

**VON DUTCH Marketing Plan**

**Spring/Summer 2021**

Danielle Hueston

New York City College of Technology

BUF 3310: Contemporary Designers & Lux Markets

Professor Devon Jackson

December 14, 2020

Von Dutch is a global clothing brand that was founded in 1999 in Los Angeles, California by Michael Cassel and Robert Vaughn (Von Dutch, 2020). The brand was named after Kenneth Robert Howard, who also went by Von Dutch, Dutch, or J.L. Bachs (“The Von Dutch Story, 2005). Howard’s father, Wally Howard, was a sign painter, who taught him how to letter and pinstripe professionally by the age of ten (2005). Howard grew up to become an artist, mechanic, pinstriper, gunsmith and metal fabricator who eventually became known as one of the originators to create a distinctive style of pinstriping (2005). His striping was the first modern technique to become popularized (2005). Kenneth Howard is also credited with being the first to paint stripes and flames on cars and motorcycles in the 1940s and 1950s and being the “godfather of Kustom Kulture” (Thomas, 2003). One of his most famous drawings became known as Von Dutch’s signature “Flying Eyeball” design (Top Hats, 2020). He was inspired by the Macedonian and Egyptian cultures and wanted to convey the idea that "the eye of heaven knows everything and sees everything" (2020). His beliefs in reincarnation and his lifestyle as a whole influenced many of the brand’s famous trucker cap designs (2020). The french designer Christian Audigier helped make a name for the brand up until 2004. Currently Earl Pickens is Von Dutch’s new executive director of design (Von Dutch, 2020). His goal for the brand continues to be a mix between luxury fashion and streetwear (2020). Throughout the early 2000s Von Dutch was worn heavily by A-list celebrities and Hollywood influencers such as Paris Hilton, Brittany Spears and Justin Timberlake. Von Dutch has stood as a leading brand in both pop culture and music for over two decades.

Von Dutch’s major mission is to continue to be in the forefront of the fashion industry and stand amongst the other innovators of fashion. According to its “Statement of Equality”, the brand is also passionate about advocating for human equality (“Statement of Equality”, 2020).

The company wants to influence and make a change, while helping to put a stop to racial prejudices across the world (2020). Von Dutch vowed to do its part to ensure the humane rights of everyone, regardless of race, religion and/or gender (2020). The company has also partook in several initiatives in efforts of aiding African Americans and assures there is no place for anytype of inequality within its company (2020). Overall the company goal is to be one of the leading forces of street style and luxury fashion while being fair and just to all.

Like every company Von Dutch has its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. One of its major strengths is that it is very popular amongst celebrities and influencers without the company even having to pursue any partnerships. This gives good brand exposure. Another strength is that the brand is known for its iconic designs. Noticeability is always a good thing for a brand to have. If customers are able to look at a product and know immediately whose product it is, that shows the building of customer relationships. When customers feel like they have a relationship with a brand they are more likely to repurchase from it. A huge weakness of Von Dutch is that the company's prices are a bit more expensive than its competitors. It also does not utilize social media and advertising as much as they should to build brand awareness and attract more customers. Von Dutch also does not carry much stock, which leaves many of its items sold out on its website. This could lead to what could have been a potential customer taking their business to a competitor who easily keeps more stock available and on hand. Also although the company has an official instagram, Facebook and Twitter account they are not very active. An opportunity for the brand it would be participating in partnerships with influencers. Although influencers tend to wear the brand without being paid to promote it, going in this direction will definitely build the company's brand exposure tremendously. This will also allow the company to break into new markets and even add value to its merchandise. Today, sales are so heavily

influenced by social media and what a customer's favorite influencer is wearing that this could really help boost sales for the company. Another opportunity for the future may be to open more physical stores. Currently the company only has three storefronts. One is on Melrose Avenue in California which has been temporarily closed due to COVID-19. The other two are located in Bali, Indonesia and France. Statistics have proven that since the coronavirus pandemic's huge outbreak in March of 2020 many people have found themselves shopping more online. Depending on how long this change may affect in store shoppers, and whether the government will be enforcing another lockdown could really make this opportunity a bad risk. A threat for Von Dutch is that some of its competitors are more up to date with promoting on social media and are more active with their accounts. Also due to the fact Von Dutch does not make the typical classical clothing pieces, it is likely that the brand's signature designs can become a fad to fashion.

Von Dutch's target market is males and females ages eighteen to thirty. They are most likely in college or have just graduated and on their way to pursuing a career. Its target customer is also likely to be a part of the middle class because although the prices are not as high as Christian Dior and Versace, they are still pretty pricey and tend to be more expensive than an item from Forever 21 or H&M. As mentioned previously the brand does not discriminate between race, religion or ethnicity. However, they most likely like to keep up to date on the latest fashion trends, like to read fashion blogs and/or magazines, and watch lookbooks and style videos on YouTube. This target group also likes to dress comfortably, yet fashionably.

