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 Final Assignment  
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### Columbia Sportswear: Winter Outerwear/Winter Jackets

**Problem:** Loss in market share. Columbia Sportswear is losing the American market in the winter jacket industry to new brand competitors, such as Patagonia and Marmot. Columbia has been a leader in winter outerwear, especially in the winter jacket industry. Since 2014, however, its American market share has been steadily declining. It no longer holds the number 1 or 2 spot in the winter outerwear market in the US.

**Goal/Objectives:** To determine what is drawing winter jacket customers to Columbia's competitors so that the company can attract and/or re-attract a larger following to its brand and regain, or surpass, its lost market share.

**RQ:** What fashion trends, lifestyles, and/or social aspects affect winter outerwear and specifically winter jackets purchases?

What demographics such as age and gender affect winter outerwear and winter jacket purchases?

What makes consumers want to buy a certain brand? What motivates them? What qualities are they looking for?

What messages will best motivate target audiences to purchase a specific brand?

**Research Plan:** Focusing on the American market, my research plan will start with secondary research. This will be followed by qualitative primary research methods of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic studies. Quantitative surveys will wrap up the research.

### Secondary/Syndicated Research

**Why here?** Secondary research is the analysis of existing data in order to answer the RQs. It is a good first step in the research plan as it can be used to set the direction of the research. Pre-existing research can educate me on the brand, competitor brands, strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities for the brand and the market in general. When done properly, secondary research serves as a way to understand the brand and to guide further primary research towards insights into answering the research questions. Secondary research can be used throughout the research process to reinforce findings of the primary research data.

**Why this method?** Secondary research enables me to find credible pre-existing data and information quickly and inexpensively. I do not have to organize my own study, and can easily find and take advantage of the vast amount of previous studies available. The cost and time saved due to just reporting and interpreting pre-existing research and not having to develop and perform the study, and the availability of many trusted commercial and government resources, are the key advantages of secondary research. I can then summarize what I have found and provide a point of view regarding the information that answers the RQs for the client.

**Databases:** The databases I would use to obtain the information needed at this point of the research are Simmons, Statista, and MRI. Simmons and Statista report heavily on consumer goods. Simmons focuses on consumer behavior and presents the lifestyles, media habits, and product brand preferences that determine the purchasing decisions of American families. Statista provides product sales for various brands within an industry and the corresponding market share. The data in both databases are presented in graph, chart, and text form for easy interpretation. MRI gives statistics and information based on demographics. This site supplies a breakdown of the typical brand consumer by age, income, ethnicity, geographic location, and education. MRI also shows what print publications, such as magazines, TV channels and shows, radio stations, and websites consumers prefer.

Search/Findings: Simmons and Statista: I would search for information regarding the winter outerwear industry in order to understand where Columbia stands as a brand relative to other outerwear brands. I would hope to find information regarding specific brand sales and general winter outerwear and jacket sales in the American market, while also looking at how Columbia does in comparison. I would hope to find charts or graphs that show comparisons of the market share for the main brands. I would also search for information on consumer behavior in regards to lifestyles and brand preferences. I would like to find a correlation between certain lifestyles and brands. Another key insight that can be drawn is the number of winter outerwear and jacket brands in the market as well as their annual ad spend. I would search how the ad spend corresponds with sales, and if any particular type of ads, sponsorships, or endorsements have a positive effect on sales. I would hope to find data which gives me an idea of how Columbia compares in the ad spend categories and use that to determine how it can compete with the flood of new entrants that are successfully building their customer bases. MRI: I would search for any information regarding demographics and brand sales and/or preferences. I would hope to find information that would help me correctly understand what demographics Columbia is currently doing well in and what demographics it is not and needs to reach out to. I would hope to find information that would allow me to construct consumer profiles that would help in designing further primary research techniques. I would also search the advertising preferences and correlate that with the Simmons data. Applying the Findings: The information from these sites can help me understand where Columbia stands compared to its competition and where it needs to improve. I can also get an idea of what the brand is doing correctly and incorrectly, and where the competition is outperforming it. The information offers a look at the consumer patterns of the market segment that Columbia should try to understand and to cater their message. Bringing together the findings from these three databases, I would be able to create a basis for further primary research. MRI supplies information to create consumer profiles, which can be constructed for Columbia and its competitors. The information gathered from Simmons and Statista will allow me to see brand preference and brand performance. Combining the results of these sources, I can uncover where the brand is suffering and thriving and highlight areas of focus that the brand needs to tackle in order to stay relevant in the industry. This would give the brand a direction for further primary research and focus that research on brand-specific areas.

Potential Other Sources: Blogs: The Internet provides reliable blog sites with viewpoints on a variety of topics that are informative and educational. These sites want to stay relevant and so they constantly update their sites with current and accurate information. While these sites may not have the general statistical information that can be found on sites like MRI, Simmons, and Statista, they provide up-to-date current information, particularly in regards to consumer preferences. This information is very valuable to companies. Brands like Columbia need to monitor these sites to see what's going on in the clothing and outerwear culture if they want to be and stay successful.

Though secondary research provides an understanding of where a brand ranks in regards to its competitors and shows potential areas for improvement in regards to market share and consumer preferences, it has its disadvantages. It is not specific to the RQ, the research method and data collection used are often unknown, the data search may reveal conflicting viewpoints, and there is a lack of depth on what is reported. For these reasons, it is important and necessary to next turn to primary research methods.

