**Barefoot Marketing Group**

**Memo**

To: TOMS Shoes

From: Barefoot Marketing Group

CC: Dr. Kim, TOMS Shoes

Date: October 21, 2011

Re: Agency Proposal for Conducting Qualitative Research

This memo comes to present you with the Research Agency’s proposal for conducting primary research. In the following up to our secondary research findings, we are pleased to present you with our plan for planning and developing a qualitative research program that will supplement our efforts to better understand the college student market’s attitude toward TOMS Shoes.

Background

TOMS Shoes current marketing strategy is geared toward the ‘one for one’ movement, which is for customers who enjoy volunteering, giving back to one’s community and social responsibility. The branding for TOMS has caught broad attention including business marketing research, social cause marketing research and social entrepreneurship. The ‘one for one’ mission provides a brand that consumers can run to if they feel the need to give to a charitable cause.

Some of the key considerations that have helped us shape the research problem would be the brand’s strengths and weaknesses. Some of the strengths involve TOMS being a recognizable brand, consumers feel good after purchasing shoes that help give back to a charity, creating a ‘feel good marketing’. However, some of the weaknesses involve consumers feeling pressured to buy shoes, to help others in need. The shoes are considered expensive, other companies are ripping off the idea, and people consider them to be copying when the other companies are trying to help others in need. The only type of advertising TOMS shoes uses is social networks, YouTube, blogs and word of mouth advertising. Their largest marketing tactics involve campus groups involving the TOMS shoe brand.

Qualitative Research Problem

The problem is there has been growing numbers of negativity toward TOMS Shoes. TOMS needs information and knowledge about what college students think of the TOMS shoes brand. This is extremely important and justifies research because TOMS needs to stay relevant to their consumer, they need to understand exact consumer perceptions, and need to know what is going on in college campuses because that is their biggest marketing tactics. Because such a significant portion of their income comes from the college students demographic, research is more than justified in helping to determine the next step for TOMS. TOMS needs specific and qualitative answers from the 18-24 year old target market about their usage patterns for TOMS shoes. They can satisfy these needs with a series of focus groups.

Research Method

We have decided to use focus groups as our type of research method. We feel that this is justified by the idea that we will be working with multiple individuals that are in the same age range that we are focusing our research on. We feel that the best way to understand why someone may purchase TOMS shoes, or not purchase TOMS shoes, is by talking to them in a focus group. We will be organizing two focus groups, one with people who own or have owned a pair of TOMS shoes and the other focus group will consist of people who have never owned a pair of TOMS shoes. We feel that this will help us understand how others perceive TOMS shoes and what they think of TOMS idea of social responsibility. Our plan will start with students taking a survey, either online, or in person to see if they qualify for the focus groups. If they do we will invite them to join our focus group and we will videotape it and write up transcripts so we know exactly what was being said. After the focus groups are over we will be able to write up a report on what certain students think of TOMS shoes, and why they may or may not purchase a pair.

Research Sample & Recruiting

We will be recruiting 18 to 24 year old Oklahoma State University students to participate in focus groups. The criteria used to screen participants will be four questions asked in a survey. What their age is, if they attend Oklahoma State, if they have ever owned a pair of TOMS shoes, or if they have ever owned a pair of BOBS shoes. We have decided to hold two focus groups, one involving people that own TOMS shoes and of people that own BOBS shoes. We feel that it would be beneficial to hear why people have chose to purchase BOBS shoes over TOMS shoes, and vice versa. There will be two different focus groups with about 8- 10 people in each one. People will be recruited by taking a survey online, or a survey that will be passed out around campus in multiple classes. The only incentive for participation will be snacks and refreshments at the focus group.

Research Instruments

We will be using surveys that will be passed out around campus, and also an online survey that people can take online. We are asking that everyone leaving their name and phone number, or E-mail address, on the survey they take so if they qualify we have a way of reaching and contacting them to be apart of our focus group. The way we will be informing participants of their rights prior to the participation in the study and its purpose, will be a participation information sheet. It will have the purpose on it, the procedures, risks of participation, benefits of participation, confidentiality, compensation and contact information on the sheet. It will also explain how participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for refusal to participate and that people are free to withdraw their consent and participation in this project at any time. The instrument used to gather data will be the surveys and focus groups, these two things will help us better understand what college students think of the TOMS shoes brand and why they have or why they have not owned a pair of TOMS shoes. Since we are focusing our research on the "college student" age group (18-24) it is important that our focus groups consist of that age group, and of people who are currently enrolled in college. Our discussion guide for the focus groups consist of talking about the last time an individual bought shoes, what they liked about their purchase, how they felt after their purchase, if they feel a shoe brand's social responsibility aid in the individual's purchase, if they like TOMS or BOBS shoes better, how long their shoes lasted, what made them want to buy the shoes, what they believe about TOMS social responsibility and if they think TOMS shoes approach to shoe sales are effective. Please refer back to the appendix for comprehensive examples of the research instruments.

Project Timetable

Research proposal approved by the client Friday, Oct. 21

Research instruments receive final approval Friday, Oct. 21

Secure room for focus group Friday, Oct. 21

Participant recruiting begins/ends Wednesday, Oct. 19- Friday, Oct. 21

Conduct mini-group Friday, Oct. 21

Analyze mini-group findings and make revisions Monday, Oct. 24

for focus group as necessary

Reminder contact to focus group participants Tuesday, Oct. 25

Conduct focus group Wednesday, Oct. 26

Data transcription, analysis of findings Wednesday, Oct. 26- Sunday Oct. 30

Submit final report Monday, Oct. 31

Next Steps

We look forward to meeting with you next week to review this proposal and address any concerns you might have about the design or the proposed budget. In the interim, please feel free to contact me should questions arise before that time.

Barefoot Marketing Group