online, more than 50% said they did and listed the most important feature as easy navigation. In addition, those same respondents mentioned that they often look for deals in terms of coupons, price comparisons and would wait to purchase an item if they felt there was a good deal coming.

Vans needs to take a more aggressive stance in promoting and increasing the awareness of the Vans online store, especially the custom shoe build feature as well as to preview their extensive line of clothing and accessories. We would recommend that Vans develop a better link to Facebook and Twitter and ensure that the design is easy to navigate from a mobile device in addition to distributing coupons for discounts via online transactions. In addition, we would also suggest that based on recent research from eMarketer, that Vans deploy increased use of photos or videos to encourage engagement rates with social media users, which will ultimately lead to additional online store traffic.

Rationale

Our team, CLECK Research Foundation has conducted much research by methods of survey, focus group as well as content analysis. We gathered and subsequently analyzed this data to better illustrate the relationship created and maintained by Vans “Off the Wall” and its publics. Vans’ target market includes male and females ages 18-22. We have portrayed the current attitude of Vans’ publics by exhibiting the use of these methods.

The survey was administered to and responded to by ten males and thirteen females. The sample of people who completed the survey was predominantly Caucasian and has completed some college. After studying its results, we have concluded that all survey participants are familiar with Vans. This demonstrates great brand recognition within our target demographic. The survey also displayed that consumer satisfaction was acceptable but not excellent. Seven of the 23 people awarded Vans between one and seven out of ten in customer satisfaction. In addition, this group of people is heavy users of social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn which affords another outlet for which this group can be targeted.

Further aspects of our target market were analyzed by way of a focus group. Its results portrayed that the participants are attracted to the Vans brand mainly because of its shoes. All participants agreed that when thinking of Vans, what first enters their minds is shoes. Many participants were drawn and attracted to the shoes because of the seemingly endless variety of colors that Vans offers. Also, these people like the “cool and cute” style of the Vans products. We’ve gathered that the participants choose to wear them because they are comfortable, cool, inexpensive and high in quality. College students ages 18-22 are always searching for deals as well which puts Vans at the top of the list when considering price and quality. There is also great feedback from users of the Vans online store. The site is easily navigable and offers many different options, even shoe customization.

The surveys and focus group have been successful in identifying what the target market already loves about Vans as well as what needs to be altered or improved upon within the company. In effect, the current relationship between Vans and its publics can be enhanced and made superior in comparison with its competitors.

In terms of content analysis, we have executed newspaper and magazine publications as well as a television broadcast in the effort to increase brand recognition, interest and excitement

with the Vans brand. By being featured in various snowboard and skateboarding magazines, and by using professional snowboarders such as Shawn White as Vans endorsers, the Vans products and name will be more strongly associated with these activities and people which was Vans' goal from the start of the corporation. Because our target demographic is so technologically engrossed and active within the social media world, we have created new Facebook and Twitter pages where consumers can go to view product launches and sales.

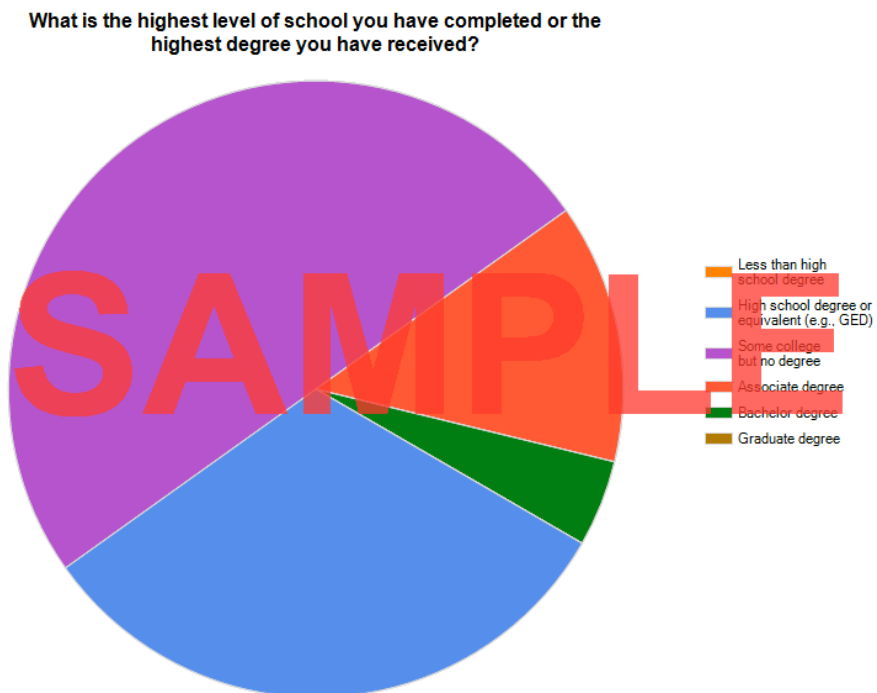
We have answered the question of why this research has been conducted; to measure the relationship, created and maintained by communication, between Vans and its publics. Through the methods of survey, focus group and content analysis, we have clearly illustrated this relationship as well as the attitude of Vans' target market towards the brand. After having conducted and analyzed our findings, the Vans brand can improve this relationship and attitude, sequentially, bettering their company for greater success.

