

Analysis of Vans Marketing Strategy

Chenxi Wu^{1,a,*}

¹ North Broward Preparatory School, Coconut Creek, FL 33073, the USA

a.Chenxi_WU@mynbps.org

*corresponding author

Abstract: Nowadays, more and more sports brands appear in the market, and different brand marketing strategies will bring different results. The purpose of this case study is to explore the marketing strategies of Vans and find out its shortcoming. This paper adopts the method of literature analysis. By reviewing and summarizing the papers on the marketing case analysis of Vans or the marketing analysis of fashion sports brands in the past five years, this paper summarizes the marketing strategies of Vans brand in various aspects of disagreement and analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of various strategies. The findings show that this brand has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of the product is that it always co-branding with other artists or brands. The disadvantage is the product itself, the price and the way to sell the products. To summarize, Vans can develop an effective strategy by modifying its issues from different sides. The suggestions are that its products need to be more innovative which can get noticed by the public again. Besides, the company should appropriately reduce the price of specific products. Finally, this brand should consider investing more money into the product itself to improve product quality.

Keywords: Vans, marketing strategy, 4P theory

1. Introduction

The modern world of business is constantly evolving and to remain competitive, companies must continually analyze and update their marketing strategies. This is especially important for companies in the fashion industry, where trends and customer preferences are constantly changing. If their products are out of style, their brand will be abandoned by the customers very quickly. The analysis of the marketing strategy of Vans is an important topic to explore because the company is one of the most recognizable and influential brands in the world. Vans has been able to create a new era of extreme sports culture, especially skateboard culture. Connecting with consumers through their unique designs and creative marketing strategies, this brand has been a hit in recent years. The general methods and tactics that may be used to improve the evolution of other companies and brands can be gained by examining the different strategies that have made Vans a success or their inadequate points. Vans is a well-known American skateboarding and lifestyle brand that was founded in 1966 [1]. Vans' social history is intertwined with the skateboarding and surf culture of Southern California in the 1970s, which acted as a catalyst for the brand's growth and popularity. As a result, Vans has long been associated with a relaxed, casual lifestyle that values individualism and creativity. In terms of industry background, Vans operates in the highly competitive footwear and apparel industry, which is subject to rapidly changing trends. Vans has adapted to these changes over the years by expanding

its product line to include a broader range of shoes, clothing, and accessories. Vans' economic background is distinguished by its consistent growth and profitability. The company's revenue and net income have increased in recent years, thanks in part to its expansion into international markets and successful collaborations with other brands and designers. Finally, Vans has positioned itself in the skateboarding and action sports markets, while also appealing to a broader audience of casual wearers. Vans has a strong brand identity and a loyal customer base, which has enabled the company to weather economic downturns and changing market conditions. Vans' social, industry, economic, and market backgrounds have all contributed to the company's success as a well-known American brand. This research will further our understanding of how to develop effective marketing strategies to build brand recognition and remain the customers' loyalty to the brand. By exploring the different elements of Vans' marketing strategy, which include problems in product marketing, disadvantages in channel marketing, problems in product price and promotion strategy, the company can gain greater insight into how to effectively engage with customers and create a successful marketing plan instead of gradually losing their customers. The method to explore this topic is to search the official information online and combine it with the author's own thoughts about it, then put them together and analyze it. This paper analyzes the Vans' product marketing, channel marketing, product price and promotion strategy.

