Hughes #43 Launch

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Introduction

This report will outline the strategic brand partnership between Vans Apparel and Quinn Hughes with the Hughes #43 shoe launch. This product will be a substyle of the 1998 Vans Knu Skool shoe, which recently relaunched in 2023 due to its initial popularity (French). The limited availability of these shoes makes them the perfect product for a collaboration launch. Quinn Hughes is the Captain of the NHL team, the Vancouver Canucks. 25-year-old Hughes recently gained popularity and recognition across North America by being the first Canuck in History to receive the Norris Trophy as the 2024 recipient. This award is highly prestigious and given to the best defenseman in the league. The Hughes #43 collaboration will demonstrate how Vans can increase its sales and brand recognition amongst its target consumers in North America. Through strategic alignment, financial data, and industry analytics, this report will highlight how Vans can increase its brand value through this exclusive product launch.

Current Market Analysis

Relevant factors and trends

Donald Trump's re-election poses many risks to the US athletic Shoe industry due to increased political tensions in China and the proposed tariffs on imports (ABC). These tariffs could significantly increase the cost of shoe manufacturing, potentially leading to a rise in shoe prices in America. The shoe industry, which already operates under strict labour laws and safety regulations to ensure product quality, could face even more challenges in maintaining these standards.

Furthermore, the US is in a recession, dramatically decreasing consumers' disposable income, as reflected in a decrease in US Vans sales in fiscal year 2024 (annual report). Due to an increase in

inflation, consumers are less likely to spend a premium on shoes, especially if they already own numerous pairs. However, it's important to note that social factors, including an increase in sustainability awareness and health-conscious consumers due to rising obesity rates in the US, will play a significant role in driving the growth of the athletic shoe industry. To address sustainability desires, companies have shifted towards more eco-friendly manufacturing to reduce their carbon footprint. Shoes are more commonly comprised from recycled materials so major corporations can reduce appeal to ethically conscious consumers. Innovative shoe technology and innovations such as virtual shoe try-ons have also increased, creating the need for brands to stay up to date-and meet consumers' evolving expectations.

Athletic Shoe Industry

The athletic shoe industry in the US is comprised of a few massive players. The industry is about 26.9 billion USD and grew by a CAGR of 5% over the past five years[1]. Limited edition shoe collaborations have significantly increased over the past few years and are often sold out instantly. Men's shoes comprise 50% of the market share, with revenues over \$13 billion (Exhibit 1). The industry requires low capital investment but experiences high volatility and competition. The market has seen stable growth and expansion in recent years as athletic shoes have become popular streetwear as well as functional for sports. Over the next five years, CAGR is expected to grow by 1.5% due to the industry prioritizing consumer-centric products.

Market Conditions

Competitor analysis

Converse:

Converse is an American lifestyle footwear company founded in Boston in 1908. Like Vans, Converse's mission is to empower youth by inspiring self-expression through individualism. Converse, originally the Converse Rubber Company, was designed for street culture and targeted consumers involved in skateboarding, basketball, and other arts. Converse "All Star" shoes were initially made in 1990 and are now wildly recognized and a top sellers. Converse's global popularity sky-rocketed during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where the US team won gold in the Olympic's first basketball game wearing All Star Converse. Salesman Chuck Taylor's involvement with basketball secured Converse as the official basketball shoe of the Olympic games from 1938 to 1968 and had 76% of the basketball shoe market by the 1960s [1]. In 2003, Nike Inc. acquired Converse, increasing financial stability and expanding its global outreach. In fiscal year 2024, converse generated over USD 2 billion in revenues and operates 80 stores in the US.

