

How Nike creates its brand identity through Instagram

A Thematic Analysis of Nike

Student Name: Niels van Santen

Student Number: 540585

Supervisor: Dr. Débora Antunes

Master Media Studies - Media & Creative Industries
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis

June 2024

Word Count: 17751

How Nike creates its brand identity through Instagram

ABSTRACT

The brand identity of Nike is a subject that has been researched, but close to no inquiry is on Nike's brand identity through its Instagram content. Nike is one of the largest companies in the world, and in turn influences many people of society. Nike is a brand that promotes sports, performance, and in general wants people to do the best they can. This research finds whether this is the case or that there is more to this subject. To find out, a qualitative approach was used, accompanied with a thematic analysis. As thematic analysis allows to find out what deeper meaning there is among the content of Nike on Instagram. Concepts that guided this research are that of brand identity in general, branding on Instagram, and celebrities endorsement. Hence, the most important aspects that make this research effective are the models of Kapferer (2008) and that of De Chernatony's model (1999). The first model knows four components to examine brand identity, which are: 'physique', 'personality', 'relationship', 'culture', 'reflection', and 'self-image'. In turn, the second model knows four components of brand identity, which include: 'personality', 'positioning', 'visions and culture', and 'relationship'. The execution of the thematic analysis included 302 posts of the official Instagram account of Nike. Over a period of a year, posts of Nike were thoroughly analyzed to find meaning of how Nike creates brand identity through their content on the social media platform Instagram.

KEYWORDS: brand identity, Nike, Instagram, thematic analysis, Kapferer (2008), De Chernatony's model (1999)

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
1. Introduction	4
1.1. <i>Research design</i>	5
1.2. <i>Academic and social relevance</i>	6
2. Theoretical Framework	8
2.1. <i>Nike and creating a brand</i>	8
2.2. <i>Celebrity endorsements</i>	9
2.3. <i>Brand identity</i>	10
2.3.1. <i>Brand identity on Instagram</i>	11
2.4. <i>Model of Kapferer (2008)</i>	11
2.5. <i>De Chernatony's model (1999)</i>	17
2.6. <i>Summary</i>	19
3. Methodology	20
3.1. <i>Research design</i>	20
3.2. <i>Sampling and data collection</i>	21
3.3. <i>Sensitizing concepts</i>	22
3.3.1. <i>Sensitizing concepts</i>	23
3.4. <i>Data analysis</i>	24
3.4.1. <i>Data analysis process</i>	24
3.5. <i>Credibility and ethical considerations</i>	25
3.6. <i>Summary</i>	26
4. Results and discussion	28
4.1. <i>Motivation for high performance</i>	29
4.2. <i>Tangible elements Nike</i>	32
4.3. <i>Promotion of sports</i>	34
4.4. <i>Everyone is included</i>	37
4.5. <i>Innovative vision</i>	41
5. Conclusion	45
5.1. <i>Social and academic implications</i>	46
5.2. <i>Limitations and future research</i>	47
References	48
Appendices	53
Appendix A. Initial coding framework	53
Appendix B. Final coding framework	57

1. Introduction

In the current day, social media usage is a phenomenon that has come to dominate everyday life (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 1). In recent decades, social media platforms have been changing human interaction and communication. Thanks to the rapid development of information technology, social interaction is less and less limited by time and space (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 1). Additionally, the platform of Instagram is an increasingly more prominent part of people's lives, with 2 billion monthly users in 2024 (Dixon, 2024). It makes Instagram one of the most used social media platforms of all over the world. The amount of monthly Instagram users has been increasing and it is predicted the number of users will keep on doing so in the future (Dixon, 2024). Then, Nike is a sports brand that is about performance (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Nike has been revolutionary in the sports industry by its marketing strategies (Andersson, 2023, p.1). The brand delivered innovative products, done strategic partnerships with famous figures, and has been effective in their use of social media marketing. Still, academic research on Nike's brand identity through their Instagram content is little. New contemporary academic they is thus needed.

Nike is one of the largest brands in the world (Sher, 2024, p. 1). The consumer engagement with the brand is significantly high. Nike's website, Nike.com, had over 124 million visitors as of March 2024 (Sher, 2024, p. 1). Through successful marketing campaigns and innovative products, Nike keeps on influencing the sports industry (Andersson, 2023, p. 1). People and especially athletes all over the world get inspired by Nike to strive to the best they can perform. As a company, Nike views itself as a performance brand (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Apart from this value, Nike values the notions of innovation, principle, change, and creativity. Nike's marketing strategies have been proven to be revolutionary for the sports industry and made the brand stand as a global leader (Andersson, 2023, p. 1).

Further, the concept of brand identity can be understood as the fundamental character of the brand that additionally defines the brand itself (Black & Veloutsou, 2017, p. 417). A company possesses a brand identity to make itself recognizable to consumers in regard to competitors (Nandan, 2005, p. 271). Through the model of Kapferer (2008) and the model of De Chernatony's model (1999), the concept of brand identity can be researched and understood. The model of Kapferer (2008) understands brand identity through six intertwined elements (Louis & Lombart, 2010, p. 114). These six facets are: 'physique', 'personality', 'relationship', 'culture', 'reflection', and 'self-image'. Aside from this model, there is the model of De Chernatony's model (1999). This model is made up of four components, which are: 'personality', 'positioning', 'visions and culture', and 'relationship'. All four components of the model have an effect on the other (De Chernatony, 1999, p. 166).