#### Focus Groups and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

Why here? Working off of the secondary research, focus groups and in-depth interviews would be better directed. The secondary research develops an understanding of the brand and its competitors for me as the researcher. It helps me to create better and more thorough questions to be used in the focus groups and IDIs, which will lead to more in-depth answers and insights in regards to the RQs. From

the secondary research, I know the actions. Now I need to know the why behind these actions, which I will get from the discussion and insights gained from the focus groups and IDIs.

Why these methods? Focus groups and IDIs provide a way to speak directly to consumers and get their reactions to products, ideas or concepts. A focus group usually consists of 6 to 12 consumers who take part in a carefully planned series of discussions led by a trained moderator. The controlled discussion facilitates in uncovering consumer attitudes and perceptions about a certain brand. Focus groups bring a group dynamic into the mix, which allows the client to gain multiple perspectives from an interactive group setting. The members of a focus group feed off of each other and come up with a broad array of concepts and ideas. The goal is to help the client make better decisions by obtaining consumer feedback and what motivates them towards a certain brand of product. If present, the client can see and hear from the consumer directly. IDIs are conducted one-on-one with a single respondent. It is best to perform the interview in person, but it can be done on the phone or by Skype. Interviews allow the client to gather a deeper, richer understanding of the participants' perspectives. The participants are not influenced by any group dynamics and can feel more open to share personal details on certain topics. Both of these methods tap into the emotional benefits that a customer is searching for in choosing a product brand. This is often the motivational force behind a purchase and knowing this can help the client match a product to the consumer, resulting in increased awareness, perception, and sales.

Who to Interview? The outerwear industry serves a diverse population. In addition, consumers wear winter jackets for a number of reasons and functions. Demographics and product usage are major determinants for participant selection. The first criteria for participants is they have to wear winter jackets for at least some purpose. This could be for pleasure, such as ski vacations, or it could be necessity due to living in a cold climate. Participants need to be able to articulate their viewpoints and speak their minds. In a focus group, the similarities and differences among the participants impact the group dynamics. When deciding on participants, there are a few key decisions to make: how diverse do I want the group to be, and do I want to discuss the product with loyal customers or those who have no interest in the brand or maybe both? Though people tend to feel more comfortable with like people and are more willing to share information when they are comfortable, the benefit of a focus group is to bring together people with differing viewpoints to gain perspectives and insights, and to see if a consensus can be achieved. The goal of this research is to gain insight into the emerging winter outerwear fashion industry along with the gradually declining Columbia consumer base. Bringing together diverse participants would result in diverse perspectives. This would offer unique and invaluable insights into the customer attitude of the outerwear market for the various consumer population segments, and in potentially deciding Columbia's future in that market. For an IDI, a respondent also need to be able to share his/her feelings in addition to clearly speaking on their opinions. In selecting participants, it is important to let them know they will be asked their feelings on the product and brands of outerwear, specifically winter jackets. It's a good idea to ask them some generic questions during the selection process to determine their comfort level in sharing their feelings. By focusing on a single respondent, the client has the opportunity to gain a deep knowledge about a consumer's attitudes and feelings about a particular product and brand which can be valuable in adjusting product brand or marketing concepts. Who I will interview also depends on results from my secondary research. If a certain age group, for example, such as 18-34 year olds are big buyers, I will want to gear my focus groups and IDIs to more of that age group as a target audience for Columbia.

Focus Group/IDI Setting Interviews: Due to the variations in geography and climate in the US, and that the product is worn primarily during cold weather or for purposes that may be based on geography and climate, I would want to hold focus groups and IDIs in different parts of the country to assess any differences or similarities among regions. Focus Groups: Focus groups are usually best conducted in a person-to-person setting where the moderator and participants come to a focus group facility or meeting room for discussion. This allows for greater brainstorming and probing for greater depth as

comments and ideas are shared and bounced off of the various participants. It is beneficial to a company to hear consumer opinions from the consumer in his or her own words. Including a few jacket styles with labels removed may make the environment more interesting for the participants and give them a physical product to describe their viewpoints. Online focus groups could also be useful. Recruitment rates are much higher since participants can work from any computer, and recruitment can be done from anywhere in the country. This eliminates any geographic barriers for the participants and the additional costs to the client for holding traditional-style focus groups nationwide. Consumers may be more likely to participate online because it can be viewed as more convenient and faster. Others may prefer the anonymity of the discussion board type online focus group, and thus may be more willing to respond to questions. Both the online live discussion and the message board discussion allow the moderator to follow-up with specific questions based on participants' answers. IDI's: The goal of the setting in an IDI is to produce the greatest amount of comfort possible for the participant. Possible locations include the participant's home, work office, or a neutral setting such as a coffee shop or library. Sometimes it can be beneficial to be in a setting close to where the related topic or product is located, such as a shopping mall seating area outside a store that sells outerwear. This reflects the nature of the research, and allows some related visual to accompany both questions and answers. The right setting helps to put the participant in the proper mood for an in-depth discussion, and since the comfort level of the participant is important for a successful interview, it is best to give the participant some location options and let him/her choose which is best. If geography or weather conditions become a barrier for a site interview, an acceptable back-up is to Skype. This allows a real-time visual and audio one-on-one interaction.