Nike:

Nike is the world's leading footwear and apparel corporation. In 2024, Nike's revenue was over USD 51 billion. With its "Just Do It" slogan and numerous high-profile athlete sponsorships, it's tough for other companies to compete with its success. Over the last fiscal year, advertising and promotional costs exceeded \$4 billion USD. Nike, owned by NIKE Inc., operates about 1,045 retail stores globally. Due to their style and similar target market, Nike acquired Converse, which is Van's closest competing shoe brand. NIKE Inc. makes up 48.2% of the athletic shoe market. Due to Nike's size and strong brand reputation, consumers are very brand loyal. Nike has expanded its consumer base by combining comfort with performance to apparel to a broader audience. Nike also owns other brands, such as Bauer Hockey, which has a strong presence in

the NHL. Nike attributes its research, design, and development as crucial success factors[5]. Nike uses market intelligence to design innovative products and meet consumer preferences.

Adidas

Adidas is Europe's largest footwear company and second worldwide. Adidas was founded in Germany and has one of the world's most recognized logos, which has three stripes. In the 3rd quarter of 2024, Adidas spent 724 million Euros on its marketing and point-of-sale expenses. Adidas's target demographic consists of highly active individuals aged 20-29. Although Europe, the Middle East, and Africa comprise the largest segment of Adidas's net sales, North America still holds 24% (Statistica). Adidas recently partnered with celebrities such as Kanya West with the Yeezy line, which saw immense popularity. Adidas' revenue triples that of VF Corporation, its closest competitor after Nike. Addidas's marketing strategy emphasizes innovation, which appeals to tech-savvy consumers. In 2017, Adidas released Futurecraft 4D, which uses athlete data and 3D printing to create personalized shoes for consumers.

Customer analysis

Vans targets consumers aged 16-34 who enjoy skateboarding, action sports, and self-expression. As highlighted by VF, Vans targets the Active segment and generates the most revenue in North America. Vans is known for youth culture and targeting younger consumers that sit at the center of action sports". Vans thrive by offering consumers personalized experiences, such as customizable shoes, which have increased brand engagement. Consumers also engage with the brand through their collaboration on Roblox with "Vans World," a virtual skateboarding game where customers can design unique vans shoes and customize their avatar in merchandise. Vans World has been an enormous success, having over 117 million players.

Company analysis

Vans, originally Van Doren Rubber Company, is a global apparel and footwear company founded in California in 1966[3]. Vans grew in popularity among Skateboarders due to its rugged style and sticky sole. In 1977, Vans released their "Old Skool" shoe, their first shoe with the now globally recognized side stripe. In 1911, Vans went public, and in 2004, it was acquired by VF Corporation. After seeing a decrease in revenues, VF appointed Bracken Darren as their new CEO in 2023 and is undertaking many C-suite changes. Vans recently appointed Sun Chloe as their latest Global Brand President. Sun has experience working as Lululemon's Head of Product. VF has the 3rd largest portion of revenue worldwide, after Nike and Adidas, in the Athletic shoe industry.

Vans products are available globally through chain stores, specialty stores, independent distributors, and licensors. In 2024, VF's advertising expense was 8% of its revenue, at \$835.8 million. Vans sponsored non-profits committed to equity and mental health. Vans global brand revenues dropped by 24% in fiscal 2024, and VF, in total, had a net income loss of over one million.

Vans is currently undergoing a "turnaround", as Darren expressed in VF's 2024 annual report. They are "simplifying (their) product line-up, introducing a sustained level of investment in design and innovation". Vans implemented an inventory reset during the second half of fiscal year 2024 to create more space for new products. Throughout the year, Vans saw a strong performance of their latest product, the Knu Skool shoe, which became the second biggest-selling franchise globally. In terms of marketing, Vans simplified their marketing strategy towards fewer campaigns with deeper meanings to drive higher ROIs. They also launched an

innovative new collection called "OTW" (Off The Wall) to increase brand excitement. In FY25, VF's revenue is expected to grow chronologically each quarter.

The large-scale cost reduction program will improve the company's cost structure, operating efficiency, and profitability. Vans is currently on track to deliver annualized fixed-cost savings by removing spending in non-strategic areas of the business. Cost reduction remains a crucial focus for Vans, even while driving growth.