To effectively brand on Instagram, a feeling of community should be created among their desired customers (Yan, 2011, p. 691). Through this, the brand can connect to their customers, which generates more engagement. A relationship is formed in this way. What a brand needs to look out for when branding on social media, is that the users are hard to regulate (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 206). Due to lack of regulation, criticism can freely flow on the platform. This can be very disadvantageous for the brand, as the reputation and relationship to its customers can be damaged (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 206). A brand receives positive rewards when their content knows repetition (Lou et al., 2019, p. 775). For customers, the content becomes more familiar. In the case of Nike, patterns in their content are looked out for to understand their convention of brand identity.

Because of the lack of research on the brand identity of Nike by their Instagram posts, the following research question is formulated to be answered:

“How does Nike create its brand identity through their Instagram content?”

With the concept of ‘brand identity’ meaning, the fundamental character of Nike that in turn defines Nike (Black & Veloutsou, 2017, p. 417). Additionally, with ‘Instagram content’ is meant, the Instagram posts that have been produced on Nike’s official Instagram account for a period of a year. To answer this research question, the model of Kapferer (2008) and the model of De Chernatony’s model (1999) guide this study. Further former theories related to the topic help to interpret Nike’s Instagram content effectively.

1.1. Research design

The research utilizes a qualitative method, as the qualitative approach allows to find a deeper understanding of Nike’s brand identity. It allows to obtain deeper, more in-depth meanings compared to a quantitative approach (Fischer & Guzel, 2022, p. 1). Concerning the studies on media, values that are implemented in the media want to be understood (Brennen, 2017, p. 1). The media platform in question is the social media platform Instagram. To answer the research question, posts from Nike’s official Instagram account are thoroughly analyzed. The most appropriate method chosen to do this, is that of thematic analysis. It allows one to find patterns and obtain meaning through the content (Ayre & McCaffery 2022, p. 78). Through the analysis, themes can be identified. The data collected are posts from the official Instagram account of Nike. The data involves 306 posts from April 30th, 2023 to May 1st, 2024. So a time-period of one year. The data involves the videos and imagery, but also the captions of the posts.

Sensitizing concepts served as assistance during the analytic process (Bowen, 2019, p. 1). In this research, it helps to understand Nike’s brand identity through the Instagram content. The main sensitizing concepts that assisted during the research are the elements of the model of Kapferer

(2008). These involve those of 'physique', 'personality', 'relationship', 'culture', 'reflection', and 'self-image'. To further help during the research, past theories on this topic are kept in mind, but also the model of De Chernatony (1999) allows for deeper understanding on the matter. The elements that are featured are: 'personality', 'positioning', 'visions and culture', and 'relationship'.

1.2. Academic and social relevance

So, Nike is one of the largest brands in the world (Sher, 2024, p. 1). Additionally, Nike spends annually over 4 billion dollars on their marketing, which conveys the notion that advertising is an important aspect of Nike. Thus, to unravel how Nike creates its brand identity through their advertising is notable. The advertising model of Nike that is chosen is the social media platform Instagram. Social media usage has brought significant changes in the way people socially interact in current society (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 1). In addition, social media has become part of what contemporary society is, and because of that, social media currently has an influential position, which is why it is important to understand it better and better (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 3). For Instagram specifically, it is one of the largest social media platforms in the world with over 2 billion monthly users (Dixon, 2024). On top of that, these social media platforms keep on expanding, which makes it increasingly more important to obtain a good understanding of it. Now, there is an absence of academic theory on Nike's Instagram content in relation to its brand identity, while people engage significantly with Nike online. That is, more than 124 million monthly visitors on their website (Sher, 2024, p. 1). Additionally, their Instagram account has around 306 million followers (Nike, n.d.). A company with these numbers of online engagement is important to have understanding of, as it can have societal impact. For instance, particular groups in society know misreporting on underrepresentation. These groups can be helped by influential brands like Nike. Inclusive advertising can have positive effects on Nike's branding, but also society itself (Eisend et al., 2022, p. 53). Advertising that has inclusivity implemented can help limit the barriers between social groups, like different genders, races, age, sexual orientations, etc. Nike has been known to employ inclusive and diverse advertising strategies (Eisend et al., 2022, p. 53). For this research, it is relevant to test if this is still the case, by examining Nike's Instagram content of the last year. This way theory on the topic remains up-to-date.

Further, a significant amount of mainly adolescents make use of social media to help define themselves (Hidayah & Huriati, 2016, p. 54). Those that engage with Nike's social media content, can be better understood by understanding Nike's brand identity through its content. Which is why this research can help in comprehending this. Additionally, Nike views itself as a performance brand (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Which means that Nike conveys this notion through its content, additionally users that engage with it are impacted and can define themselves as part of the

'performance' identity. Nike influences the sports industry strongly, clothing wise and by inspiring athletes all over the world (Andersson, 2023, p. 1). With the large amount of influence it has, it is principal to gain meaning on how Nike does this.