Ed Hardy is a major competitor for Von Dutch. Like Von Dutch, Ed Hardy's Trucker hats are really popular within the fashion community. The two brands also shared the same designer Christain Audigier. Both Ed Hardy and Von Dutch are known for their innovative artwork, as Ed Hardy strives to bring the colorful aspects of tattoo culture to fashion (West, 2012). Both brands also have similar target markets. Ed Hardy targets youth of all genders ages 15-30 (2012). Ed Hardy also considers itself to be a major contributor to Pop Culture Fashion (2012). An advantage Ed Hardy has over Von Dutch is its prices are less expensive. An example would be that Ed Hardy Trucker Hats range from about \$30-\$60 while Von Dutch Trucker Hats range from \$49- \$89. Ed Hardy also either carries a bigger stock range than Von Dutch or Von Dutch just sells out of their items faster. While viewing both websites "Out of Stock" was seen multiple times on the Von Dutch website compared to none on Ed Hardy's. An advantage Von Dutch has over Ed Hardy is they have more of a following on social media and are a bit more active. Ed Hardy has a little about 23,300 followers on Instagram in comparison to Von Dutch with 79,100 followers. One of Ed Hardy's marketing strategies is the Instagram store and 'Shop Now Button', something that Von Dutch does not utilize at all. Ed Hardy has also partnered with the tattoo shop United By Ink in order to increase its brand exposure. I found no brand partnerships with Von Dutch.

Another competitor of Von Dutch is Juicy Couture. Contrary to both Von Dutch and Ed Hardy the Juicy Couture brand is more targeted towards female sixteen to twenty-five. Both Von Dutch and Juicy Couture have been noted to make sweat suits fashionable. Prices are fairly similar to those of Von Dutch. However Von Dutch does not nearly come close to Juicy Couture in terms of reach as Juicy Couture has about 760,000 followers on Instagram compared to Von

Dutch. Juicy Couture is also way more active on social media and also uses the Instagram shop feature. Juicy Couture also focuses on doing a lot of partnerships such as its recent collaborations with the Kappa and Parade brands which were really successful.

One of our business initiatives is to improve and modernize our Instagram account so it can become a top source for customers to access information (collaborations, sales, etc.) regarding the Von Dutch brand and help improve website sales. This includes increasing our follower count which is currently at a rank of 522,616th (Social Blade, 2020) to at least 500,000th. As well as posting more frequently, at least once a day, until the drop of the Spring/Summer collection on February 6th, 2021. The goal is to double the amount of daily sales and to get more visitors on the website. Increasing our engagement rank on Instagram which is currently 6,211,003rd, follower rank is another goal. Building connections with potential customers through our social media platform in order to boost sales is another goal. In order to communicate this the first brand partnership I chose was influencer marketing. Since the target age group for the brand is eighteen to thirty years of age and about 90% of adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine use social media (Clement, 2020), I think this will be the most beneficial partnership for the brand. I have chosen Destiny Bailey also known as Dess Dior as the macro-influencer for this partnership. With over 1.1 million followers on Instagram, 58.4 thousand followers on TikTok and 63.8 thousand subscribers on YouTube, I feel like this rapper/social media influencer would be beneficial for increasing brand exposure. Her niches are fashion and music, which are pretty much the definition of the Von Dutch brand. For the next seven weeks Von Dutch will send her one outfit per week to promote on each of her social media handles in exchange for payment.

Another business initiative is to work on building new customer relationships while still keeping the interests of old ones. This inevitably should help increase our revenue and boost sales projections of our Spring/Summer 2021 collection. The major goal of this would be to expand Von Dutch's markets and customers. In order to communicate this the second partnership we chose is Co-branding. Von Dutch will be collaborating with Off-White to create a new line of trucker hats in order to provide additional value to both groups of customers. Off-White is an Italian luxury fashion label so this allows Von Dutch to enter another portion of the European Market and access a larger number of consumers. Off-White currently has a significantly bigger reach than Von Dutch with a total of 10.9 million Instagram followers, 205.8 thousand Twitter followers and 248.7 Facebook likes. As Off-White is another streetwear meets luxury brand, our current consumers should continue to be interested in the new product and Off-White's market should also be interested in the new collection also.

Given the research that was conducted in order to complete this marketing plan it is highly likely that the partnerships we have chosen for Von Dutch's Spring/ Summer 2021 selling season will be effective for achieving our business initiatives and goals.

## References

Clement, J. (2020, November 23). U.S. social reach by age 2019. Retrieved December 15, 2020, from

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/471370/us-adults-who-use-social-networks-age/>

Social Blade. (2020). Von Dutch's Instagram Stats Summary Profile (Social Blade Instagram Statistics). Retrieved December 16, 2020, from

<https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/vondutch>

Thomas, K. (2003, August 26). Von Dutch. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from

[https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/2003-08-25-von-dutch\\_x.htm](https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/2003-08-25-von-dutch_x.htm)

Top Hats. (2020, November 20). History of Von Dutch. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from <https://www.tophats-shop.com/en/blog/history-of-von-dutch-b16.html>

The Von Dutch Story. (2005). Retrieved December 14, 2020, from

[http://kustomrama.com/wiki/Von\\_Dutch](http://kustomrama.com/wiki/Von_Dutch)

Von Dutch. (2020). History. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from

<https://vondutch.com/pages/history>

Von Dutch. (2020). Statement of Equality. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from

<https://vondutch.com/pages/statement-of-equality>

West, M. (2012, November 05). Social Media Analysis: Ed Hardy. Retrieved December 15, 2020, from <https://www.slideshare.net/masonwest/social-media-analysis-ed-hardy>

