



## Textual Analysis of Nike's Dream Crazy Commercial

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**Abstract.** In 2018, Nike Inc. chose Colin Kaepernick as the face of the "Just Do It" campaign to celebrate its 30th anniversary. Due to Kaepernick's scandalous past of kneeling during the national anthem, the controversial decision represented an excellent risk for Nike as a brand. This paper depicts that even though Nike's stocks eventually recovered, the evidence shows that political stances impact a company's profitability. Often, the impact is negative in the short term since customers tend to always divide between the two sides of every significant socially or politically contentious matter.

**Keywords.** Nike, commercial, Textual Analysis, Minorities, Media Representations

Media that works to represent others as a natural environment for the social construction of reality. The media works to draw and direct attention to and from the issues that take place in societies and determine the form in which they are addressed. Issues promoted by the media gain the status through which people think about them and their political and social implications (Fürsich, 2010). Moreover, media outlets frame contemporary issues according to political, social, or religious considerations through representations of gender, race, or religion. For example, in the wake of the emergence of the terrorist organization ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Alzyoud (2022) explored the history of The New York Times' coverage of Islam and Muslims. The examination revealed the newspaper's heavy emphasis on themes of terrorism and extremism when publishing news stories about Islam and Muslims. Also, the most prominent and widespread coverage of Muslims in the newspaper was related to terrorism and ISIS.

Top brands and multinational companies often resort to enlisting the services of celebrities in advertisement endeavors due to their extensive influence and reach. Mostly, companies manage to popularize their products more and even generate extra profit by strategically using celebrities. However, when the superstars or icons are controversial, the advertisement or commercial becomes equally controversial, attracting criticism and admiration. Also, when celebrities are extensively popular, they attract more scrutiny to advertisements, which might have an unintended effect on their featured advertisements. In September 2018, Nike Inc. announced that it would extensively feature Colin Kaepernick, the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback, in its 30th anniversary "Just Do It" campaign (Osborne, 2018.). The campaign's slogan was "Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything." From 2011 through 2016, while Colin Kaepernick was the quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, he sat or kneeled during the national anthem before games for most

of the season. Kaepernick knelt to protest racial injustice. Kaepernick's bold actions generated a lot of debate and controversy in the media, with many people supporting his right to protest and equally as many expressing abhorrence towards his disrespect for the flag. The purpose of this paper is to assess the effect that celebrities have on the efficacy of advertisements that feature them in terms of message perception and reception by the target audience. Additionally, this paper aims to evaluate the effect of using celebrities in advertisements on the company's profitability with extensive reference to Kaepernick's partnership with Nike.

### **Literature review**

On January 30, 2014, *BuzzFeed News* posted Tasneem Nashrulla's article in which she detailed the controversy that embroiled the SodaStream advertisement that featured actress Scarlet Johansson. SodaStream recruited the actress to help popularize their new personal soda makers that specialized in healthy sodas that were environmentally affable. Consequently, the Israeli company made the popular actress the global brand ambassador. The ad aired on February 2 in a Super Bowl commercial in the U.S. and on February 3 during the final of *The Jump* in the U.K. The commercial features Johansson as a soda scientist attempting to make her message of nutritious sodas go viral by seductively sipping her drink through a straw. According to Nashrulla, the primary source of controversy surrounding the commercial was the actress's decision to associate with a company that had its main plant in the West Bank in an Israeli settlement, a territory Palestinians claimed following its capture by Israel in 1967 (Nashrulla, 2014). Ironically, the actress had been the global ambassador for Oxfam, an organization that undertakes humanitarian endeavors worldwide, since 2007. In her role at Oxfam, the actress helped raise funds to eradicate poverty and highlighted natural disasters' impact on communities worldwide. Since Israeli settlements such as the one that hosted SodaStream's main plant are illegal as per international law, Johansson's involvement represented a glaring conflict of interest. Following criticism by Oxfam regarding Johansson's participation in the ad, the actress resigned as an Oxfam ambassador, an indication that she sided with SodaStream. However, pro-Palestinian activists started online campaigns on platforms such as Twitter to mock and ridicule the actor for being insensitive to the lamentations of Palestinians regarding human rights abuses. On Twitter, people used hashtags such as #NoScarJo and #SodaStream to demand that the actress withdraws her support for the brand. Nevertheless, Dan Birnbaum, the company's CEO, intimated in an interview with Associated Press Television News that, despite the attacks and protests, SodaStream lost no customer but instead benefitted from the spotlight (Nashrulla, 2014). Celebrities can leverage their popularity in collusion with companies to boost profit through controversy. Coca-Cola's commercial "The chase" is another example of the major companies that announced their products in Super Bowl 2013, and met with a great wave of anger from the Arabs, this advertisement has received much criticism since the guy and his camel are omitted from the race when you visit the website (Makharesh, et al., 2022).