1.3. Thesis outline

After this chapter, relevant concepts and theories will be explained. These dive into theories about brand identity in general, creating a brand in regard to Nike, and brand identity on Instagram. Further focus is on the model of Kapferer (2008) and the six elements it knows to understand brand identity. Additionally the model of De Chernatony (1999) is explained through its four components. The subsequent chapter is that of methodology. In this third chapter, the sampling, collection of data, the analysis, and the coding process is explained in detail. Additionally, the sensitizing concepts are described that serve as guidance during the analysis. The fourth chapter contains the results of the analysis and discussion of these. The main themes that came forth from the analysis are presented. These include: 'Motivation for high performance', 'Tangible elements Nike', 'Promotion of sports', 'Everyone is included', and 'Innovative vision'. The last chapter concludes the research, by answering the research question. Finally, this chapter explains theoretical implications, limits to the research, and notions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

This part of the thesis explains the main theories and concepts that assist in this research. Mainly an emphasis is put on the concept of brand identity, as it forms the research question. Further is informed about branding itself and Nike as the organization of focus. To assist in this research, the model of Kapferer (2008) is used. Through this model, brand identity can be studied by dividing it into six different components that are interrelated. Apart from this model, there is also the model of De Chernatony (1999). This is a model that is similar to that of Kapferer (2008), but is not the primary model of assistance during the research. Still, the model is explained as it gives more insight into Kapferer's (2008) model and more meaning can be retrieved from the research that can be implemented to give a right answer to the research question.

2.1. Nike and creating a brand

The term 'brand' can be defined as a name, symbol, term, or design, or a fusion of all of these, which identifies the services or goods of an organization and in turn distinguishes them from competitors (Avis & Henderson, 2021, p. 354). The concept of what a brand is can also be described as a service, product, or place that is identifiable and constructed in such a way that the consumer recognizes unique and relevant added values to it, which are in line with their possible needs (Avis & Henderson, 2021, p. 353). An interesting notion about what is seen as a 'brand' as a concept is that initially, the term brand started out as a type of simple physical label. Yet, especially in the last decades, the term brand evolved to an abstract and complex entity (Avis & Henderson, 2021, p. 353). During the process of creating a brand, companies are inclined to construct it through associations and differentiation (Kay, 2006, p. 748). However, solely being different is not sufficient for creating a strong brand. Customers need to ascribe deeper value to the brand to be effective. The concept of branding can be described as marketing and the promotion of knowledge about the brand (Keller, 2003, p. 8). In addition, branding can be understood as the manufacturing of mental constructions that delivers knowledge to customers, which helps to guide them during the process of making decisions (Keller, 2003, p. 8). Brands have major influence in the fashion industry. The brand involves not only a distinctive feature that represents the manufacturer, but also a role that is symbolic and the brand offers unique, differentiated value to its customers (Puey & Jiménez, 2022, p. 193). A fashion brand is characterized by strong identity, recognizable style, a certain level of awareness, and emotional and symbolic associations (Okonkwo, 2009, p. 23).

Nike as a company, views itself as a performance brand (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). What is meant by that is, Nike holds the notion of performance as their core value. In addition, Nike's guiding principles involve that they see themselves as them always being on the offence and that they are here to win (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Conveying their idea of being a brand that is fully

about performance. It is in line with the elite athletes that they relate with. Trevor Edwards, who was president of Nike from 2013 to 2018, expressed that it is important for the brand that its consumers understand that Nike is a performance brand that revolves around sport. Edwards also explained that one of the values of Nike, in regard to their performance aspirations, is to express this value through their partnerships with elite athletes (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Nike expresses their performance brand value through their advertising by showing notions like determination, competition, and achievements through sport related imagery. Nike's brand name comes from the Greek name for 'victory'. Further Nike knows the iconic phrase 'Just do it', which both enhance the notion that Nike's brand identity is predominantly about performance (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). The logo of Nike is the recognizable 'Swoosh' symbol. The Swoosh is a symbol that stands for performance (Nike, 2022, p. 1). Further, Nike gives other characteristics to the logo, which are innovation, principle, change, and creativity. All these aspects direct to the notion of performance.

Understanding how branding works and what Nike's symbols stand for aids directly in the research to how Nike creates its brand identity through their Instagram posts. Their logo and slogan may appear often in their content. This is why it is chief to know the meaning of these to effectively interpret Nike's posts and that way consider how they convey their brand identity on the platform.

2.2. Celebrity endorsements

The fashion market knows celebrities as brand ambassadors or representatives. The majority of companies cooperate with celebrities (Robertson, 2021, p. 22). A celebrity endorser can be defined as an individual who knows public recognition and uses this recognition to promote a certain product by appearing in an advertisement (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2074). Brands use celebrities who have positive associations, which in turn enhances the brand product's position in the market. An example in the case of Nike is when golf player Tiger Woods endorsed golf balls from Nike around 20 years ago. Because of the endorsement, the golf balls' market share increased from 1 percent to 3.9 percent in around eight months (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2074). However, another example where celebrity endorsement can actually damage a brand, is when the golf player Tiger Woods received allegations of affairs and drug abuse (Robertson, 2021, p. 22). Nike was financially hurt due to their collaboration. It damages Nike's credibility in relation to its consumers. Still, when Nike distances itself as a brand from the famous athlete, no long-term damage is done (Robertson, 2021, p. 22). It is important that the celebrity endorsement feels genuine and real, thus that authenticity is maintained. The collaboration needs to be convincing. This is done when the consumer is convinced that the celebrity acts as their true self (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2073). For the fashion industry, consumers tend to have a desire to look like the

celebrities they endorse. Which is why fashion brands like to collaborate with these celebrities so those who relate to the celebrity will purchase more products of that brand (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2073). For the research, famous figures are looked out for to understand how Nike uses these celebrities and athletes to convey their brand identity.