Length: Focus groups usually average around 90 minutes, and can last up to two hours. Though this may seem like a long time to some people, there needs to be sufficient time to allow participants to respond to the questions, and for the moderator to follow-up with more specific questions based on responses and insights from the participants. I would opt for a 90-minute focus group with 10 participants. This gives each participant 9 minutes to speak, not including the moderator's time to ask the questions. The moderator must be organized, stay on schedule, be experienced in asking questions, encourage feedback, and still maintain a pleasant personality to get the most of the 90 minutes. If the length of time appears to be a deterrent to recruitment, then a 60-minute focus group of no more than 6 participants would be a possibility. IDI's: Interviews typically range from 30 to 60 minutes. Since the IDI will be performed in a relaxed and casual environment, preferably of the participant's choosing, a 45-minute interview should allow enough time for the respondent to share his/her feelings on the product and brands while also giving the interviewer time to establish a rapport with the respondent. This will then hopefully lead to the opportunity for the interviewer to probe for deeper insights, and allows the respondent to express him or herself more freely, openly, and honestly. The interviewer and interviewee must be able to relate to one another and connect on an emotional level if deep insights are to be drawn out.

Quantity: Focus groups and IDI's are considered to be relatively inexpensive, with focus groups costing around \$5,000 to \$10,000 per group study, and IDIs costing even less. Obtaining different viewpoints from various demographics and geographical regions are important in gaining insights into the RQs that will provide useful information for Columbia. Enough focus groups and IDIs have to be done in order to gather enough data to evaluate for insights, consensus, and recommendations for client action. Based on this, I would schedule 3 to 4 focus groups and 6 to 7 IDIs in each of the 4 major regions of the US. I increased the number of IDIs in comparison to focus groups because generally two IDIs equate to one focus group. The importance of the different viewpoints validates conducting multiple focus groups and interviews. Additional focus groups or IDIs should not be scheduled solely to confirm a single train of thought. However, if after about one-half of the focus groups and IDIs are

conducted and the results are all over the place, it may be time to go back and re-analyze the wording or content of my questions.

Questions: The questions should follow an order or flow by starting out general or broad and then narrowing down to the specific topic, and probing deeper into the respondents' feelings and emotions.

Basic idea questions:

1. Why, or for what purpose(s) do you wear winter outerwear/jackets?
2. What do you look for in a winter jacket?
3. How/why is that important to you?

Brand questions:

4. What do you see as the top brands of winter jackets?
5. What do you associate with the brands you mentioned?
6. What brand of winter outerwear/jacket do you wear?
7. Why do you wear that particular brand (or those particular brands)?
8. Why is that quality/asset (or those qualities/assets) important to you?
9. What does that make you think of that makes it important to you? (IDI)
10. Can you tell me more about that? (IDI)

More motivation/insight/emotion questions

11. When did you start wearing the brand (or brands) you wear? When/how did you become aware of the brand?
  12. Why was that?
  13. How was that important to you?
  14. Can you tell me a little more about the how, why, maybe who? (IDI)
  15. Do you have any memorable moments wearing this brand?
  16. How does that make you feel?
  17. Why do you think that is?
  18. Is there anything more, maybe who or what, that was involved? (IDI)
  19. What makes something a trend for you?
  20. Why is that?
  21. When do you get on board with trends?
  22. Why is that?
  23. What kind of experiences or memories do you have regarding trends?
  24. How does that make you feel? Why is that?
  25. Can you explain a little more about your experiences and feelings with/about trends? (IDI)
  26. Is there anything or anyone that influences or would influence your purchase of winter jackets? (people, places, things)
  27. Why do you think that (or those or who) influences you? (Why is it important to you?)
  28. Would you consider trying other brands?
  29. Why is that?
  30. How does that matter to you? Why is it important to you? How does it make you feel?
  31. I'm not sure I understand. Can you describe to me the importance of that in making a decision to try or switch brands? (IDI)
- Brand specific questions
32. Have you ever worn Columbia winter jackets?
  33. Why do you think that is?
  34. Why is that important to you?
  35. What are your perceptions of the Columbia brand?
  36. How do those perceptions make you feel about the brand Columbia?
  37. Why/how is that important to you?

### Wrap-up questions

38. Will you explain to me again the factors that are most important to you in purchasing winter outerwear/jackets and why those are important to you?

39. So overall, what causes you to buy one brand of winter jacket over another?

40. How are those reasons important to you?

Data Analysis: These qualitative methods provide detailed information and emotional insights with plenty of room for my interpretation. The moderators can create descriptive narratives of the participants' responses and group these into categories to form a general consensus. From this consensus, I can construct shared meanings of the brand and its product offerings and use it to create descriptive consumer profiles. I can discover relevant themes throughout the process that will be useful for the future of the brand. There are 3 key things to look for when analyzing qualitative data: frequency, specificity, and emotions. Frequency is important because it shows how popular the subject was during the research methods. The more a topic was spoken about or mentioned in a group, or by an individual, the more significant that topic. Specificity, or how detailed the responses were, is another key factor. A topic that was mentioned consistently can be important, but so is the amount of detail that was given. The more detail that is supplied, the more insights I can develop. Lastly, and most important, are emotions. Emotions can be observed and noted by a number of ways such as through a consumer's speech, his or her body language, physical reactions, and facial expressions. Qualitative research does not attempt to ask whether a certain action or behavior takes place, but how and why these things occur. By analyzing the respondents' answers to a series of questions to find some general themes, insights are gained that address the RQs and research objectives, and can be of benefit to the client in reformatting the brand image.