Appendix A: Survey

1. How old are you?
2. Are you male or female?

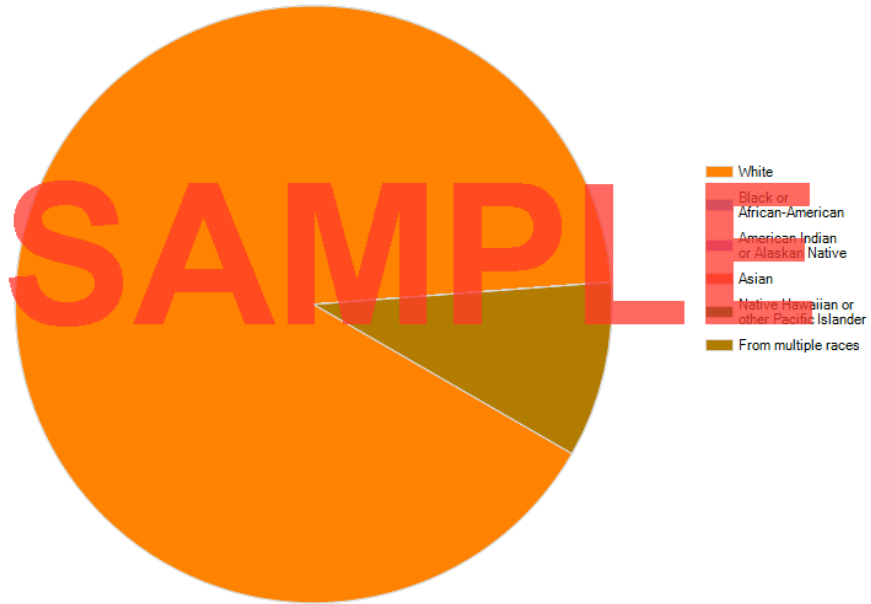


3. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?



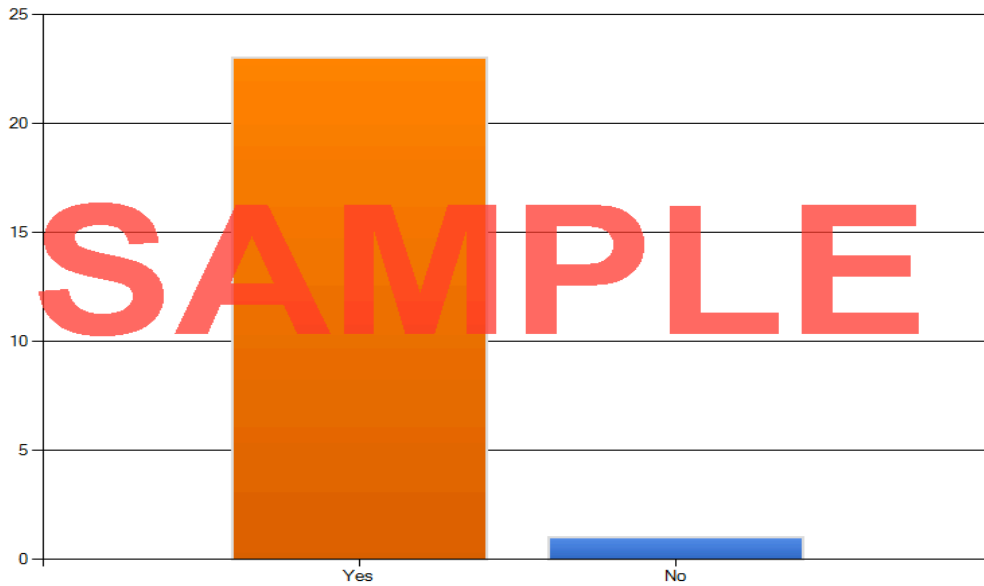
4. Are you White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander, or some other race?