2.3. Brand identity

The concept of brand identity can be defined as the fundamental character of a brand and it in turn defines the brand (Black & Veloutsou, 2017, p. 417). A company is in charge of creating its brand identity (Nandan, 2005, p. 264). As a company you can create a brand identity through developing a product which is unique and different compared to those alike. This is how a company wants to make themselves recognizable (Nandan, 2005, p. 271). Thus, brand identity is created through those in power of the company, yet brand image is created within the minds of those who are consumers of what the company has to offer (Yuan et al., 2016, p. 3070). Brand image can be defined as the beliefs the consumers have of who are the target audience of a specific brand. A brand image is created through the perceptions consumers believe about associations of a brand (Yuan et al., 2016, p. 3071).

The personality, or overall character of a brand, has often been proven to be the most important reason for a consumer to engage with a brand (Nandan, 2005, p. 266). In comparison, the more functional aspects of the products a brand has to offer are a less of a significant reason for consumers to engage with the brand (Nandan, 2005, p. 266). Companies strive to create the connection between their brand identity and image as strong as possible (Yuan et al., 2016, p. 3071). To do this, they specifically focus on conveying their message of brand identity to their consumers. How a brand identity develops, is affected by internal influences within the company and external influences outside of it (da Silveira et al., 2013, p. 30). The brand identity originates from the internal members, which are in turn the internal influences. Those who are organizational members or brand managers within the company for example create internally the first notion of the brand's identity. While those outside of the company also participate in the creation of the identity of the brand, as well as the maintenance of it and how it keeps changing (da Silveira et al., 2013, p. 30). These are additionally the external influences. One way the external parties influence the change in identity of the brand, are the consumptional needs that keep changing (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 5). Consumers do not know a static behavior and in response to the consumers' changing behavior, brands do need to adjust aspects of their identity from time to time (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 5). This way, consumers remain interacting with the brand and more consumers can be attracted. The internal and external influences together contribute to how the identity of the brand develops

itself. How a specific brand is positioned in its market can be understood through the meaning of the company's brand image (Nandan, 2005, p. 266).

This section aids in this research, as the main concept of research is that of brand identity. To understand the concept is principal. For this research, the focus is on how Nike itself creates their brand identity on Instagram. However, to recognize that the brand identity they have and want to convey is influenced by parties outside of the brand is important. It is important, as it can help to realize that how Nike forms its content is not solely from what they have in mind themselves, but also that they may alter their content to respond to the wants outside of the organization.

2.3.1. Brand identity on Instagram

According to Yan (2011, p. 691), when an organization aims to effectively brand themselves on Instagram, an emphasis should be on generating a feeling of community among their desired customers. When the sense of 'we' is created among the brand's community, the organization is able to connect better with its customers and this in turn creates more engagement (Yan, 2011, p. 691). The sense of a community reduces the barrier between the brand and the consumer and unfolds the chance for a more devoted relationship. Still, on social media platforms like Instagram, it is an impossible challenge to regulate users engaging with your brand (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 206). One reason is that on social media, followers can easily form groups, which can enforce the spread of criticism. On top of that, comments on the Instagram posts of the brand are hard to control. Due to the lack of regulation, unfavorable criticism can easily damage the brand (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 206).

The content posted by a brand on social media platforms is crucial in telling the Brand story. Additionally, the brand story builds and guides the brand identity (Lou et al., 2019, p. 776). This also shapes the brand communities. According to Lou et al. (2019, p. 775), when someone is repeatedly exposed to the social media content of a brand and also interacts with it, positive attitudes towards the brand increase and this in turn makes for higher purchase intentions. This is why many brands simulate their customers to interact with the brand's online content (Lee et al., 2019). Thus, this section shows that aspects that are repeated throughout Nike's Instagram content is useful during the research.

2.4. Model of Kapferer (2008)

Brand identity knows six branding elements which form it as a concept (Louis & Lombart, 2010, p. 114). The model of Kapferer (2008) can be utilized as a framework to understand the concept. The model frames brand identity into six features, which are: physique, personality,

relationship, culture, reflection, and self-image. Through these elements of the framework, a company can specify the meaning of their brand (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). All components are interrelated and a strong brand identity depends on consistency between the elements. When the brand identity is strong, trust among consumers can be built and maintained and can be used to differentiate the brand from similar brands (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 309).