The *Independent* published an article by Jenn Selby on April 6, 2015, where she assessed the involvement of actress Nicole Kidman in an Etihad Airways advertisement for its 'Flying Reimagined' brand campaign. The commercial, which aired on March 15, featured the famous actress as its narrator and star. Kidman appeared on scenes aboard the airline's new Airbus A380 at its home base and on several landmarks worldwide. Although the actress has previously promoted other products, her association with Etihad Airways stirred controversy and criticism owing to an apparent conflict of interest. The Association of Professional Flight Attendants, which championed the wave of criticism against Kidman, cited the actress's role as United Nations goodwill ambassador since 2006 as totally contradicting the airline's policies (Selby,

2015). According to the national president of the association, Laura Golding, Etihad Airlines engaged in unfair and inequitable labor practices against women. APFA urged Kidman to halt her promotional contract with the airline and further commenced a public campaign against UAE airlines, including Etihad, to create awareness of how unacceptably they treat their female employees. The controversy surrounding the ad is directly attributable to the celebrity status and popularity that the actress has. Referencing Kidman's speech from the previous month on International Women's Day, the APFA president can easily highlight the contradiction between the actress's sentiments and her involvement with a brand that does not champion women's rights. Although Kidman had not offered any response to the criticism by the time of Selby's article publication, the airline had defended itself, saying through a letter asserting that it treats all employees with respect and dignity (Selby, 2015). Still, the criticism and awareness campaign against Etihad Airways proves that using celebrities in advertisement can stir controversy on the simple basis of the celebrity's previous engagements, which can either sway public opinion against or favor the company.

The *Marketing Dive* published an article on December 4, 2017, authored by Peter Adams, where he examined the "Live For Now" commercial by Pepsi that used reality T.V. star Kendall Jenner from the Kardashian family in a starring role. The ad commences with Kendall taking notice of protesters with placards marching along the street while she is in a photoshoot. Kendall leaves the photoshoot and joins in the Black Lives Matter protests. Eventually, the reality T.V. star reaches for a can of Pepsi, walks to the frontline of the protests, and hands it to one police officer, who then sips it. The primary source of contention in the ad, as Adam discerns, is the company's decision to mix the highly emotive matters of social injustice and police brutality, which the Black Lives Matter protests represent, with simple marketing. Essentially, Pepsi seized a movement that protested racism to sell fizzy drinks conveniently.

Furthermore, Pepsi blatantly used imagery from real-life situations, such as comparing Jenner to protester Iesha Evans. The brand received widespread criticism and condemnation on social media platforms immediately after the commercial aired. Makhareh (2018) reported that since the creation of social media, people have needed to use these websites as a vital component of their lives. Social networking websites are now more important than ever for businesses. The backlash was so severe that the ad only lasted a day before the company pulled it (Adams, 2017). Also, the insertion of Kendall, a celebrity, into the commercial illustrated that choosing the right influencer depending on the preconceived idea of an ad is crucial in the success of the ad. Simply put, Kendall Jenner comes from a well-off family, and portraying her as a crusader of social justice seems disingenuous, especially considering the jovial mood of the commercial itself. Therefore, a consumer's attitude towards a commercial that features a celebrity is highly dependent on the consumer's general knowledge of that person. Although celebrities might attract attention to a brand, the attention might be harmful, "as was the case for Pepsi after the "Live For Now" commercial when the company's brand perception fell to its lowest point in ten years" (Adams, 2017).

