

Project Part 3: Documentation of Focus Group

1. Executive Summary:

Our main purpose of conducting the focus group was to identify the reasons Brandy Melville's popularity and sales have decreased over the last ten years. We also wanted to determine a potential marketing strategy to increase inclusivity regarding clothing sizes. We conducted these focus groups with the hope of gathering information regarding consumers' sentiment towards the brand, and how we can possibly improve that sentiment through rebranding. We expected to have four focus groups, with three participants in each group, for a total of twelve participants all females ranging between the ages of 18 and 25 years old.

Our key findings were that people view Brandy Melville with a more negative sentiment, and believe that with the changing of society, it is probable that people will view a brand that advertises as "one-size fits all" is actively discriminating against people with different body types. In order to come up with an effective marketing strategy, we will not only need to rebrand regarding sizing, but also perhaps offer a wider variety of clothing options. Another topic that came up in conversation with the focus groups was that the thing that customers take into account the most when considering where to shop from is quality. If Brandy Melville includes more sizes, improves their quality of clothes and offers a wider selection of clothing, it could be helpful towards brand image.

2. Research Progress:

For our focus group, our hope was to hold four separate focus groups, with three participants each. Unfortunately, we did come across some challenges when setting up times, so we had to adapt to everyone's schedules. In order to adhere to everyone's schedules, we held one of the focus groups on Zoom, but besides that we still had the same amount of participants expected. However, this did not negatively affect the information gathered from the focus group. We also faced some challenges during the focus group in which it took awhile for the participants to open up and fully understand our questions, but after the warm-up questions, we were able to converse easily.

3. Key Findings:

- a. ***Awareness:*** In the topic of awareness, we found that most of our participants were familiar with Brandy Melville, and were also aware of how sizing works at Brandy Melville. Most people seemed to purchase from the brand because of its popularity in social media, or because influencers seemed to be promoting it heavily at the time. When we asked people what one word came to mind when they thought of Brandy Melville, the most common words heard were: inequality and skinny. Our participants relate Brandy Melville to inequality, and target preference of people who are traditionally skinnier than the average female in the United States.
- b. ***Sentiment & Opinions:*** Regarding the topic of sentiment, most people had a negative sentiment towards Brandy Melville. The most common reasons we saw this sentiment arise was because of their lack of inclusivity, and confusion among the participants as to why they would not want to cater to all women. People's sentiment for Brandy Melville has also changed from what we found in our focus groups. Customers used to find it "cool" but with body image becoming a bigger issue today, people think of Brandy Melville as a more "harmful brand".
- c. ***Motivation to Purchase:*** When we asked participants what they consider before shopping for clothes, one of the most common responses was quality, or price. Our participants stated that they would likely not shop from Brandy Melville because of fear that they would not fit in the clothes, so it was worthless to spend time even considering them as an option.
- d. ***Competition:*** We asked participants of their favorite brands and some common answers were: Zara, American Eagle and Pacsun. The main reasons why participants purchased from these brands were the diverse options of clothing the brand had, it was not just "crop tops" and skirts, but included clothes for all fashion styles. Another thing that was mentioned was that Brandy Melville has not kept up with current fashion trends, and in order for consumers to want to purchase from them, they would have to add more sizes and styles to their collection. We also asked consumers about Abercrombie & Fitch's recent rebranding, and their sentiment towards it. Most participants stated that they agreed with the brand's decision to adapt to changing society, and in order for a business to stay relevant, they have to change with society. After asking how participants would feel about Brandy Melville rebranding, most of them stated that it could possibly change their perception of the brand towards something more positive.

4. Takeaways:

- a. ***Implications of Focus Groups on Further Research Plan:*** One implication of our focus groups on further research is that we will need to change the wording in some of our questions in order to reduce leading. We will also need to make sure that one of our screening questions is whether or not the person taking the survey has ever heard of Brandy Melville, since their responses will be irrelevant to our research if they have never heard of it before. Finally, through our focus groups, we realized that we must better frame out questions in a way that is concise enough to ensure reliability and validity.
- b. ***Knowledge Gained:*** Through our focus group we learned that most people have a negative sentiment towards Brandy Melville due to their lack of inclusivity, but also due to the fact that they view their clothing as low quality. In order to come up with a more accurate marketing strategy, we must take all of those factors into consideration when making our survey. After our qualitative research, we do believe that by including more sizes and promoting a more inclusive brand image, more consumers will purchase from Brandy Melville.