Strategy and Recommendations

Strategy

The strategy is to release the Hughes #43 shoe in the colour blue to increase Vans Canadian Market share with the endorsement of Vancouver Canucks Captain Quinn Hughes. The slogan of this campaign will be "Vans in Van," a playoff company name and Vancouver. Through promotional photoshoots, social media campaigns, and fan engagement at 2025 Go Skateboarding Day, Vans will successfully increase its brand value and experience positive returns.

Athlete Partnership: Quinn Hughes from the Vancouver Canucks will be offered a Brand Ambassador Deal for \$750,000. The partnership will include two photoshoots, social media engagement, a life appearance at Vancouver's 2025 Go Skateboarding Day event, and introducing the new Hughes #43 shoes. As the most recent recipient of the James Norris Memorial Trophy, Quinn Hughes's fame is at an all-time high. Hockey fans across North America are excitedly buzzing as he is a well-respected player with immense talent. Quinn has experience in brand partnerships such as the release of his juice flavor at Glory Juice. Because of Quinn's involvement in NHL-wide marketing campaigns, he has been described as "the most

marketable player" in Canucks history. Although Vans has traditionally done campaigns with a focus on skateboarding, expanding into hockey could be a way to expand its consumer base and appeal to a new audience.

Brand Alignment

Vans "off the wall" presents the company as creative, expressive, and popular with younger generations. Quinn Hughes is among the most famous hockey players in the NHL and is looked up to by many young fans and athletes. Vans' purpose statement mentions inspiring youth with "expressing your true self." As an authentic and personable leader, Quinn often expresses his true ideas and self through hockey and his appearances in the media.

Target Market: This product launch's main target segmentation is male consumers aged 16-30 in the US and Canada who are involved in physical activity and fans of the NHL. Men are the main target demographic because they make up 50% of the footwear industry, while Women only make up 14%. Furthermore, the NHL has 6.7 million Instagram followers.

Product: The product will be a limited-edition substyle of the Knu Skool shoe by Vans Apparel in a blue and green colour, named Hughes #43 (Exhibit 2). The shoe will get its name from Vancouver Canucks Captain Quinn Hughes, who wears the number 43 and often uses it in marketing campaigns, like his recent collaboration with Glory Juice. The Knu Skool style was re-introduced to Vans after being a popular product in the 90s. When the original model came out, it was the first shoe in the market to contain patches of leather, which increased its durability and made it unique. Differentiated from the original Old Skool shoe by its exterior, the Knu Skool shoes offer customers a sense of Nostalgia, comfort, and style.

The shoe was brought back to have a nostalgic feel and take consumers back in time to the 90s. Vans offers a minimal selection of Knu Skool Shoes, having only three colours on their website and are priced as their most expensive shoe. This edition of the #43 Hughes shoe will feature a combination of a blue and green exterior, which is unique to the brand and represents the colours of the Vancouver Canucks.

Price: The price per pair of Hughes #43s will be \$125 Canadian, a CAD 20 markup from the price of the Knu Skool shoes (Exhibit 3). Given the shoe's exclusive collaboration with Quinn Hughes, this markup is because the perceived consumer value will increase. However, after year one, the price will be decreased to \$105 to match the other Knu Skool shoes as the product will no longer be fresh and heavily promoted by Hughes.

Place: The promotion will be digital and posted on Instagram, Tiktok, and YouTube. There will also be a bit of in-person content at "Go Skateboarding Day" in Vancouver, BC. Vancouver is the perfect place for the promotion because of its plethora of filming resources, commonly nicknamed "Hollywood North." It's also a west-coast city famous for street culture, similar to Anaheim. Vancouver has big skateboarding culture makes it the ideal location for this promotional event. More specifically, on June 21st every year, thousands of skaters hit the streets of Downtown for "Go Skateboarding Day". Every year, these skateboarders are seen all over the roads outside of Rogers Arena, which is where the Vancouver Canucks play (Exhibit 4). Vans has previously been involved with Go Skateboarding Day in Vancouver in 2024 (Exhibit 5). The Hughes #43 shoes will only be available for purchase online, which saves on distribution costs to retailers.