Michael F. Jacobson, the Executive Director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, published an article on *HuffPost* on January 23, 2014, where he illustrated how the use of an acclaimed athlete in an advertisement could be controversial. In June 2013, Coca-Cola selected Michelle Kwan, an Olympic figure skater, as one of its four "Active Living Ambassadors," representing the brand at the Winter Olympics in Russia the following year. According to the plan, Coca-Cola would use Kwan's packaging, digital advertising, and retail displays. Eventually, Kwan appeared on Coca-Cola's website, brandishing a bottle of Coke. Notably, Barack Obama had appointed Kwan to the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and

Nutrition three years prior in June 2010. The Council's function was to create awareness among every American about living a healthy lifestyle and enabling all Americans to live healthily by advocating for good nutrition and routine physical activity. The contradiction in the messages that the two entities promote becomes apparent since, whereas Coca-Cola is a sugary drink, the Council encourages Americans to consume less sugary drinks, including soda. According to the Council, Soda, such as Coke, contributes significantly to calories in most American diets, which predisposes many Americans to health complications such as chronic illnesses and obesity (Jacobson, 2014). One person who serves in both entities cannot advance both positions simultaneously by promoting obesity and other illnesses one day and then good nutrition and fitness the next. Although Kwan's appeal to specific preferable demographics justifies the choice by Coca-Cola and Obama's administration, her selection by the company is both confusing and counterproductive. Companies can impede their marketing efforts by advertising celebrities who have fundamentally opposed their current products or services in the past either directly or indirectly. Jacobson suggests that an individual with conflicting interests should sacrifice one ideology and fully support the other.

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, the *International Business Times* published an article by Ben Moss detailing how the then Chelsea football club Captain John Terry, an accomplished defender, lost sponsorship deals with major brands due to continuous controversy in his personal life and career as a player. Boot sponsor Umbro, who had partnered with Terry for 13 years ever since he was 18 years old, opted to sideline the defender in their existing promotional efforts to protect the company's reputation. Umbro had constantly used Terry to promote England national team's kit. Immediately before Umbro sidelined Terry, England national team had already stripped the player of the captaincy. Samsung, an electronics powerhouse that sponsored Chelsea's jersey then, quickly distanced itself from the scandalous defender, saying in a statement that its commitment was to Chelsea as a club rather than to any specific player (Moss, 2014). The controversy engulfed Terry started after allegations that John Terry had racially abused his Premier League opponent and QPR player Anton Ferdinand. Racism is a highly emotive subject not just in the U.K. but worldwide, with the ability to shift public opinion against companies or brands that seem to tolerate it or in favor of those that appear to denounce it accordingly.

Consequently, any renowned athlete that partners with any formidable brand must steer clear of racism-related controversy or risk the brand terminating its contract with them. Ultimately, a company's prime objective will still be to maximize profit by avoiding extremely controversial subjects that would antagonize the market against their products. The strained relationship between John Terry and the brands he associated with highlights how brands assess controversy to gauge the prospects of profiting from the attention. Certain celebrities can be dangerous to the brand depending on the nature of the controversy that they attract. Sometimes, the best option is to end an association with a particular celebrity to save the brand's prospects.

*The Guardian* published an article authored by the Associated Press on December 24, 2010, in which the author illustrates how companies protect their brands by terminating their associations with scandalous celebrities if the scandal is immoral. Once the number one golfer globally, Tiger Woods lost an endorsement deal with Gillette, a shaving brand, following Wood's 2009 admission of marital infidelities. Gillette joined Accenture, Gatorade, and AT&T in the list of companies with severed ties with the golfer ever since the scandal began. Additionally, PepsiCo, a drinks company that mass-produced a drink called Tiger Focus, drawing inspiration from Woods, canceled the endeavor altogether. PepsiCo had a 100 million dollar deal with the golfer, stretching five years. Initially, Woods made approximately 100 million dollars from sponsorship deals per year (Donegan, 2009). For example, the golfer

earned seven million dollars per year through a deal with AT&T and 105 million dollars over five years with Nike. However, as soon as the scandal started, no advertisement by his sponsors featuring the golfer aired on U.S. television. The act of detachment that the companies undertook was justifiable from a branding point of view. For instance, AT&T, a company that provides consulting solutions, had essentially used Woods' high performance on the golfing course to embody their high performance consulting.