First there is the element of 'physique', which refers to the feature of a brand that feels the most tangible (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). This could involve for instance the name or logo of a brand that is recognizable to others. A brand normally knows a physical appearance. This is the core of the brand and is where value is added (Janonis et al., 2007, p. 51). What can be asked to identify the physique of a brand is to ask about what the brand does, what it looks like, and to ask what the further physical features are of the brand (Janonis et al., 2007, p. 51). According to Ross and Harradine (2011, p. 310), the physique facet concerns the physical aspect of a brand, in terms of what a brand does and is. Thus, selection of physical features of a brand forms the physique of the brand (Kapferer, 2009, p. 1). These physical features are recognizable to people and their minds give meaning to it when observed. For the physique of the brand, sensory or objective characteristics give this tangible feeling (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 7). Examples are shapes, colors, or designs. One of the greatest strengths a brand can have is a recognizable name and logo (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). To see how effective the name and logo are in terms of how recognizable they are is reflected through the popularity of the brand among consumers and the dominance the brand has in the market (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Various financial banks from the research of Zwakala and Steenkamp (2021, p. 13) state that their logo is chief for their organization. They say that their logo is recognizable wherever their clients are, but also non-clients are reminded of the existence of their organization. They say the color of the logo is the most important in terms of recognition (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 7). The logo and its features make the brand stand apart. People differentiate it from other brands, which is favorable for the brand in question (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). Of the financial banks that Zwakala and Steenkamp (2021, p. 14) researched, all say that their inspiration for the logo came from a deeper meaning. The colors stand for certain historical facts of their geographic location for example. Other reasons for the choice of their colors and symbols are cultural facts of their community (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 14). The physique component captures insights into the physical elements of properties (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 727). It includes aspects like strategies or tactics, as well as messages and visual touchpoints of a campaign for instance. According to Armannsdottir et al. (2019, p. 727), it is important to have a focus on local strategies and presence in general as an organization. Thus, adjusting your physical store to where it is located. When conducting the thematic analysis, the tangible elements of Nike can be observed through their recognizable

features (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). For instance how often the logo of Nike is present in its content.

Then, there is the component of 'personality', which involves the emotional characteristics that come forth from the most important values of a brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). The component can be understood in a way that consumers ascribe human characteristics to a brand. Southgate (1994, p. 1) proposes that this component is the most important to build loyalty among the brand's consumers. Regarding the personality component, Ross and Harradine (2011, p. 310) state that consumers subconsciously ascribe humanlike characteristics to the brands they observe. This theory on the relationship between the consumer and the brand that assumes the consumer ascribes human-like characteristics to the brand is a process named anthropomorphism (Rauschnabel et al., 2016, p. 3079). Additionally, consumers are drawn to the brand that projects the most appropriate personality. The component of personality conveys the emotional characteristics that come from the core values of a brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Projecting a true personality that is right is one of the most effective contributions to creating consumer loyalty (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). The examples that were most prominent from Zwakala and Steenkamp (2021, p. 7) their study of how the personality of an organization's brand identity can be described are a friendly or innovative personality. The component of personality will be analyzed in the thematic analysis with a focus on what of the core values are conveyed via the content (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). For instance, characteristics that give a notion of performance are important to give attention to.

Further, the element of 'relationship' involves what the consumer expects from the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). This could include consumers expecting the brand to be friendly or sustainable. When the brand remains true to the consumer's expectations, a relationship is established between them. In this way, trust is strengthened in the brand. The relationship component can be defined as the expected standard behavior that most identifies the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Examples can be to have a code of conduct like friendliness, or love. Ross and Harradine (2011, p. 310) argue that it is positive and healthy to establish a relationship between the brand and the consumer. Trust plays a central role in creating customer relationships. Trust can play a critical mediating role when a brand is in an unfavorable situation. On top of that, when the organization is of a large size, the consumer relationship can help to reduce the sense of a lack of personalness of the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Also brand image problems can be minimized through a strong consumer relationship. The dimension of brand relationship involves the engagement between the firm and the consumers (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). For an organization can especially be spoken of the relationship component when the focus is on its services. These involve for instance the physical stores or customer service of the firm (Zwakala &

Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). The relationship dimension of brand identity involves both the short-term and long-term interactions between the firm and the consumers (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 8). One way for an organization to convey the importance of brand relationship to its customers, is to stress the fact that a better relationship is a way to deliver more personalized services (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 8). An important aspect of the relationship dimension is that everyone is different (Armansdottir et al., 2019, p. 730). It is important when a company brands itself, to know that the target that is marketed towards, is build out of individuals. This is why, as a brand, you have to keep in mind that your audience is made out of components that you should exclusively target (Armansdottir et al., 2019, p. 730). Still, many organizations try to create a relationship with its customers through giving the idea that the customer is as much part of the brand as the employees for instance (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). Terms that are often used are 'us' and 'together', when addressing their customers through advertisements. When conducting the research on Nike's brand identity on Instagram, aspects of the relationship suggestion should be looked out for. Certain phrases or visual imagery may suggest the creation or strengthening of the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Further, when the relationship is good, trust is apparent (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). One way to notice if this is the case for Nike their Instagram posts is to look at the amount of likes on them.