Differences in Designing: The focus group is a group of 6 -12 consumers. The discussion that takes place in a focus group is more controlled. The moderator uses a discussion guide to lead the conversation, but it follows a sequence of which topics are to be discussed when and for how long. Though the moderator is to steer towards greater depth of information, there is an order of flow that is to be followed. At the end, the moderator needs to summarize the key ideas and draw out a consensus among the focus group participants. Focus groups are held in a meeting room or focus group facility. The in-depth interview is a one-on-one with a single respondent. The purpose of an IDI is to explore topics or issues in much more detail than a focus group. The moderator, or interviewer, of an IDI is to probe in much greater depth to gain richer insights. Instead of a discussion guide for a focus group, the moderator in an IDI uses an interview guide. The guide is set up to help the interviewer get to deep emotional levels regarding the topics by trying various questions and then following-up with gentle probing to get the respondent to open up. The interviewer continues to probe as the respondent offers more feelings about the brand. This can lead to communication that helps capture the feelings. While the interview guide provides some structure to the discussion, it is much more dependent on how the interviewer reads and relates to the respondent than in a focus-group setting. The interviewer needs to continue to guide and gently probe the respondent to get to their feelings about the brand. Though there is usually a time limit agreed upon between the interviewer and respondent, it is not based per question. This allows for more laddering in the questions. The important thing in a focus group is to get through all the questions; the important thing in the IDI is to dig deeper into the emotion of the responses. The focus group discussion is more structured; whereas the IDI is more guided by where the respondent takes the discussion. IDI's are held at a place where the respondent is more comfortable such as their home, office, or a neutral, mutually agreed upon location.

### Ethnography

Why here? By doing an ethnography at this point in the research, I can gain a deeper insight into the true behavior and feelings of customers in the context of a normal setting. From the focus groups and

IDIs, I know what consumers say they do and why. From the ethnographic study, I can now observe what they actually do versus what they say they do.

Why this method? One of the functions of ethnographic research is to see to what extent the data gathered from previous surveys, such as focus groups and interviews, is correct. This method can act as a reinforcement of the information obtained from previous methods. The main benefit of an ethnographic study is its ability to provide a detailed and honest representation of consumers' behaviors and attitudes. It offers an in-depth look into a natural environment. When conducting other types of studies which are not based on observation, it can be very easy to miss unexpected issues. This can happen either because the questions are not asked, or respondents neglect, are afraid, are too shy to mention something, or they do something instinctively without noticing. Subjective in nature, an ethnographic study can be useful in uncovering and analyzing relevant consumer attitudes and emotions. This can provide new insights for the client. It can help the client better understand why consumers make certain decisions, especially if these decisions are in some way emotionally-based instead of rationally-based. It also gives insight into human interactions. In advertising and public relations, ethnographic research is usually focused on a particular customer behavior, such as why a consumer chooses one brand over another, which is what I am trying to find out.

Where to observe: Sporting goods stores and outdoor clothing stores, such as Dicks, Sun and Ski, and REI, are necessary observations places to observe as they offer a variety of current brands and are tailored to winter outerwear and jackets. These stores are where most consumers go to buy outdoor apparel so that is what they (the consumers) will be paying attention to. A clothing store that sells or specializes in winter outerwear/jackets, such as Burlington or Belk, is a good place to observe. Any of these stores would give me the ability to see how consumer choices are made. It's important to take note of how customers view the product, talk about its look, comfort, function, style, price, and anything else that weighs into their decision. A shopping mall is a good location because it contains many of these types of stores.

It is also important to observe consumers in their daily routine and social activities, such as general shopping, sporting events, and outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, or skiing. This will help me see and gain an understanding of what gets consumers excited, what gets them interested in different brands, their choice decision-making process, and what they may do differently from what they say. A good ethnographic technique would be a fun outdoor activity with friends. At this type of event, multiple consumers, most of whom know each other, are brought together for a social gathering. As a result, people are more comfortable. The relaxed and festive atmosphere brings forth behaviors and insights that would probably not surface in a more controlled setting.

Who to observe: While it is impractical, and not really the goal of ethnographical research, to observe every customer who walks in the door of the store and write down his or her every move, it is important not to ignore what may seem to be insignificant actions because they may lead to unique insights. Customers who do more than look at every jacket are worth observing. Those who visually and physically examine the item, such as feeling it, examining the pockets, zippers, or buttons, trying it on, walking around in it, looking in the mirror, are the customers to observe. I can tell their thoughts on the jacket based on their facial expressions, interaction with anyone with them, and their interest in sharing them wearing the jacket with friends and family on social media. This will be a source of valuable information. Interactions with employees, where customers gravitate to, and when consumers or groups of consumers come into the store also provide important insights. I think it is also important to make notes of customer demographics in terms of gender, race, and age group. Like the focus groups and IDIs, consumer observation must be performed in the geographical regions where these previous studies were also performed in order to truly validate previous results and gain new insights. This will help me determine who shops for winter jackets, who purchases which brands, and what

plays into the decision-making process for the various consumer segments as well as the differences or similarities among them.

Length of observing: Winter jackets tend to be a seasonal item and are not purchased as frequently as other clothing items. Observing one time isn't enough. Observing a couple of days a week during peak fall and winter months should give me time to obtain a more complete understanding of consumer preferences, as well as allowing the market to release any new styles for the season. The benefit of doing an ethnographic research on winter jackets at the shopping mall is that there are multiple apparel and sporting goods stores there which cuts down on my wasted time. Outdoor social events can gather a large number of consumers together at one time and can provide a variety of observations in a relatively short amount of time. I must be very discreet in observing, taking notes, or recording on a cell phone any observations or insights. Most people don't like being watched, and getting caught observing will end the study at the store or outdoor activity for at least that day, maybe longer, and cause the study to have to be lengthened. When consumers know they are being watched, it is likely that they won't act as they normally would as when they are not being watched, or at least unaware of being watched. It's a good idea to just observe and listen, and then step out of the store, or away from the crowd, and quickly make any notes.