Consequently, when the golfer's news of infidelity broke, the company chose to protect its brand image and preserve its high profile by dissociating itself from the scandalous athlete. Understandably, companies use the best athletes in various sports disciplines to build their images and make consumers associate their brands with the excellence that the athletes represent. However, when the athletes become controversial in a manner that adversely affects their image, the companies and their brands suffer by association. Since a negative brand image hurts the company economically, companies must promptly leave celebrities who acquire bad reputations from their marketing efforts.

*Reuters* published an article by Piya Sinha-Roy on June 28, 2013, wherein she documents how celebrity chef Paula Deen lost numerous endorsement deals after she drew racism-related controversy to herself. According to Sinha-Roy (2013), Ms. Deen, a successful celebrity chef, had amassed many promotional deals. Since 2006, the chef endorsed products by Smithfield Foods, the largest ham producer worldwide. In total, Ms. Deen's licensing and endorsement deals were not less than seventeen prior to her scandal (Sinha-Roy, 2013). The scandal began when Lisa Jackson, a general manager of Ms. Deen's restaurants in Savannah, Georgia, brought a discrimination lawsuit against the famous chef. During Ms. Deen's deposition, in the course of that lawsuit, the chef admitted that she had indeed used racial slurs in the past. Immediately afterward, the Food Network terminated her contract, effectively rescinding her shows from the network. Days later, Smithfield Foods voided its endorsement arrangements with the chef.

Additionally, Ms. Deen lost sponsorship deals with retailers Home Depot Inc., Target Corp, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. (Sinha-Roy, 2013). Furthermore, Novo Nordisk A/S, a pharmaceutical company that the chef had partnered with since 2012 when she announced that she had Type 2 diabetes, also severed ties with her. Ms. Deen's case proves that companies guard their brands against controversies of a particular nature jealously. Matters of social injustice such as racism have immense significance in present society. Regardless of the economic benefit in terms of the influence that a celebrity can afford a company through partnerships and endorsements, the majority of brands seemingly contend that the risk outweighs the benefit. When a brand is associated with a celebrity who is racist, some consumers might perceive the entire brand as racist, thereby shunning the company's products. Besides, for some companies, opposition to racism might not just be a result of economics. Instead, a sense of morality can drive some brands to abandon racist influencers.

On October 18, 2012, *The Atlantic* published an article that Dashiell Bennett authored in which he outlined how all sponsors dumped former road racing cyclist Lance Armstrong following his infamous doping scandal. Before the scandal, Anheuser-Busch used Armstrong in its Michelob Ultra commercials, a brewing and drink company with operations in multiple countries. Additionally, Radio Shack, a retailer in the U.S., sponsored Armstrong's Tour De France teams in both 2010 and the following year while Trek Bicycle Corporation manufactured Armstrong's racing bicycles. Also, the cyclist sat on the board of FRS, a Healthy Energy drink company, as a distinguished member. Armstrong's controversy commenced when the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency provided unequivocal proof that Armstrong, a seven-time champion, had



consumed and obscured his use of performance-enhancing banned substances. Afterward, the International Cyclist Union accepted the findings of the Agency's investigation and seized all seven of Armstrong's Tour De France titles.