The element of 'culture' can be seen as the values that provide the brand with inspiration (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). The notion of corporate culture is important to look out for, as this kind of culture can reduce a brand's experienced freedom (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). An example of a brand's culture is when there is the desire to provide products to all audiences. Hence, the brand stands for this culture and knows to produce products that interests a diverse audience (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Organizations can follow a brand culture that is hierarchical or non-hierarchical (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). For a non-hierarchical culture, the firm desires to follow a flat structure. A structure that unifies those in the company can be beneficial and can differentiate the firm from those who have a brand culture that does not stimulate unity among those involved (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 15). Thus, the facet of culture can be seen as the values that stimulate the brand's inspiration (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 317). Corporate culture is an example that commonly reduces the freedom that is experienced by a brand. Particularly corporate brands know a fact that an understanding of organizational culture contributes to a strong indication of the values of the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 317). Another example of a brand's culture is that it wants to appeal to everyone and desires that no one is excluded (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 317). Inclusivity is a concept that reflects this aspiration for a brand. Another value that is commonly embedded in the culture of organizations is that of fair trade. With emphasis on the concept of fair trade, this value is increasingly more apparent among organizations

(Bürgin & Wilken, 2021, p. 1028). One reason for this, is that generally ethical concerns are increasing. Subsequently, it increased consumers' willingness to pay more for products that come forth from fair trade (Bürgin & Wilken, 2021, p. 1016). Values like these for example strengthen the brand's culture and make for positive responses from consumers and in turn stakeholders (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 317). Brand culture comes from the cultural values of the original brand developers and is commonly associated with geographical aspects of where it originates (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 15). Values and principles that guide an organization may also develop brand culture through time. Thus, the cultural dimension of the model also refers to the ideology, heritage, and core values of the brand (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 723). To be successful in portraying the brand identity's culture, these aspects should be well embedded. During the research, emphasis should be on focusing on Nike's values. To see if values like inclusivity and fair trade come forth through their Instagram posts for example. In addition, attention need to be paid to possible other values that Nike desires to portray through their content.

Then, the feature of 'reflection' refers specifically to the customer reflection, which entails the type of client that is pictured by a brand itself (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). The customer reflection involves the image that a brand has of a user or buyer that a brand seems to be approaching (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). The customer reflection component is not the same as the target of the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Reflection is customer-based, as consumers purchase goods from certain brands as a way of self-expression (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 9). An example of a type of client that the brands seem to address are family shoppers (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). For instance, parents that shop for their young children. Also, the socio-economic level of consumers can be regarded, when speaking of the customer reflection facet. Whether the perceived consumer for the brand is of average income for example (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 317). The brand reflection dimension portrays how a customer desires to be perceived by others as because of consuming a certain brand (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 9). Fundamentally, consumers make use of brands to create their own identities. Reflection shows the consumer's view. With focus on the reflection dimension, it is important to keep in mind the 'who' (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 723). In the sense of: "who identifies with the brand?". So, the reflection component, or customer reflection component, refers to the kind or client type that is perceived by the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 317). For the research, attention is then paid to the perceived client type that Nike has and the consumers that Nike appears to be addressing. Attention is to what kind of lifestyle Nike seems to connect to their customers.

Lastly, there is the element of 'self-image', which is the 'reflection' component the other way around (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Instead of the brand picturing an image of its customers, it pictures how their customers themselves would picture the brand. Additionally, it is

argued by Graeff (1996, p. 5) that consumers partly evaluate brands by considering how a product can enhance their self-image, which can be a point of focus for a company to understand their customers. The self-image component in regard to Kapferer's model is how consumers of a brand perceive themselves when they make use of products of that particular brand (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 9). This can be seen as the internal mirror for the market that is the target. The self-reflection component of the model relates to the personal opinions of consumers, as well as the beliefs and private statements (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 733). The feelings and thoughts of consumers is a representation of their self-image as it is in line with their choice of brand usage (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). Thus, the facet of self-image can be understood as how the organization internally reflects on their consumers (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Hence, how the targeted consumers picture themselves. Ross and Harradine (2011, p. 317) state that it can be argued that consumers decide on what brand to interact with partly through how the brand's products may enhance their self-image. Subsequently, consumers would create and maintain their self-image through consuming products of brands (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). A consistency between the values of consumers and what they buy can be found. This facet of the model is hard to analyze through the thematic analysis. Solely if Nike shares the customers' view on themselves in their content, it is possible to effectively create meaning of the self-image facet.

All components of Kapferer's model are interrelated and the consistency among various elements of the brand decides the cohesiveness of the brand identity (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). According to Ghodeswar (2008, p. 5), trust between the consumer and the brand can be built through a strong brand identity. Thus, brand identity can be a way for an organization to differentiate itself from others, which creates a stronger position in its market (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 6). The brand's culture depicts an internal view of the organization, while the relationship component reflects an external view (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 10). Hence, the external dimensions give a brand an expression outward, while the internal components work as an internal mirror for the brand. Kapferer's (2008) brand identity prism is for that reason central in identity-based brand building (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 13). For the model of Kapferer, the three dimensions that convey the internal expression are culture, personality, and self-image (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 722). The internal part of the model is linked to intangible characteristics and behaviors. Then, the external expression of the model is related to the facing that is outwards, commonly physical characteristics and behaviors. These involve reflection, relationship, and physique (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 722).

2.5. De Chernatony's model (1999)

Like the Kapferer's model, there is a similar model to understanding brand identity by De Chernatony (1999). The model is named 'the process of managing a brand' and this conceptualizes brand identity. The model follows the notion that brand identity is made out of four components, which are personality, positioning, visions and culture, and relationship (De Chernatony, 1999, p. 166). All four components have an effect on the other. Still, the aspect of the vision and culture of the brand are seen as the core component. This component drives and determines the brand's aspired positioning, personality, personality, and relationships that follow (De Chernatony, 1999, p. 166). Stakeholders get the brand identity passed on to them. Additionally, these stakeholders reflect and interpret the identity of the brand as a presentation. The presentation in combination with the desires and self-images of the stakeholders, influences the image of the brand that the stakeholders have (De Chernatony, 1999, p. 172). This way opinions are formed of the certain brand, which is referred to as the reputation according to De Chernatony (1999, p. 169). The reputation that is formed can either be positive or negative and directly affects the brand. So, the model by De Chernatony (1999, p. 173) stresses the significance of managing the brand, especially when the brand occurs to have negative reputations and brand images. According to the model, the brand identity is an ongoing process of influence, which is circular.