When to observe: Since winter jackets are seasonal, it is important to observe during mid to late fall and winter when stores are fully stocked and demand is higher. Christmas is also an important time as these types of jackets are sometimes purchased as gifts. I think observing on the weekend would be the most effective days to observe. These are the days when consumers have more free time to shop, especially shopping that is more thought out and not as rushed. Though the stores on the weekends are busier and more crowded, and thus may be a bit more challenging for me, the observer, it also offers me the ability to not be as readily noticed and maximizes the observations for the time spent in the store. Weekends are also good for social observing. The time off work or school allows consumers to gather for outdoor activities and outside sporting events. There are usually a variety of activities and numerous venues on the weekend from which I can choose from, and from which to gather observations and insights.

How to analyze: An analysis of ethnographic research starts at the beginning. While observing, it is necessary to take detailed and "thick" field notes. I need to focus on interactions between consumers, consumer and employee, and consumer and product. The overall and underlying observations and themes then need to be pulled out to figure out what the data really means. This could include how a store display, a store employee, or the social interaction with family and friends influence opinions and affect purchasing patterns. The key is to create subheads under which insights can fall and findings can be organized. Ethnography is useful to businesses because it helps them learn more about their target market. This type of study gives companies a clear idea of who buys their products and why these customers make their purchases. Ethnographic research helps companies understand the consumer in terms of cultural trends, lifestyle factors, attitudes, and how social context influences product selection and usage. They can then use this data to come up with strategies to improve their products and their advertising campaigns to attract more customers.

### Survey Research

Why here?: Qualitative research is about understanding what people say and do by looking into processes and meanings to consumer responses that can generate questions for further study. It answers the 'why' and 'how' of an action or behavior. Quantitative research counts or measures those responses in a numerical and statistical way. Though they are different they have complimentary contributions to the research plan. It answers the 'what' and 'how much'. By beginning with qualitative methods, such as focus groups, IDIs, and ethnographies, I can use the findings to provide insights and a stronger foundation to build the quantitative research questions. Though the qualitative research has provided me with data on the 'how and why something is', it is subjective and can't be

generalized. I now need objective data that can provide me with the “what and to what extent something is” that I can generalize to the population. Quantitative studies can test the hypothesis and relationships between variables that the qualitative data has brought to light.

Why this method? Survey research is one of the most popular methods for collecting quantitative data. It is the best method for collecting information in determining customer satisfaction and preferences for specific product brands. It is very efficient in that surveys can be administered over a broad population through a number of platforms, such as in person, by phone, or electronically. Surveys are customized to the research goal and RQ. Each question on the survey is developed to obtain information that expands the knowledge needed in addressing the client problem. The surveys are distributed to a sample drawn from a larger target population. Generalizations can be made from this sample to the larger target population regarding consumer purchasing behaviors, attitudes, and opinions. Once the data is analyzed and the generalizations are made, the client can develop tactics to influence the attitudes and opinions of the target populations.

Questions: I would construct the survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions. These questions rely on a fixed number of response options. Respondents select one of the answers from the options listed. Closed-ended questions are easier to manage and analyze than open-ended questions. If my questions are created well, responses will be easy to attain, read, and will be accurate. As in all research, I have to ask the right questions to get accurate answers. My first questions must be simple and general, and work their way to more specific and difficult questions. I will list the questions in a logical order and group them by topics such as purchasing behavior, brand awareness, brand image, demographics, and lifestyle. My questions must not contain any ambiguities, nuances, or double negatives. They must not be leading, double-barreled, or over-demanding recall questions. The questionnaire must include instructions as these are not administered on a one-to-one basis or with a moderator present to instruct the respondent. I will pretest the questionnaire for word selection, question development, question order and grouping.

General purchasing/purchasing behavior questions:

1. How often do you buy clothing from an online retailer? (Likert scale 1 to 5, 1 being not at all 5 being always)
2. How often do you buy clothing from a brick-and-mortar store? (Likert scale 1 to 5, same scale)
3. How likely do the following affect your clothing purchase? (Likert favorability scale 1 to 5)
  - a. Price
  - b. Quality
  - c. Design/Style
  - d. Social Influence/Recommendations
  - e. Comfort/Fit
4. How important is it for you to dress according to trends or what’s in style? (Likert 1-5)
5. How do the following statements about trends apply to you? (Likert scale 1 to 5)
  - a. I look to print media (i.e. magazines) for new trends
  - b. I look to my social circle of friends for new trends
  - c. I look to social media and blogs for new trends
  - d. I look to celebrities/famous people for new trends
  - e. I set my own trends
6. How important is it to dress in fashion with your friends, co-workers, or peers? (Likert 1-5)

More specifically to the winter outerwear market:

1. How often do you buy a winter jacket?
  - a. Once per year/season
  - b. Once every 2-3 years
  - c. Once every 4-5 years
  - d. Less than once every 5 years
  - e. 2-3 times per year
  - f. More than 3 times per year
2. How often do you purchase winter jackets from the following: (Likert scale 1 to 5)
 

a. Department store in person	e. Department store online
b. Sporting goods/Outdoor store in person	f. Sporting goods/Outdoor store online
c. Discount store in person	g. Discount store online
d. Brand store in person	h. Brand store online