Although Armstrong's past as a cancer survivor made him a prime candidate for product endorsement, his doping fiasco sealed his fate with the sponsors who could not risk their brands by associating with the dishonest cyclist. Consequently, the companies with whom he had endorsement deals such as Nike, Oakley, Anheuser-Busch, 24-Hour Fitness, Trek, FRS, Honey Stinger, Easton-Bell Sports, and RadioShack all dumped him. This article illustrates the distinction between how brands relate with celebrity athletes prior to controversy and after controversial scandals with insurmountable criticism. Essentially, the writer shows that certain controversies are indefensible and that brands will promptly drop a product endorser if shameful scandals engulf them, as is the case with proof of doping with professional athletes. Although the better decision for the brand in economic terms might be to retain an influencer even if they are scandalous, brands are willing to sacrifice profit for certain scandals by ending a relationship with a celebrity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Advertising is an essential utility for businesses and companies, as they can utilize it to increase awareness about their products or services and maximize profit through an increase in sales. Sports celebrities increasingly endorse products and services at the behest of major companies because they effectively promote awareness and a positive outlook towards the particular brands they partner with (Keat, 2015). Almost every company that specializes in sporting apparel and other sporting merchandise in contemporary times seeks to partner with famous athletes through endorsement deals to broaden its customer base by using them to appeal to target markets. According to Williams (2015), the use of celebrities to popularize products is an incredibly efficient strategy for companies that target society's minorities. Categories of people naturally form due to observable distinctions in ethnicity, race, religion, language, sexual orientation, or physical disabilities inevitably generate minority groups. Logically, the reality of belonging to an ethnic minority or sexual minority, for example, fosters a sense of social, economic, and political exclusion and marginalization in society. Consequently, top brands and companies seize the opportunity to convert the minority groups into customers by targeting them using inclusionary commercials that cleverly feature celebrities. However, the ability of an ad's target audience to decipher both denotative and connotative meanings of a commercial determines its ultimate effectiveness.

Incorporating public figures and sporting icons in advertisements effectively targets minorities for various reasons and might fail for other reasons. First, celebrities give the brand with which they partner credibility (Williams, 2015). Since fans generally trust their sports superstars and feel attached to them, a fan transfers that trust to whichever product the celebrity endorses, deeming it worthy. Additionally, including a celebrity in advertising helps differentiate a brand from other brands within the same niche (Keat, 2015). Consumers will be more likely to remember a commercial due to the familiar face of the celebrity. Also, the right celebrity can help open up an entirely new market for a brand, especially if the target market can directly relate to the celebrity's state, such as having an impairment. However, the attachment of a celebrity to a product through advertisement can sometimes adversely affect the product. For instance, a celebrity's public image can change. Public figures are prone to scandals that get extensive publicity and can reduce sales and profit for the brands they associate

with. Also, "superstars can overshadow the product that they are advertising, thus reducing brand recognition in the consumer's mind" (Yaman et al., 2017).

Nike decided to partner with a football celebrity, Colin Kaepernick, for their "Just Do It" campaign in 2018, featuring him in a starring role as the narrator in an advertisement. The advertisement targets minorities as it features people from diverse backgrounds, thereby accurately representing contemporary society. The commercial partly features real-life clips of current top-tier athletes who have excelled in their respective sporting specialties despite a disadvantage in their past that they overcame. Notably, Nike's selection of Kaepernick is not accidental. According to Kim: "Kaepernick's history of protesting racial injustice informed Nike's decision to partner with him, essentially to show the brand's disapproval of racism" (Kim et al, 2020).

Following the release of the commercial, great contention ensued. While some praised Kaepernick and Nike for bravely protesting racism, others were so displeased with Nike that they threatened to boycott the company and its products. A considerable lot, primarily conservatives, argued that Kaepernick's protest movement was insulting to the American flag and military (Duvall, 2020). The then U.S. President, Donald Trump, reacted to the advertisement by saying that Nike was sending "a terrible message" by associating with Kaepernick (Bieler & Bonesteel, 2018). However, equally many people of note retorted that the athlete was free to partake in any form of protest since the freedom to express himself was his constitutional right. For instance, Serena Williams and LeBron James, who featured in the commercial, supported Kaepernick through Twitter for his role in the ad despite extensive backlash (Jackson, 2018). Through exploration of the advertisement's both denotative and connotative perceptions, I intend to establish the effect of politicizing brand advertisements on target audiences and the profitability of brands that take sides on politically or socially contentious issues.