Thus, the model of De Chernatony (1999) knows four components that are previously mentioned. Firstly, there is the aspect of brand personality, which is very similar to how Kapferer (2008) conceptualizes this component of brand identity. That is, the specific characteristics that a brand knows, are established by the brand personality. When the brand is humanized, it plays a more prominent role in the lives of consumers (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). This works, as consumers more easily purchase goods from and interact with a brand which shares the same or similar notions. Additionally Aaker (1997, p. 354) states that the consumer's preference and usage of the brand increases when there is a good brand personality, as well as the amount of loyalty and trust.

The second aspect of the model of De Chernatony (1999) is that of positioning. This component focuses on the characteristics that are distinctive to the brand, which makes the brand more attractive to consumers, and additionally differentiate the brand from the competitors they have (Chernatony, 1999 p. 173). Still, to effectively play into the component of positioning, organizations need to think about what they have in common with their competitors. This way, an organization has a better understanding of the market it operates in (Chernatony, 1999 p. 173). The positioning aspect of the model of De Chernatony (1999 p. 173) can be compared to the 'physique' aspect of the model of Kapferer (2008). Positioning is chief in controlling what is communicated to the consumer and what can be understood as the message of the brand. Thus, how the brand is expressed outwards (Kapferer 2008, p. 1). The aspects of the brand that are most tangible help

convey the brand outwards. Physical qualities of the brand are their name, logo, and colors, but also their core values (Kapferer 2008, p. 1). Hence, when the brand understands these physical components or the situational aspects for instance, the brand knows how to utilize the positioning component to their advantage (Chernatony, 1999 p. 169). The positioning plays a role in the perception customers have of the brand and can make customers remember it. Additionally, through understanding the positioning, organizations can determine their audience (Chernatony, 1999 p. 172).

Following, the model of Chernatony (1999) knows the aspect of vision and culture, which is seen as most important. The vision of a brand is the precise direction it wants to go towards and what it wants to achieve. The brand needs to consider what their environment will be in a certain time period and what their goal is to achieve at the end of this set period (Chernatony, 1999 p. 172). The culture aspect of Chernatony (1999) is in line with how the model of Kapferer (2008) describes culture. It involves the collection of values that drive the inspiration of the brand and in turn explains how the brand's products came about. To limit misunderstandings between the organization and its consumers, a brand needs its own culture out of which their products would come forth (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). When an organization produces a product which a consumer cannot link to their idea of the brand's values, the consumer loses the set image they have of that brand. This way the brand identity decreases in effectiveness (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). Culture links the brand to the organization itself and subsequently makes differencing aspects stand out. This way, the organization sticks out from its competition. The brand's culture can effectively be conveyed outwards through their products and communication (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). The brand's physical aspects, like colors and materials can also be a way of conveying the brand's culture externally and make their values visible. However, it can also damage the brand identity. For example, if the material of a certain product knows a negative association, like when it is not sustainable, it can backfire and damage the brand's reputation (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). Thus, the culture of the brand mainly are the values that the brand has and through physical aspects of it, it can convey their values outward to its consumers.

The last component of the model of Chernatony (1999) is that of the relationship. The relationship involves the interaction that exists between the attitude of the consumers towards the brand and attitude of the brand towards the consumers (Chernatony, 1999 p. 169). Brands bring out certain products or a particular message for instance and consumers in turn give a response to the brand by purchasing products or giving their opinion on it. Consumers form strong relationships with brands that stand for the same values and associations of personality that are alike to their self-concept (Swaminathan et al., 2009, p. 985). In the relationship, the brand needs to deliver, act, and relate according to the customers and organizations need to keep this in mind when they

communicate to its customers. All aspects of the organization's communication should compliment the consumers (Swaminathan et al., 2009, p. 985). This communication goes as far as every image and symbol that the brand publishes. De Chernatony (1999) states that an increase of interaction and a better relationship can stimulate the innovation, and in turn the success of a brand, as the organization obtains a better understanding of its customers.

2.6. Summary

In summary, the concept of brand identity is relevant for this research, as it is the main concept that forms the research question. The focus is on how Nike as a brand creates their brand identity through their Instagram posts. The section of brand identity aids in understanding what to look for when doing the research to gain meaning from the content and deliver a right answer to the research question.

Then, the model of Kapferer (2008) is the main model that aids in the research. The six components of the model allow to discover insights of how Nike creates its brand identity. Firstly, the physique component helps to gain meaning of the tangible elements of the Instagram posts from Nike. Observable features can be understood. Then, the personality component will be analyzed by focusing on which core values are conveyed by Nike. For instance that of performance. The facet of relationship can be studied through phrases or visual imagery, to see what Nike perceives what is expected from them. To see if there is trust in the relationship between Nike and its consumers, the amount of likes can be paid attention to. Further, the component of culture aids to understand what Nike's values are as a brand. The reflection facet explains what kind of client type Nike thinks they have and wants to address. Finally, the self-image component is hard to analyze through the thematic analysis. Only reviews by customers posted by Nike would be a way that this facet is used.