2. Background Analysis

Vans is a company headquartered in the United States, that designs, manufactures and sells sportswear or shoes, including skateboarding, surfing, and other sport types. This brand was founded in 1966, and has developed from a small store in Anaheim, California, USA to a current international trend sports brand exported to all parts of the world. This brand is famous for its classic black and white checkerboard pattern, the iconic "off the wall" slogan and the sponsorship of famous skateboarders like Tony Alva and Steve Caballero. Vans' original intention and purpose is to create shoes that can provide more traction and cushioning than other shoes on the market to facilitate some special extreme sports. To meet this requirement, they use a kind of shoe sole which is very similar to the pattern of waffles to provide traction. Coupled with lightweight and durable canvas upper, the company soon made a sensation in the skateboard industry. This successful case led to the launch of the Checkerboard slip-on in 1976. This design became an instant hit, and it is still one of the most iconic design styles of the company nowadays. The slogan "Off the Wall" was introduced in the early 1980s and quickly became a brand symbol. This sentence reflects the spirit of the Vans brand, which is all about having fun, expressing yourself, and living life to the fullest. The company's activity "Live on the Wall" also further reflects this idea. They encourage fans and customers to share their own stories through some creative projects and artistic activities. Vans brand also insists on giving back to society and supporting sports events like the Vans Warped Tour, the Vans Triple Crown Series, and the Vans US Open of Surfing. In addition to its commitment to the action sports community, Vans also focuses on sustainability and environmental responsibility. The company has a comprehensive sustainable development plan, including the use of environmentally friendly materials and production processes to reduce waste and support sustainable forestry development. Vans has always been the leader of action sports enterprises, by 2020, its revenue has increased by more than 25%. Moreover, it continues to expand new markets and expand its product range, such as more clothing and accessories. In addition to products, Vans is also enlarging its popularity through publicity. It constantly promotes its products through social media and e-commerce. More importantly, it continues to invest in innovative technologies. The company launched 3D printing shoes for the first time in 2020. Their unique design and attitude to promoting sustainable development have consolidated their status as one of the popular brands in the world.

3. Marketing Strategies Analysis

3.1. Product Marketing Strategy Analysis

The following article is about the analysis of the disadvantages of Vans shoes themselves. The first point is that Vans' shoes make customers' feet unhealthy [2]. Because the product is rubber tread, it is not easy to change the shape. When a customer wears it, the front half of the foot will be too tight. After taking it off, the customers' feet feel uncomfortable. These problems can lead to various foot problems, such as blisters, paronychia. Another problem is that uncomfortable foot feeling will cause customers to wear the soles too quickly when walking with shoes almost every day. This will cause damage to the shoe itself, including the wear and thinning of the sole and cause the brittleness of the upper. This means that the shoes may need to be replaced more often, which can be an issue for those looking for a pair of shoes that will last for a longer period. All these will shorten the service life of shoes, thus affecting the cost performance of shoes.

Another disadvantage of the product is that its positioning is narrow [3]. Most shoes produced by Vans are positioned as skateboarding shoes. This will limit the publicity of this brand. Although it is a highly popular sports brand, due to the positioning of its shoes, it will not be often regarded as a symbol of top fashion, so its appeal is limited. Vans is famous for its simple and eye-catching skateboard design, also as a symbol of this brand. However, this can also limit the development of the brand. When the classic style is on trend, the company will invest heavily in the same style. This will lead Vans to lack of different styles and features like other brands. The brand has always used the same material as the sole material, without giving customers the right to choose their own style, which will make them lose a lot of customers who they could have. Just because the checkerboard style skateboard shoes are popular all over the country, it has begun to vigorously promote the brand of skateboard shoes as a commodity sales positioning. So now when people mention this brand, the first word that pops out of their minds is skateboarding shoes, which could have developed more positioning to attract customers with different trend choices.

3.2. Channel Marketing Strategy Analysis

Almost every brand has two major ways to sell their products: offline chain store stores and online stores. Vans also use these two ways as the main selling methods. These two ways both have some weak points. The offline chain stores will be limited to a certain geographical area, and it is difficult to expand the new sales range. It is not convenient for some customers to buy goods in the store far away [4]. Lots of the stores in America are located in California [5]. Some stores even located in the region customers do not know the existence of the store, like the area ten kilometers away from the town center which leads to the reduction of the purchase volume. Moreover, the choice of offline chain stores is in restriction. Because the stores have limited spaces to lay out the products, and the company can only provide some specific goods to different stores, it cannot meet all customers' purchase needs. This may limit their appeal to customers. The second aspect is about fake online stores. It is difficult to distinguish the real and fake products when purchasing Vans shoes online by using unofficial websites. Because many fake shoes look very similar to genuine ones, it is difficult for non-professionals to discern the real from the fake. And now more and more channels on e-commerce websites can find Vans shoe stores, and their prices are often cheaper than authentic ones to attract customers to buy. Counterfeit shoes are usually made of cheap materials. Their quality, comfort and durability are not as good as authentic ones, resulting in foot injury when the shoes do not fit customers' feet. These fake goods do not give customers a good impression of purchase and damage the brand reputation, which can lead to the loss of brand reputation and income.