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5. Are you familiar with Vans?

Are you familiar with Vans?



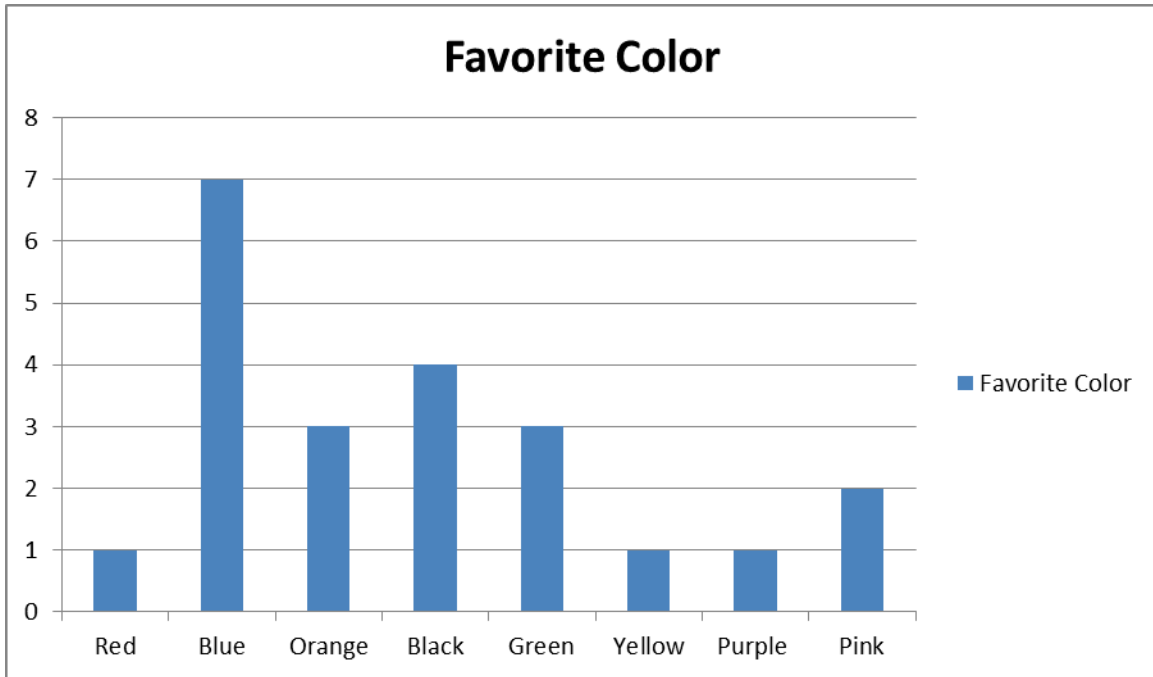
6. Do you shop online for clothing or shoes?