3. How important are the following qualities when purchasing a winter jacket? (Likert scale)
  - a. Price
  - b. Durability/Quality
  - c. Design/Style
  - d. Brand
  - e. Comfort/Fit
4. How important are the following factors when forming an opinion on winter jackets? (Likert)
  - a. Advertisements
  - b. Endorsements
  - c. Family
  - d. Store clerk
  - e. Friends
5. Rank the following brands of winter coats in terms of preference. (Likert Scale 1-5, 1 =most preferred, 5=least preferred)
  - a. The North Face
  - b. Patagonia
  - c. Columbia
  - d. Arcteryx
  - e. Marmot
6. Rank these same brands of winter coats in terms of familiarity. (Likert Scale 1-5, same #5)
  - a. The North face
  - b. Patagonia
  - c. Columbia
  - d. Arcteryx
  - e. Marmot
7. How much do you spend on a new winter jacket?
  - a. \$1-\$50
  - b. \$51-\$100
  - c. \$101-\$150
  - d. \$151-\$200
  - e. \$201-\$250
  - f. \$251-\$300
  - g. \$301+

Specific to Columbia brand:

1. Have you ever purchased a Columbia winter jacket? Yes No  
If yes, answer question 2. If no, proceed to question 5.
2. Would you purchase Columbia again? Yes No  
If yes, answer question 3 and 4. If no, proceed to question 5.
3. What did you value in your Columbia winter jacket? Check all that apply.
  - a. Style/Design
  - b. Fit/Comfort
  - c. Price
  - d. Quality/Durability
  - e. Brand Popularity/Recognition
4. Now rate each item as to its level of importance. (Likert scale 1-5, 1=most important, 5=least important)
  - a. Style/Design
  - b. Fit/Comfort
  - c. Price
  - d. Quality/Durability
  - e. Brand Popularity/Recognition
5. How does the Columbia brand come across to you? (Pick one of the answers in each pair/Matrix)
 

a. Affordable – Expensive	d. Traditional – Innovative
b. Low Quality – High Quality	e. Versatile - Limited
c. Comfortable – Uncomfortable	f. Popular - Unpopular

Survey flow: In order for the questions to contribute to the objectives of the survey, it is best if they flow in an organized manner. This is usually from easiest to hardest and from generic to more specific. By being able to answer the easier questions and rate the easier statements, the confidence and momentum of the respondent builds so they can respond to the harder items later. It is also beneficial to group the questions/statements by topic and scale type. When the questions/statements are grouped together respondents can more easily follow along and provide accurate answers. My survey would begin with general purchasing decision questions like those posted above. This would introduce the topic of shopping as the main idea of the survey as well as get a better understanding of whether consumers shop more online or at brick and mortar stores and influencers that affect purchasing decisions. Following the general section, I would focus on more specific questions regarding the winter jacket industry. This section would determine the price point customers expect to pay for a new jacket, what qualities they value in a purchase, and how often they purchase a new winter jacket. This section would also ask questions about the various brand preferences, familiarity, and characteristics. I would follow that with Columbia brand specific questions such as if a consumer has ever purchased the brand, if the brand was favorable, and perceived qualities of the brand. Within the product section and specific brand section, I would group all the quality questions, such as the importance of comfort, durability, style, and which qualities consumers associate with specific brands. The quality questions are important in purchasing decisions and flow well after finding out the basics of winter jacket purchases, such as where purchases are made, the frequency of purchases, and which brands are most familiar and preferred. The quality questions will start to answer why certain brands are purchased over others, and which quality attributes are present or missing in the Columbia brand. Next within those categories, I would group the influencer questions as the next set of questions. Influencers affect

purchasing decisions, but are a little more complicated and personal than quality factors. Next to last, I would place the lifestyle questions regarding outdoor winter hobbies and activities such as their participation in outside winter sports, camping, hiking, running/jogging, or as an outdoor spectator. The reason I would place the lifestyle questions next to last is because these questions have the potential to cause concern for consumers. They may not care to answer such questions, not see what these questions have to do with purchasing, and question the survey motive, causing them to stop answering the survey questions. If that becomes the case, the preceding questions have been answered and all is not lost. The survey would end with general demographic information like age, marital status, education and income level, geographical location, and gender. While these are not extremely sensitive questions, many consumers find these questions to be sensitive and this can adversely affect overall participation. Again, consumers may not want to share answers to these questions and they may question why those questions are important and the motive behind the survey. Keeping them at the end alleviates an early onset of frustration or suspicion and the respondent not completing the survey. As the survey questions build, the consumer may feel confident enough in the survey to answer the demographic questions. Unless I am targeting a certain audience, such as a specific gender and/or a specific age group, I would always place these questions at the end of the survey. In each set of topic questions or statements, I would arrange them in order of ease (easiest to hardest) and try to keep the same measurement scales together as much as possible.

Measurement styles: In trying to assess the importance of various factors that affect product and brand purchasing, I would use ordinal data with 5-point Likert scale to measure the respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with the statements or questions on my survey. The 5-point Likert scale is very commonly used, so it is understood by a majority of the population. This limits the possibility of confusion, therefore increasing the level of accuracy of the survey overall. This type of scale offers a variety of choices for a single question in an easy to understand format. This style of measurement also offers a mid-point response that corresponds to neither one way or the other (not agree or disagree, not strongly or weakly, etc.) where a consumer without an opinion or who doesn't believe in one side or the other can choose a response. These choices can be ranked and the central tendency measurements of mean, median, and mode can be calculated. The sample mean is the average response for the various sample questions, and is representative of the attitudes and opinions of the majority of the sample population. However, the mean may not truly represent the average response of those surveyed. I need to know the standard deviation to tell me how far away the responses are from the mean. A smaller standard deviation of plus or minus 2.0 shows that the mean is a good representation of the set of data. If the standard deviation is larger, the other measurements of central tendency need to be examined. A large standard deviation can indicate that the respondents are segmented, but it can also be the result of skewed results. Sometimes with a small sample population, a single high or low response can skew the mean. The median, or middle score, may be necessary to examine in cases where there are extremely skewed figures. In such instances, the median is more representative than the mean for determining opinions of the majority of the consumers surveyed. The mode, or most common number, is the one that appears most often for a question. If one score comes up much of the time, it is important to recognize that frequency. In small sample sizes, the frequency of results and any outliers are important in data interpretation. In analyzing survey data with a central measurement of mean, the data should always be re-evaluated by the median and/or mode for each response choice when the standard deviation of the mean is high in order to truly evaluate the most frequent response. I could also use percentages rather than mean, median, and mode for certain ordinal questions or statements that are measured with a Likert scale if a consensus is hard to determine. These measurements for the various survey questions offer an excellent indication of what most consumers think or feel about a certain topic. This information will be valuable to Columbia in determining what steps to take regarding regaining its brand market share. I also would use a matrix table to simply gain an idea of what