3.3. Analysis of Product Price and Promotion Strategy

The third area is about the product price and promotion strategy. Vans needs to give more consideration to the product price. Their shoes' general prices are between 60 dollars to 80 dollars [6]. In contrast, their promotion strategies have great advantages. The price of Vans shoes has always been controversial. For example, a Chinese brand Warrior's general price is between 15 dollars to 20 dollars. These customers who think the price of shoes is too high have their own reasons: they think that Vans shoes are not significantly different from other cheap brands in terms of quality and design, such as Chinese brand Warrior [7]. Their appearances are similar, but the prices are several times lower. For those customers who want to find cheap substitutes, Vans cannot be a popular brand, they are not willing to pay higher fees just for the brand's name.

However, Vans has done a very great job in the promotion strategy. Its most common means of promotion is co-branding with other artists or well-known brands. One of the most successful co-branding collaborations that Vans has done is its collaboration with Disney. Through this collaboration, Vans has been able to use the popularity and nostalgia of Disney characters by creating a huge number of products using characters such as Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, and others. The collections have been a huge hit with fans and have been sold out in a short period. In addition to Disney, Vans has also collaborated with some of the world's most influential artists, such as Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and Keith Haring [8]. These collaborations make Vans be able to use the artist's unique style and create products that appeal to a wide range of customers. Vans has also cooperated with other famous brands such as Supreme and Off-White, which have helped the brand to reach a wider audience and gain exposure to new markets. Overall, Vans' co-branding strategy has been highly successful and beneficial for both Vans and its partners. Through this strategy, Vans has been able to gain exposure to new markets, tap into new customers, and create unique and exclusive products.

4. Suggestions

Based on the disadvantages above, the article will put forward some solutions about them. First, Vans can produce more innovative products. According to the article, product innovation is important in sports marketing [9]. Its iconic design is deeply loved by customers, which is their advantage. So, they can take advantage of this point and combine the latest technology and materials to create more stylish products. This can make the company more competitive because there are more and more brands of skateboard shoes on the market, and the competition is becoming more and fiercer. By attracting new customers, they can expand their market. In addition to attracting customers, innovative products can also provide new functions, better meet customer needs and preferences, and improve customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Innovative products can also enhance the brand image because Vans has always been positioned as a company dedicated to providing cutting-edge and high-quality products. Developing new and innovative products can further enhance the brand image. In addition, the most intuitive impact is to increase their income because of the opening of new markets and sources of income. It can increase the company's profitability over time.

The second point is that Vans can reduce the price of specific products because it can increase their sales [10]. The price of classic and popular models remains the same. At the same time, Vans can create some new categories and lower the price to attract some customers. Some customers who thought Vans were too expensive would not be willing to buy. However, if the price goes down, more customers will show up. At the same time, it has also increased brand awareness, because customers who buy the product for the first time think it is the type of shoes they like, maybe they will make a second purchase or recommend it to people around them. In addition, lowering the price of specific products can increase their competitive advantage. They can provide low-price skateboard shoes to

create selling points and take it as an advantage of the company. So, the brand can attract customers who are still hesitating about what to choose between Vans and other competitors. Another good thing is that selling at lower prices can help the company sell some products that are not very popular. If the company sells at a low price, it can also get more storage space to reserve space for future new products.