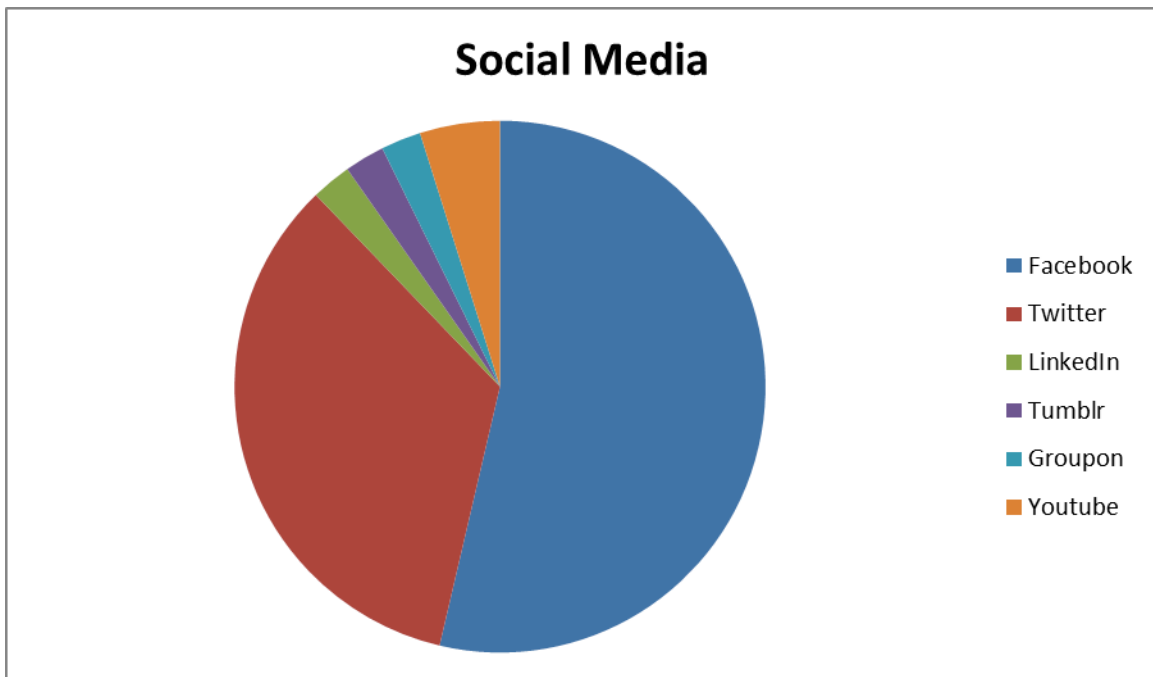
7. How would you rate your experience with Vans on a scale from 1 to 10? 1 being poor and 10 being very satisfied



8. What is your favorite color?



9. Which social media networks do you use?



Appendix B: Focus Groups

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Vans?
 - a. Shoes?
 - b. Quality?
 - c. Clothing?
 - d. Sports?
2. How do you view your clothing style?
 - a. A statement/ a lifestyle choice?
 - b. No preference?
3. Do you own any vans shoes or clothing?
 - a. If so,
 - i. What attracted you to the Vans brand? They are comfortable and look cool
 - ii. Did you consider any other brands for the same purchase? Totes. I looked at nikes, globes, dvs, and quiksilver
 - b. If not, why?
4. Which of these activities apply to your lifestyle?
 - a. Surfing?
 - b. Skating?
 - c. Music?
 - d. Snowboarding?
 - e. BMX/ biking?
5. What first attracts you to a brand?
 - a. Colors?
 - b. Reputation?
 - c. Friends?
 - d. Media?
 - e. The brand itself?
6. What is most important to you in deciding brand loyalty?
 - a. Price?
 - b. Quality of product?
 - c. Convenience?
 - d. Peers/ Social standing?
7. Have you ever shopped for Vans online?
 - a. If so, did you visit the Vans website or online store? yes
 - b. What were you impressions of the site? Easy to use
 - c. Did you eventually buy a Vans product online? I did buy them online and they were awesome!
8. Do you follow any companies using the internet?
 - a. If so, what is most likely to attract you to product or companies website?

- i. Easy navigation?
 - ii. Shopping?
 - iii. Videos/ music?
 - iv. Linked to social media?
- 9. Do you frequently buy online?
 - a. Gift certificates?
 - b. Clothes/Shoes?
 - c. Food?
 - d. Products?
- 10. Do you look for deals?
 - a. Coupons?
 - b. Compare other prices?
 - c. Are you willing to wait on a purchase for a good deal?