consumers think of a certain topic such as the brand itself. I use matrix tables because they also have a middle ground point, which offers more than a simple ‘yes or no’ question would.

Expected data: Surveys are a method of asking questions to a sample population of consumers. The information and data are collected during a single point in time. It gives me, as the researcher, the ability to ask multiple questions in a short period of time and in a way that is convenient to the participant. Surveys are also typically anonymous and result in more honest answers. While qualitative methods, such as focus groups and in-depth interviews, allow for a deeper insights of the feelings, motivations, and emotions behind consumer thoughts or actions, many participants will hold some information back due to shyness, embarrassment or risk of feeling like an outcast. The anonymity of surveys eliminates that risk. Results are analyzed and compared among a set of variables based on the respondents’ answers. The survey explores, describes, and explains a variety of concepts, attitudes, and behaviors. The data helps to determine something new or confirm previous insights. The resulting data from surveys are quantitative, and as stated previously, do not consist of the rich, deep qualitative responses that contribute to the why aspect, but as important to the research objectives and RQs, the results are in statements of generalities that can be applied to target populations. It offers the best impression of what consumers think and what they do. With the help of bivariate and multivariate analysis, I can test hypotheses of association to help predict causality as well as discover new trends in thinking and decision-making. I can compare data of Columbia users to non-Columbia users. Analysis tools found on sites like Qualtrics make survey data easier to analyze. These tools allow you to find the mean, median, and mode for Likert scales, which allows me to uncover how the sample population feels about a brand/product/feature/etc. These tools also supply the standard deviation, which shows the amount of variation within a set of data. With tools like these, the survey is a useful way to gauge a population sample’s perception of a vast amount of topics without costing a large amount of money or time. This data will help me refine the existing customer profiles to create more accurate and unbiased target personalities. This data will show me and the client what is important to consumers in purchasing a winter jacket—where they shop, how often they purchase, brand perceptions, importance of product and brand qualities, what are they looking for in a winter jacket, and influencers in their decision-making. It is important for the client to know the “what” that generally applies to a vast number of consumers to make any and all necessary adjustments to their brand and/or product so as to appeal to more customers. Data from this process will also create a ranking scale of opinions for diverse topics as the Likert scale gives a range of interest for the topics, which allows me to understand whether consumers just like something or if they love it.

Who to sample: I want to measure consumer shopping behaviors as it pertains to the winter jacket market, and consumer attitudes, opinions, awareness, and preferences towards various brands. The main criteria is that the consumer wears winter jackets. Geographical location and demographic information also plays a role in this market, so consumers in the four main regions in the US and of various demographics should be surveyed. Results can, and will, vary by location and demography due to the nature of the product and its reason for usage/purchase. The survey is focused on the American population since this is the area of concern for the client. This helps the survey be more directed and easily distributed.

Quantity of responses: The survey sample size is a major factor in the accuracy of the generalizations of my data. Up to a certain number, the larger the sample size, the more likely the data are accurate for making generalizations. There is a point when the sample size does not offer any additional accuracy in results for the increased costs in surveying a larger sample size. Since the survey will be focusing on the American population as a national survey, a large random sample of 1,000 to 1,200 consumers is desirable. This will provide enough data for me to conduct a detailed analysis among the several categories of questions. Because I am interested in geographic similarities and differences, 300 to 400 surveys would be distributed to each region. This amount of data is both manageable and informative.

The range of responses should give me a relatively low margin of error of plus or minus 3% with a 90% confidence level of accuracy and, if my questions are properly developed, I should find responses with key insights to help develop the brand.

**Distribution:** Each method of distribution has its benefits and limitations. A first inclination is to survey at a store or mall, but this is not a true random survey and therefore results cannot be generalized to the larger population. Respondents at a store or mall are surveyed because they happen to be there at the time the surveyor is present. Mail surveys are among the most economical and can achieve a random sample, but the response rate is very low which can skew the results. Telephone surveys are an option, but with laws limiting when calls can be made it is difficult to get a good cross-section of the population and true random sample due to consumers working at the times when calls are allowed. Online surveys reach a large segment of the target market and is what I would use to distribute my survey. Though, as with all the means of distribution, there are issues with random sampling. A percentage of the population does not have computers, but this is no different than the number of consumers that don't have land line phones. In the US today, I think a representative sample of shoppers have computers either at home or at work. I would use email as one way to distribute the surveys. This allows the distribution of the survey in a matter of moments. Results and data can also be collected in a day. Response rates tend to be higher than other ways of distribution and answers tend to be honest. There is no cost to distribute via email and visuals and audios can be attached to the email to aid the respondents. The other online method I would use is the web-based survey. Similar to email, the distribution and responses are fast, and hundreds to thousands can be collected in a day. Again, response rates are high and honest. The cost of developing a web-based questionnaire is minimal, and audio and visuals can be added and even enhanced to attract and aid the respondent. Web-based surveys can be designed to prevent people from completing more than one survey. The use of the Internet for email and web-based surveys helps to break down any barriers due to geography. Both of these online survey methods will target an audience in which Columbia is interested