Promotion: The promotion will include 2 videos, multiple Instagram posts, and one event interaction with Quinn Hughes. The first video will showcase Hughes walking into Rogers Arena

before a Canucks game wearing his suit, and then the camera will pan down and show he's wearing the Blue Knu Skool Shoes. The second video will be filmed at "Go Skateboarding Day" and show Hughes interacting with fans and attempting to skateboard with them outside Rogers Arena.

Financial Assessment and Budget

Athlete endorsement Cost: Vans will pay Quinn Hughes an upfront cost for the Brand Ambassador deal 750,000 (Exhibit 6). Hughes' cost was found using Caitlin Clark's recent deal with Nike and Sydney Crosby's Adidas deal as proxies. Crosby is one of the most popular NHL players, and his deal with Adidas, adjusted for today's inflation, is just over 1 million dollars. It's reasonable to assume that Hughes would be paid less than Crosby because he is less popular than Crosby, but still relatively high because of his fanbase and achievements. Hughes will also earn royalties of 5% based on the net sales of the Hughes #43 shoes in all 3 years.

Advertising Cost: Van's advertising cost includes the upfront Brand ambassador deal signed with Hughes, Quinn's royalties, the cost of shooting the promotional content, the price of a billboard, and the costs of setting up posters on Go Skateboarding Day (Exhibit 7). Year 1's marketing expense totalled just under \$1 million and decreased over the following years.

Product Revenues: Year 1 revenues are projected to be the highest because that's when the promotions with Quinn Hughes will be released (Exhibit 8). Year 1 sees revenues of over 1.2 million, but that number declines over years 2 and 3 because the product will be mature and no longer promoted at Go Skateboarding Day, where a large portion of the converted sales stem. Projected revenues were calculated using industry data and similar product launches as proxies to find average ad impressions and conversion rates.

Breakeven: Vans will take approximately 8,869 units to break even (Exhibit 9). This consists of just over 1 million sales, which Vans easily achieved in year 1. To calculate these numbers, industry data and similar collaborations were used as proxies (Exhibit 10).

Brand Metrics: This product launch will drive consumer engagement with the Vans website and social media platforms.

Implementation and control

Action plan:

In January 2025, the Van's sponsorships team will contact Quinn Hughes' agent regarding the Brand Ambassador Deal. After securing the partnership, Vans will begin manufacturing the Hughes #43. After receiving a prototype, Vans will work with Hughes and his agent to schedule a 1-day photoshoot. The photoshoot will likely be in February and be done at Rogers Arena in Vancouver. Vans will take photos of Quinn wearing the Hughes #43 on the ice and right outside Rogers Arena. Vans content creation team will also film a video of Quinn walking into the Canucks change room wearing the shoes. After the filming, the Vans team will edit the content into a 15-second video of Hughes for their social media channels.

May 2025

Vans will begin posting ads for the new shoes on their Instagram and TikTok accounts to create anticipation for the big reveal. They will also launch an online contest and allow users to enter to win a brand new pair of Hughes #43 shoes before they're released to the public. Users can enter the competition via the Vans website and social media. Hughes will also post Instagram stories previewing the shoes and a QR code to sign up for the contest. Vans will finalize their preparations before "Go Skateboarding Day 2025" in May.

On June 5th, Vans will select a resident of Vancouver who fits their target demographic to win the new pair of shoes. This fan will receive the shoes downtown at "Go Skateboarding Day" and be surprised by meeting Quinn Hughes. Vans was previously an official sponsor of Vancouver's "Go Skateboarding Day" and will continue to be one in 2025. Vans will set up a tent in the skateboard plaza close to Rogers Arena. Quinn Hughes will be present at the tent. Assuming that Vans will run a similar sponsorship in Vancouver as last year, the only additional cost at this event will be two large banners of the shoes. Vans will also showcase Quinn's advertisement on one billboard, starting June 1st and continuing until August 1st (Exhibit 11). This billboard is on the skateboard day route, located in a busy area of Downtown Vancouver right beside Rogers Arena.