### **Denotative Level Analysis**

Nike's "Just Do It" commercial featuring Kaepernick is unquestionably a motivational piece that engenders the importance of commitment, hard work, and resilience as necessary components for excellence in sports. The advertisement captures these components in its slogan, "Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything." The commercial fulfills its ultimate purpose of garnering maximum attention and publicity by using Kaepernick, one of the most controversial football players, as its main face (Park et al., 2020). Consequently, Nike manages to leverage the athlete's popularity to extensively market its brand, thereby serving its global interests in the shoes, clothing, and accessories markets.

The ad also effectively expands its reach by carefully selecting a diverse set of people representing today's diverse world to feature in the video. Nike is a famous brand worldwide. Rationally, a commercial that attempts to market its products worldwide has to feature individuals that characterize people from various parts of the world. For instance, the ad includes a female Muslim boxer, a disabled child wrestler, and a black basketball star player. Notably, the selection of the individuals also intentionally represents the marginalized minorities of American society, such as racial minorities and religious minorities. According to Muñoz (2019), as of 2019, half of Nike's consumer demographics within the U.S. comprised ethnic minorities, including Asians, African Americans, and Hispanics. The marketing acumen was exceptional in that the ad opened up new niches by targeting minority groups around the world while sacrificing the U.S. market. Consequently, "Nike's online sales soared by 31% after the campaign" (Washington Post, 2018).



Apart from visual appeal, the commercial amplifies its marketing scope by employing a transcendent inspirational theme in the ad through Kaepernick's narration. The narration complements the video, showing athletes such as LeBron James, who have conquered their sport and moved further to help others in humanitarian capacities. Nike's mission is to bring motivation and innovation to all athletes worldwide (Nike, n.d). The ad perfectly captures the company's mission, as Kaepernick implores his listeners to strive first to become athletes, then be the best athletes in their respective fields, and finally grow beyond sports and positively impact the world. The emotional appeal that Kaepernick's narration encapsulates shows the effort of the ad to communicate to its target audience and promote the company positively to improve its prospects for making a profit. Therefore, Nike understands that its economic sustenance relies on its broad appeal to a diverse customer base and incorporates diversity in its commercial for more effortless success.

### **Connotative Level Analysis**

While endorsing Kaepernick as the face of its campaign through the video commercial *Dream Crazy*, Nike's intention was way beyond marketing Nike products and boosting sales, as a typical advertisement would be (Kim et al., 2020). Nike did not advertise any new product in the ad. However, the company chose to take a stand on racism by supporting Kaepernick's cause of protesting social injustices based on race, showing authentic solidarity for the quest for Black civil freedoms. The idea to consider Kaepernick for the starring role in *Dream Crazy* out of all possible athletes was an intentional move with inferences. Before Kaepernick became the face of *Dream Crazy*, the athlete was already a controversial figure after kneeling for the national anthem to protest police brutality and racial inequality in America (Coombs et al., 2020).

The slogan for the commercial unsurprisingly epitomizes Kaepernick's situation since he "sacrificed" his career for something that he believes in. Consequently, the National Football League owners rejected him as a financial liability, leaving him without a team. Therefore, Nike's decision to use him for their "Just Do It" campaign was an explicit confirmation of support for his stance, essentially intimating that Nike was against police brutality that Black people predominantly endure. The brand elected to leverage its immense influence, became political, and helped effect positive change by endorsing Kaepernick despite the financial risk attached.

Beyond Kaepernick, Nike's careful selection of the other individuals was symbolic. Practically, every athlete who appeared on the commercial overcame substantial systemic restraints by utilizing their respective sports opportunities. While LeBron James made it to the epitome of basketball as a black man, Isaiah Bird became an elite wrestler without legs (Muñoz, 2019). Thus, the ad intends to convey a message of hope to minority groups that face oppression in the U.S. by basically providing proof of successful people who overcame difficult circumstances through perseverance. Also, the adequate representation of ethnic minorities does not only serve marketing purposes. Contrarily, Nike also aims to dispel the notion of marginalizing people from minority groups in social activities such as mainstream sports. Further, Nike's distaste for marginalization and discrimination is also apparent in its selection of Kaepernick himself to vocalize the ad. Since the entire NFL had marginalized Kaepernick, thereby denying him a platform to protest, Nike accorded the athlete a national platform to voice his protest.