**Concept testing:** Concept testing is used to evaluate product concepts, brand features, prices, and market positions. It is most often performed before the introduction of a new or improved product. In this survey, respondents were asked to check off rating scales in evaluating various aspects of winter jackets in general and the Columbia brand specifically. Results were then assessed as to the average response and on the strength of the response in regards to such things as degree of purchase intent, important qualities, and brand preferences. It was used to gain insights into consumer opinions of the product and specific brands, and the positions of these brands in the eyes of the consumer and resulting market share. This survey is attempting to direct the Columbia brand by showing what avenues to explore in its present and future products in the winter jacket market, as well as advertising and marketing tactics. This survey can look into Columbia's current successes, its failures, and its soon to be released products. It will give the company insights on where to improve a product and/or concept or to discontinue it.

**Content Analysis:** I would only consider performing a content analysis if my secondary analysis showed that (1) ad spend correlates with sales in the winter jacket market, (2) if Columbia's ad spend is a significantly less than its competitors, and my survey results and/or focus groups and IDIs revealed that (3) print media, such as magazines, is an important influencer for consumers. If these three situations exist, then I would look at how Columbia's ads compare with its competition. I would look at the number of ads, ad size, color, placement, headlines, photos/artwork, overall attractiveness or eye-appeal, promised benefits for the consumer, and suggested action by the consumer. Then I would evaluate the ads as to how well they are set off from competitors' ads and how well they differ in placement from Columbia's competitors. From those evaluations, I would be able to determine what, if any, improvements are necessary and if so, what could then be done to improve Columbia's ads. Most

of this is qualitative because it is based on judgement or perception. The actual counting of ads and any monetary correlation in cost or sales is quantitative.

If social media and blogs were revealed to be an important influencer as a result of my research, I would first ensure Columbia is actively engaged on the major platforms and monitoring the messages for positive and negative comments. This could lead to a more complete content analysis, but simple monitoring at first would be beneficial to Columbia to see where they stand and help the company determine if additional study and analysis of their social media is needed.

Conclusion: The goal of this research plan was to determine what is drawing customers to Columbia's competitors in order for Columbia to know what it needs to do to attract or re-attract a larger following to its brand and regain, or even surpass, its lost market share. To do this I set out to answer the following research questions: What fashion trends, lifestyles, economics, and social aspects affect winter jacket purchases? What makes consumers want to buy a certain brand? What motivates them? What messages will best motivate target audiences to purchase a specific brand? To answer these questions, I needed to discover what brands come to mind when consumers think of winter jackets, what qualities of winter jackets are important to the consumer, what or who are the main influencers in purchasing decisions, and where Columbia fits in the purchasing scheme compared to other popular winter jacket brands. I started my research plan with secondary research. This gave me credible pre-existing data and information on product sales, brand sales, market share, comparisons with competitor brands, and consumer purchasing behaviors and brand preferences. The next step was to determine the why or emotional motivation behind the behaviors and preferences through qualitative research methods. Focus groups and IDIs provided deeper insights into not just what the consumer wants but why they want it. This was followed by an ethnography to observe if consumers do as they say. This could either confirm the previous two qualitative studies or provide new insights. Based on these qualitative insights, questions could be formulated for a quantitative survey that would determine what is important to consumers and how important it is in the purchasing of winter jackets and specifically the Columbia brand. By being able to distribute the survey to a large random sample population, the data and conclusions obtained can be generalized to the American market. Brands have to stay relevant and focus on the current and emerging trends in order to maintain and grow their market share. By performing this research, Columbia will be able to develop a better understanding of its target audience and how to proceed to capture sales from that audience. It will be able to appreciate the customer it is trying to reach in terms of their social habits, lifestyles, and interests. This research will guide them in their mission to make and keep the Columbia brand the preferred option for the consumer. With the data and analysis obtained from this research, Columbia will know where it stands and how to tap into what's important to its target audiences in order to increase its market share.

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Peer Evaluations:

**GROUP MEMBER 1:** Name: Spencer Carney

He/she was always present and on time for any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A-

He/she always fully participated during any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A-  
 He/she worked well with the group, offered critical feedback, and was pleasant to work with: A  
 He/she was a necessary member of the team, made the project better overall, and would be great to work with again in the future: A  
 Overall, I'd give this team member a grade of: A-

**GROUP MEMBER 2:** Name: Rachel Palmour

He/she was always present and on time for any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A  
 He/she always fully participated during any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A  
 He/she worked well with the group, offered critical feedback, and was pleasant to work with: A  
 He/she was a necessary member of the team, made the project better overall, and would be great to work with again in the future: A  
 Overall, I'd give this team member a grade of: A

**GROUP MEMBER 3:** Name: Jeff Holmes

He/she was always present and on time for any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A  
 He/she always fully participated during any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A-  
 He/she worked well with the group, offered critical feedback, and was pleasant to work with: A  
 He/she was a necessary member of the team, made the project better overall, and would be great to work with again in the future: A-  
 Overall, I'd give this team member a grade of: A-

**YOURSELF:** Bobby Ellis

I was always present and on time for any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A  
 I always fully participated during any in-class workdays or out-of-class group meetings: A  
 I worked well with the group, offered critical feedback, and was pleasant to work with: A  
 I was a necessary member of the team, made the project better overall, and was a major factor in the group's overall project: A  
 Overall, I'd give myself a grade of: A