

IB ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE HIGHER LEVEL ESSAY

How does Nike help break the stereotypes of racial and gender prejudice by representing the success stories of athletes in its *Dream Crazy* Advertisement campaign while promoting its brand image?

Nike is an American multinational sportswear brand known for its social campaigns that break the stereotypical norms present in society. In September 2018, Nike introduced its *Dream Crazy* advertisement campaign with prominent sports personalities such as Colin Kaepernick, Leo Baker, Serena Williams and others who dreamt and achieved their unconventional goals. By including successful celebrities, Nike celebrates their stories and endorses diversity by breaking the gender and racial prejudices in sports advertisements. Moreover, through this campaign, Nike attracts the communities associated and inspired by these athletes and their goals; thus, drawing them towards the brand. This essay analyses the advertising choices like the multi-modal approach and persuasive techniques such as celebrity endorsement, testimonials, and documentary photography used by Nike to promote its brand image and celebrate these athletes' success stories by breaking the prejudices.

Figure 1 - Colin Kapernick Nike Dream crazy Advert



Image found on Nike News website

In this campaign's first advertisement (Figure 1), Nike showcases the controversial former National Football League (NFL) player, Colin Kapernick, to celebrate his actions against police brutality and attract consumers associated with him by breaking racial prejudices. Colin protested against police brutality towards African Americans by taking a knee during the national anthem in 2016. As a result, various controversies followed, leading him to be suspended permanently from the NFL (New York Times, 2016). Colin's face is the advertisement's primary content, where the audience's attention falls at his gaze. A gaze that signifies confidence and courage to stand up against the discrimination faced by African Americans and fight against police brutality. The quote in the centre of the advert, "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything", signifies Collins' journey and encourages the audience to break racial prejudices even if there is a severe sacrifice. The quote acts as a testimonial expressing Collin's journey and his struggles, and Nike uses it in the advert campaign

to promote the idea of taking risks to break societal wrongs. Nevertheless, by blending Colin's rough hair in the background, which symbolises his African ethnicity, Nike inspires the African American audience to stand up in unity with Kaepernick and Nike to fight the oppression they face. Nike uses Colin as an athlete activist from the fourth wave of black activism in America (University of Massachusetts, 2017) to support the demand for minorities' equal racial rights and connect capitalism by representing itself as a supporting brand for them; moreover, attracting consumers from such minorities and people against social prejudices.

Figure 2 - Leo Baker Nike Dream crazy Advert



Image found on Nike News website

Another advertisement (Figure 2) showcases a prominent American skateboarder, Leo Baker, to celebrate his journey of overcoming stereotypical gender prejudices in skateboarding and attract people from LGBTQ+ communities. The central part of the advert includes the quote, "You don't have to change who you are to change the world.", Using the pronoun 'You', Leo is making a direct connection with the audience by suggesting that they are a part of the community and their actions will help the society to break the prejudices set against the

LGBTQ+ communities; hence, directing them to support his actions. This further acts as a testimonial for the LGBTQ+ communities to pursue their dreams, and embrace their identity, disregarding the stereotypes present in sports and society. The advert uses diagonal lines, which in photography suggests action, tension, and movement, that Leo's involvement seen in the sport. Uniquely, he created tension in society by being the first non-binary person to openly challenge the 'males' of society in a 'male' stereotypically associated sport. Through this, he has also started a movement in society to put his community's voice to fight and openly accept themselves. Leo's frame seems to be jumping over the fence, suggesting that he has already overcome some prejudices present in society. In contrast, the placement of the bridge over Leo suggests that Leo is trying to reach the bridge's height, thus implying that there is a long way to go ahead. However, the first step has been taken and now the others need to follow him. By showing the wide-open sky and Leo trying to fly with his hands wide open like a free bird, the low angle shot further endorses the idea that the sky is the limit. However, the LGBTQ+ community can reach it and overcome stereotypical ideas related to gender in society. The shot also captures him wearing Nike sneakers, which again promotes Nike's ideology supporting the people who break these social norms. Through this advert, Nike is also promoting its street-wear fashion attire by showcasing him wearing sweatpants, sweatshirts, and a cap that attracts consumers through celebrity endorsement. It again proves itself a unique brand that accepts and is open to consumers from all different gender backgrounds, which additionally helps Nike with its marketing (Breant Lang, 2020).