The third point is that Vans can invest more money into the product itself to improve the product quality. This should be the worthiest investment of the brand because the quality of the product will affect all aspects of the brand. First, product quality can be improved to increase sales. When customers are satisfied with the product after purchase, they will have the will to continue to purchase next time. They can also create a good reputation for the brand and attract new customers to buy or recommend it to family and friends. In short, it can improve Vans' popularity and increase sales. Moreover, the increase in the number of buyers and the improvement of brand reputation will have a positive impact on the brand, which can improve the customer's repurchase rate of products and establish a strong brand image. For Vans itself, by improving product quality, it can improve the company's own production process and reduce the possibility to return and exchange goods from dissatisfied customers. When the product quality is improved, it means that there will be fewer defects in the shoes, the customer acceptance rate will be improved, and fewer returns will appear. This will improve the company's work efficiency and eliminate unnecessary time, human resources, and time to repair defects. This can help Vans reduce costs and improve profitability. All the above can help the company have a competitive advantage. Especially in modern society, the competition of fashion sports brands is quite fierce. The brand with novel design and good quality can stand out from it. And improving product quality is just an indispensable part. When customers think that a brand of shoes is fashionable, comfortable, and high-quality, they are more willing to choose this product.

5. Conclusion

This paper gives a brief introduction to the background, brand concept, business scope and development status of Vans in order. Then it analyzes different problems in different aspects. The first is the problem of product marketing strategy. The shoes themselves are too easy to open and grind. The product positioning is narrow, and most shoes are categorized as skateboard shoes. Next is the problem of the company's channel marketing: there are not many styles of shoes in the offline chain stores, which are not enough to meet the needs of customers, and it is easy to buy fake goods through online unofficial websites. The disadvantages and advantages of product price and promotion strategy. The disadvantage is that the price of Vans shoes is higher than that of Chinese brands Warrior who sells the same style of shoes. The advantage is that Vans often co-names with other artists, which can attract customers to buy. According to the above questions, three suggestions for Vans are summarized. Vans needs to have a lot of innovative products to get public attention again. The brand can appropriately reduce the product price. The company should invest more money into the product itself to improve the product quality. This paper points out some marketing problems of Vans brand and can provide some reference for the future development of the company. This research will help the company gain some inspiration on improving marketing strategies, and help customers better understand the current strengths and weaknesses of Vans. There must be deficiencies in this study. Unfortunately, this article failed to study consumer analysis and macroeconomic analysis. However, in the future, the research can be strived to obtain more information and a deeper understanding of the brand to complete the writing.

References

- [1] Vans Homepage, <https://www.vans.com/en-us/company/about>, last accessed 2023/03/26.
- [2] 30 types of marketing strategies, <http://eprints.cihanuniversity.edu.iq/id/eprint/252>, last accessed 2023/03/26.

- [3] Hajira, B., Sneha, R.: *Rural marketing strategies in India: Recent trends*. *East Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 8(1), 1527-1536 (2022).
- [4] Steffen, A.: *Second-hand market participation as part of a firm's responsible marketing strategy. Dealing with socially responsible consumers: Studies in marketing*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 325-338 (2023).
- [5] Gleim, Mark R., et al.: *Is doing right all that matters in sustainability marketing? The role of fit in sustainable marketing strategies*. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 70 (2023).
- [6] Liu, Y., Zhang, D.: *Analysis on cultural development and marketing strategies of high street fashion brands: A case study of the brand fear of god*. *Scientific and Social Research* 4(3): 124-131 (2022).
- [7] Warrior Shoes. *Walk into Warrior*, <http://www.warriorshoes.com/>, last accessed 2023/03/26.
- [8] Malviya, Sanket R.: *Marketing strategies and consumer satisfaction*. Ashok Yakkaldevi (2022).
- [9] Zhang, J.: *Research on the characteristics of trendy brand clothing consumption behavior and the formulation of marketing strategies* (2023).
- [10] ENT 530 social media portfolio: *Vans Waffer*, <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/53413>, last accessed 2023/03/26.