

### 1.3 Consumer Essay

What factors tend to drive your consumer decisions and preferences?

Nike as an International Corporation makes a variety of athletic wear from shoes to hats and everything in between. The Nike brand has been very popular because their products are made with "modern technology" and the best quality "raw material" (NIKE Inc.). Nike has become world famous for their multipurpose and all weather use products. It has won great honor for producing and providing comfortable shoes, sports equipment and clothing to consumers all over the world. Everyone talks about "the brand" and image of a company. Nike has more than just a brand, it has a faithful, loyal, fan base which can often lead to some saying it has a cult following. "Sneaker heads" (shoe collectors) still go crazy over a pair of Nike Dunk style shoes, or even the Air Force Ones, which are still going strong in numerous different colors. This is even though the style was originally introduced way back in the early 80's. Then there is the company's extension of the Jordan brand. Michael Jordon is arguably the best basketball player, maybe even athlete, of all time, and his shoes are more than just popular. They are ridiculously valuable as collectible items. Nike could never introduce another style of shoe and most likely still dominate just by re-releasing their more successful older styles. The same can't be said for most competitors. Other companies have to keep developing new product annually where Nike only reinvents its models ever so often. I've always liked Nike. Whenever I buy their gear, I always know I'm getting a good quality product that is durable, comfortable, and usually looks nice. Nike has always been one of the most innovative companies around, and with their efforts to enable customization of their products has really taken customer service to another level.

They also tend to attract the best athletes. Nike for years has represented their celebrities as sport idols, all knowing, talented humans who are so because they've indulged in the Nike brand. Celebrities provide the images or "Faces" that need no further identification. Wherever they go, they are recognized, and moreover, recognized with awe. Whatever they do has publicity value and that is why Nike chooses them to promote their brand. That is what celebrity means. That is what Nike holds. Yes, Lance Armstrong and Tiger Woods as of the past few years may have backfired, but at the time of signing they were top of the list talent. They still have the old-school players like Jordan, as well as the new school future legends like LeBron James. It's hard to picture a world without Nike sneakers when they have become so ingrained in our culture. It wouldn't be too farfetched to say that everyone has worn Nike sneakers and or product at some point.

Many people like to argue that their daily lives are not influenced by marketing and advertisements. To some extent that may be true, however, everyone is in some way drawn to certain products or ideas. After analyzing Nikes "Find Your Greatness" ad which features an overweight child giving it his all to reach what Nike promotes, I came to the conclusion that companies do not always target the audience straightforward. Instead, they create positive memories and feelings that influence our behavior over time. It causes something

like a snowball effect. Take into consideration Nike. One of the greatest sports companies in the world heavily invests in advertisements. Often they are short messages, like the ad stating "Find Your Greatness." Three simple words and the Nike logo don't seem like a devastating amount. However short ad after short ad one has Nike stuck in their subconscious. This is done in order to encourage us to buy something at a later date. No one likes to think that they are easily influenced. We all seek to draw away from the "pack" to avoid being seen as sheep blindly following. In fact, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that we respond negatively to naked attempts at persuasion. Instead, the best advertisements are ingenious at leaving impressions. I as a self-proclaimed "budgetista" don't tend to overindulge in today's market. But there is just that "I want" not I need but "I want" feeling ingrained within me.

When it comes to analyzing society and what pulls our strings corporations like Nike have mastered the game. The number one way to persuade a person is through emotion/feelings. The former mentioned ad evokes a great deal of emotion upon sight. Knowing that a devastating amount of America's population is obese makes this ad very controversial. That is depending on what vantage point is being taken. The obese or what may seem like the "average" American is being looked out for, by none other than Nike. Or that is what they attempt to convey through the slogan "Find Your Greatness". Everyone and anyone can find it with the use of Nike products. Right?

Second comes Logos. The company has tapped into this sector through Function/Compatibility, companies find ways to make the function or use of their product explicit. If we don't understand we won't bother to pay attention. This is where audience comes into play. Different audiences will be targeted by different ads. It wouldn't make sense to target eight year-olds with Nike free weight ads as much as it would to tap into the teenage/college student pool with that type of ad. Same scenario applies for older audiences; they won't be approached with the "awes" and "ohhhs" of shiny Nike shoes, but rather with the classics eternal styles it has provided for years. Nike takes a logical approach when encountering this situation. The main question asked is, will the product be compatible with the audience whom has taken interest in it? Once again advertisement analyzed, fully depicts this. It targets the obese population in America (which we know consist of millions, sadly). It promotes fitness, and all the same while pushes those who find themselves in the physical situation in which the child in the advertisements is. "Find your greatness" aren't three simple words, it's a powerful phrase. The word greatness with the setting evoke passion for better strives. Lastly cost is almost always a deal breaker. This is why many companies heavily invest in making sure the audiences know that their money isn't going to waste; it is being "invested". After thoroughly analyzing the advertisement it can be seen that Nike is saying that, by investing in Nike, one is investing in their well being. This could be quite the catch. It would seem logical to buy Nike. After a lot of reconnaissance, I could say I have been part of that population who sadly has believed Nike or for that matter other products could be the sole purpose for improvement in life. Not many stop to think about that, why would they when it has been ingrained in us that what is displayed is the truth. We won't realize our consumer tendencies until we stop and reflect upon them.

Lastly what has completely changed my decisions and preferences as a consumer are yes, now, former Nike faithful has been its ethics. As great and caring as they make themselves out to be, they just aren't. On their website Nike states, "Use only what you

need”, however they do not provide merely the essentials one needs. They propose luxurious items to society, but they pose them as necessities. As respectable and credible as they are from a business standpoint, from an ethical standpoint they over invest in athletes when money could be used for true necessities. For instance Nike’s recent splurge on a college football operations building’ “The performance center was paid for through a donation from Phil Knight, a founder of Nike, an Oregon alumnus and a longtime benefactor of the university”. Many may argue that they make millions and it is up to them to spend it how they see fit. However Nike turns out a huge profit because of the way they operate and where they manufacture. Who is Nike, behind closed doors?

Maybe not the company you think. My position is that Nike is a major shoe company who is taking advantage of countries poverty. Though they preach the evil of sweatshops, they continue to exploit them in developing countries. Children working in a sweatshop are held under gruesome working conditions. Many of them are forced to work a 9-hour workday. When the workers started to get better wages, Nike decided to look for new places to build sweatshops. These places were China and Vietnam. These two countries were perfect because of their relaxed labor laws. In China and Vietnam Employees are prohibited from making independent trade unions. This is a big plus for Nike because there are no organized groups to strike or fight for more rights in the workplace. Child Labor laws are very lenient in most of the countries that Nike has established its self in. Nike is currently working with these developing nations to make their child labor laws stricter, which masks the vast amount of exploitation occurring. Research shows that as of now Nike has established sweatshops, which are located in South Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, and Vietnam. After researching and digging up information on Nike, my preferences and ways of piking what I consume have changed drastically. We are only in power of what we consume if we decided to be, if not they(the companies) are.