### **Discussion**

Nike's advertisement involving Kaepernick was impactful, especially in America, which served as its primary target. The adverse reactions prove that the intended connotations contained in the ad emotionally impacted their intended audience. #NikeBoycott and #BurnYourNikes trended on Twitter, with other consumers threatening to burn their Nike sneakers. The "Just Do It" campaign elicited enormous backlash, particularly on social media, from consumers of Nike products for having the athlete as its leading figure (Watkins, 2018). In contrast, others disposed of their Nike apparel after the commercial (Watkins, 2018). Notwithstanding, "Nike remains the highest-selling company for sports gear ahead of a competitor such as Adidas and Puma" (Niskanen, 2019).

Apart from products, the commercial impacts people's lives as it efficiently motivates members of society that are physically or socially challenged. The 2018 "Just Do It" was a timely ad, as it helped intensify social injustice awareness efforts when many Black people were dying due to police brutality. The inclusionary message that Kaepernick vocalizes offers encouragement to the disadvantaged, urging them to use challenges as character-building opportunities. The ad is as relevant to young people as older people since it uses individuals of various ages to communicate encouragement. Simply, the commercial successfully communicates that everyone, whether female, young, Black or disabled, can attain greatness.

The use of Kaepernick as the face of the "Just Do It" campaign also had financial implications for Nike as a company. Most companies avoid politically and socially contentious issues to prevent losses by losing customers on one side of an issue. Immediately after the commercial was unveiled, Nike's shares fell, with the stock closing the day about 3.2% down (Thomas, n.d.). Also, symbolic consumption, whereby brands and products signify some aspects of a cultural ecosystem, contributed to consumer apathy, which affected Nike's profitability. Some consumers opted not to use Nike products because of Kaepernick's viewpoints on social justice issues. Even though Nike's stocks eventually recovered, the evidence shows that political stances impact a company's profitability. Often, the impact is negative in the short term since customers tend to always divide between the two sides of every significant socially or politically contentious matter.

### **Conclusion**

The forgone analysis substantiates those controversial public figures resourcefully attract attention to any brand they associate with. When celebrities are politically controversial, they have the unique ability to impact attitudes towards major brands by influencing their fans and followers. Companies that take the risk to voice a political stance or social stance on a subject should seek celebrities whose values, opinions, and convictions align with theirs. Through collaboration in endeavors such as commercials, both the company and the individual can significantly benefit financially, as Kaepernick and Nike eventually did. However, mismanagement of the attention that a controversial celebrity might attract to a company can cause losses and brand destruction.

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### **Appendix A**

A voice of Colin Kaepernick in the background saying: "If people say your dreams are crazy, (footage of a skateboarder falling many times) if they laugh at what you think you can do, ( footage of a child with no feet as a wrestler) good because calling a dream crazy is not an insult. It is a compliment. (Showing different footages of a Muslim woman wearing the Hijab and disabled female basketball player on a wheelchair dribbling) Don't try to be the fastest in your school (footage of young African boy running in the fields); be the fastest ever (showing an African man winning a race). Don't believe you have to be like anybody to be somebody. (Someone skating) Don't become the best basketball player on the planet (Lebron James playing basketball and footage of him giving a speech) be bigger than basketball. Believe in something (footage of the back of Kaepernick while he turns to face the camera and look at it), even if it means sacrificing everything. If you have only one hand, don't just watch football, play. (a football player celebrate with one hand to play with) if you're a girl from Compton, become the greatest athlete ever (several footages of Serena Williams, a female tennis player playing). Yeah, that's more like it. (Kaepernick walking on the street and saying) To know, ask if your dreams are crazy, ask if they're crazy enough."

Ad's link: <https://youtu.be/-grjIUWkoBA>