Figure 3 - Serena Williams Nike Dream crazy Advert



Image found on Nike News website

Similarly, in one advertisement (Figure 3), Nike showcases Serena Williams's success in overcoming racial and gender stereotypes and prejudices in her career. Serena Williams is an African American woman tennis player who faced discrimination to a great extent due to her racial identity and gender. She started her career in her city, Compton in California, a town with a large African American population assumed to be a threatening population due to street gang violence, thus degrading all of Compton's citizens (CNBC, 2020). The quote, "Girls from Compton, don't play tennis. They own it.", alludes to her identity and message from her journey, breaking the stereotypical norms which she faced. The quote's first sentence, "The Girls... don't play tennis", sets a negative tone by not giving a higher authority to Compton's girls, the city where this exceptional athlete belongs. However, the next sentence, "they own it," indicates the power of girls from Compton by providing the message in the structure of the rule of three and making it more persuasive for the audience. Nike also helped her put across her perspective on society's barriers to individual career choices associated with racial and gender identity.

Additionally, documentary photography showcases her playing tennis, which adds a visual representation of the quote. The camera angle captures the moment of her serve, and her style, which indicates her power as her serve, is one of the strongest and fastest in the world and the idea that she owns it (Business Insider, 2019). It also indicates her individuality irrespective of her gender or racial associations. The light on her face and the Nike logo on her athlete attire help capture the audience's attention towards her and the brand logo. Moreover, representing the Nike logo on Serena's apparel presents her association and partnership with the brand as an empowered African American woman (CNBC, 2019). Using Serena as one of the African American female celebrities, Nike uses feminism (Katie Martell, 2019) and the fourth wave of black activism in advertising to reach out to its female and wider millennial audience to build its brand image.

The title of the campaign itself, 'Dream Crazy!', is associated with the adverts. They showcase the stories of those athletes who have pushed themselves against the social boundaries for their dreams. Nike is addressing the experiences of those athletes belonging to the American popular - culture, which aims to target the audience from America. The audience will associate themselves directly with these athletes, as Nike uses celebrity endorsement to build credibility among the audience and promote their brand image through these athletes.

Overall, making the layout of the larger body of work consists of athletes' image in the background with their quote in the foreground and the Nike slogan 'Just do it!' at the bottom. The slogan blends in with the quotations of athletes, acting as a glittering generality as its association with the quotes creates an optimistic mood for the audience and generates a powerful effect on them; thus, making them believe in the brand's vision. Further, the slogan

evokes strong emotion and directs the audience to follow their dreams, adding subtle support to promote their brand image. The adverts consist of a monochromatic filter with the quotes in a white font where the colour scheme signifies the authority and power; athletes overcoming their problems and legacy. Moreover, the white font on the dark background also brings out the quote to the audience.

To conclude, Nike has used strategic marketing strategies such as racial activism, feminism, and support for the rights of minorities to promote its brand image. They have used celebrity endorsement, testimonials, and documentary photography to endorse their support and attract consumers from these communities to encourage the advert campaign. Besides, making the athletes wear Nike sportswear creates a bandwagon effect on the audience, which helps Nike sell their products. By showcasing these athletes from various backgrounds, Nike is also fulfilling its social responsibility of treating people from different genders, races, ethical grounds, and circumstances, which adds to an ethos to persuade the audience, contributing to building their brand image. '*The Dream Crazy*' advertisement campaign created Nike's brand image as its content showcases the society's transformation of social norms associated with sports, which makes the audience believe that Nike is a brand that adopts today's social perspective.

Word Count- 1491 words

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Figure credits

Figure 1

Nike news Dream Crazy. 2018, Nike,
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Figure 2

Nike news Dream Crazy. 2018, Nike,
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Figure 3

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