At Go Skateboarding Day, the Vans promotional team will also film a short video showing Hughes interacting with fans and skateboarding wearing his Hughes #43 shoes. This video will be posted on both the Instagram accounts of Quinn Hughes, Vans, and YouTube. Posters around these skateparks on Go Skateboarding Day will also feature Quinn's #43 shoes. The #43 shoe will be released on June 22nd, one day after the promotional event. The decision to release the product now is because consumers will be more likely to purchase it after seeing the promotion and all the ads on Go Skateboard Day.

Risks and mitigations: There's a risk that political tensions will cause Go Skateboarding Day 2025 to be cancelled due to safety concerns. To combat this, Vans can shoot a short promotional video instead, showing Quinn playing road hockey wearing the Hughes #43 shoes inside a skateboard park. The video will show Hughes doing various stickhandling tricks within the park, which still includes skateboarding culture in the product launch. Another risk is that consumers

won't purchase the \$43 shoe. If the conversion rates are way lower than calculated, Vans can lower the selling price of the shoe or run a short sale to generate increased buzz for the products. Finally, a risk is that Hughes would refrain from saying yes to the campaign. While this is highly unlikely, given Quinn's love for community involvement and leadership qualities, it's important to note that if Hughes said no, Vans has the extra cash to offer him, so he would be more likely to accept the deal.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1

Athletic Shoe Stores in the US

Products & Services Segmentation

Industry revenue in 2024 broken down by key product and service lines.

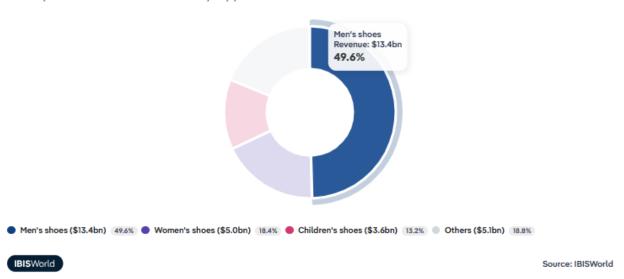


Exhibit 2

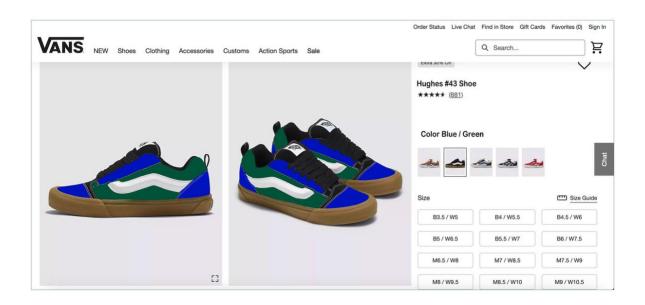


Exhibit 3

1 Hughes #43 Knu School Shoe

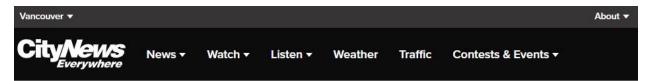
Selling price	\$ 125.00
Price yr 2,3	\$105.00
COGS	\$ 30.00
Gross profit	\$ 95.00

Exhibit 4



Hundreds of skateboarders take over a road near Rogers Arena. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

Exhibit 5





Vancouver skateboarders celebrate Go Skate Day









Thousands of skateboard enthusiasts took to the streets of Downtown Vancouver Friday to celebrate Go Skate Day.

Exhibit 6

Quinn Hughes cost breakdown explained

Proxy:

Caitlin Clark deal \$28,000,000 million

Years

Cost per year \$3,500,000 million

Clark's instagram 3,000,000 Cost per follower \$1.17 Hughes followers 264,000

Applied to quinn \$308,000.00 = C37*C36 Crosby Adidas deal \$1,000,000 in 2015

Adjusted to inflation \$ 1,230,998 = C39*(1+0.021)^10

Hughes cost \$ 750,000 Assumption: Hughes has a lower reach than Crosby

Exhibit 7

Breakdown of Marketing Expense

Quinn Hughes Deal	\$ 750,000.00
Billboard	\$ 9,800.00
Posters	\$ 50.00
Cost of first photoshoot	\$ 10,000.00
Cost of second photoshoot and video	\$ 10,000.00
Year 1 Royalties	\$ 62,661.81
Year 2 Royalties	\$ 42,108.74
Year 3 Royalties	\$ 31,581.55

Exhibit 8

Income Statement

		1	2	3	
Year		2025	2026	2027	Total
Revenue	\$ 1	1,253,236.25	\$ 842,174.76	\$631,631.07	\$2,727,042.08
COGS	\$	300,776.70	\$ 240,621.36	\$180,466.02	\$ 721,864.08
Gross Profit	\$	952,459.55	\$ 601,553.40	\$451,165.05	\$2,005,178.00
Marketing expense	\$	842,511.81	\$ 42,108.74	\$ 31,581.55	\$ 916,202.10
Contribution After Marketing	\$	109,947.74	\$ 559,444.66	\$419,583.50	\$ 1,088,975.90
ROI		13%			

Exhibit 9

Breakeven Analysis

Fixed costs			
Marketing Expense	\$	842,511.81	
Variable Cost			
COGS	\$	30.00	
	*	55.55	
Sale Price Per Unit	\$	125.00	
Contribution Margin	\$	95.00	
CMR		0.76	
Breakeven		8869 units	
Breakeven Sales	\$ 1,108,568.17		

Exhibit 10

Cost per poster	\$10
Promo booth impressions	2000
Quinn Hughes cost	750,000
Promo booth conversion rate	10%
Billboard conversion rate	0.006%
Quinn Hughes impressions	158,400
Quinn Hughes post engagement	21,178
Instagram ad conversion rate	0.50%
Vans impressions	1944000
Billboard Cost	\$ 9,800.00
Billboard impresesion	1870400
Vans post sales	9720
Quinn Hughes post sales	105.89
Sales from booth	200
Year 1 sales	10026
Year 2 sales	8,021
Year 3 Sales	6016

Assumption: Staples Price

Assumption: 2,000 people in attendance

Assumptions: Proxy: Caitlin Clark \$28 million Nike deal scaled to NHL. Major NHL deals are usually

between 1-5 million for top athletes. Quinn doesn't have the same reach as Clark

Assumption: Trade show conversion rate = 20%-30%. I adjusted downward because the attendees of

Skateboard day won't primarily be present to purchase items

Assumption: found by comparing it to website popup ads and decreasing by 10%

Assumption: 60% of Quinn's followers would see the post

Assumption: Average Instagram post CTR
Assumption: 12% reach rate * # of followers

Assumption: \$4,900 for 4 weeks

Assumption: Calculated views of billboard per month * 2

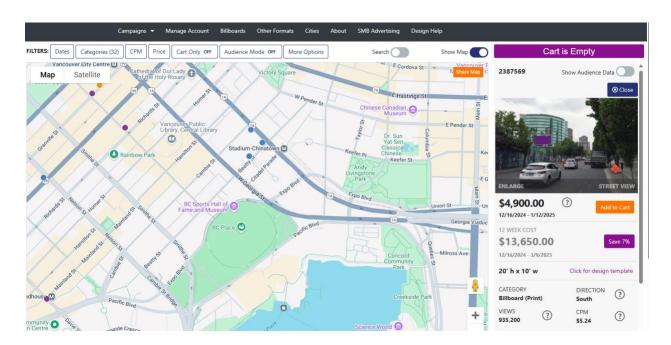
Assumption: Only people who engaged with the post would potentially purchase

Assumption: Sales in year 2 would decrease by 20%, and 40% in year 3 due to the product not being new

anymore

Assumption: Sales in year 3 would decrease by 40% of year 1

Exhibit 11



Appendix:

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