The model by De Chernatony's (1999) helps to gain further meaning during the research. The model by De Chernatony's (1999) and that of Kapferer (2008) overlap for a large amount. This is why it is utilized to further understand the connotations that come forth from the Kapferer (2008) model. The reason to use the model of Kapferer (2008) as the main model to follow when conducting the research is that it knows six components, while the model of De Chernatony model (1999) knows four. Six components can examine more aspects of Nike its brand identity to focus on for a more detailed answer to the research question.

3. Methodology

The chapter of methodology explains on the qualitative research design approach for obtaining the correct answer to the research question. Through purposive sampling, 306 posts were collected from the official Instagram account of Nike. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis. In this chapter the research design, collection of data, sensitizing concepts, sampling, gathering of data, and the process of analysis are in detail described and justified. Finally, the chapter offers an explanation of the credibility and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research design

For this research, a qualitative method is utilized, as the qualitative approach allows to find a deeper understanding of the brand identity of Nike. To empirical research, a qualitative approach knows the value to contribute a deeper, richer comprehension to the meanings people attach to certain actions, relationships, and events (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 1). Regarding the studies on media, values that are implemented in media want to be understood (Brennen, 2017, p. 1). This also involves entertainment media, like social media. Instagram is the social media platform from where the data will be derived. Through analyzing the posts of Nike on the platform, greater understanding can be obtained of how the brand creates its brand identity. Thus, a qualitative approach to this research is suitable, as this method allows to gain a deeper meaning of Nike's brand identity.

Additionally in connection with the qualitative approach, thematic analysis is chosen for this research to understand Nike's brand identity through their Instagram content. The thematic analysis allows to find patterns and through these patterns obtain meaning of the content (Ayre & McCaffery 2022, p. 78). By utilizing thematic analysis, it is possible to analyze the visual content Nike shares and to understand how they communicate their brand identity through it. When conducting the analysis, particular themes can be identified (Ayre & McCaffery 2022, p. 78). This way, thematic analysis allows to find patterns, but also underlying ideas and meanings within Nike's content on Instagram. Further, the use of thematic analysis allows for the development of critical analysis that helps for identification of specific concepts which are among the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 1). Thus, through the use of thematic analysis, ideas, concepts, and patterns come to light and uncover implicit meaning when researching the imagery content and captions of the Instagram posts of Nike.

To analyze the data, an inductive approach was used to look for patterns throughout the content, with the intention to make themes emerge from these (Liu, 2016, p. 129). First the Instagram posts by Nike will be observed inductively to look for patterns. From these patterns, more meaning can be derived. This way, data is obtained about Nike's brand identity. Despite the

fact that this research knows an inductive approach, the analysis of the data is assisted by sensitizing concepts on what brand identity entails. The coding frame that is utilized to guide the thematic process is that of Ross and Harradine (2011, p. 310). Their frame lays the way step by step to code in the most effective way to gain an understanding of Nike's Instagram posts of how they create their brand identity through it.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

Instagram posts involve images that are static or videos that are usually short, which can be accompanied by text and hashtags (Esposito et al., 2021, p. 1). Hashtags are recognized by the '#' symbol and are meant to categorize what kind of content the Instagram post has. For this study is subsequently chosen for the sampling unit of the official Instagram posts of Nike. Through this content, specific messages about Nike and their brand identity can be decoded. The content that is part of the dataset are all of the posts from the official Nike Instagram account which are dated from April 30th 2023 to May 1st 2024. Capturing a year of their content on the platform.

Further, a purposive sampling technique is used for this research, which entails a sample that is made smaller that is selected for a particular purpose (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 654) The sample for this study was selected on the posts uploaded by Nike in a year. When utilizing a purposive sampling method, specific criteria are followed when the sample is created (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 49). This choice of sample is relevant to this research, as it can create the needed dataset to get meaning on how Nike creates their brand identity through their Instagram content. The sample is applicable to this study, as it is in line with the purpose of the main research question.

The specific criteria for creating the sample were: (1) The posts are from the official Instagram account of Nike, (2) posts that represent aspects of the brand identity prism, and (3) the period of when the posts are uploaded is from April 30th, 2023 to May 1st, 2024

The specific criteria used for the sampling in this study are the restriction to just the official Instagram account of Nike and the period of April 30th 2023 to May 1st 2024 from which the posts are uploaded by the brand. When an Instagram post was composed of multiple images, all images were analyzed.

The time period that was selected for this study is from April 30th, 2023 to May 1st, 2024. Thus a time period of a year. The amount of posts that were analyzed is a total of 306 Instagram posts. When conducting qualitative research, there is an emphasis on in-depth analysis, which is usually complemented with a smaller sample size (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The sample size of 306 posts is the right amount to be able to analyze each post on an in-depth level, which makes the decision for its size suitable for the research.

For this research, the data was collected from the official Instagram account of Nike, which is @Nike. The entire process of data gathering was from May 31st, 2024 to June 5th, 2024. To start the data gathering process, the researcher logged in to their personal Instagram account and went to the official Instagram account of Nike. The start was at the first post since April 30th, 2023 on the account. From this date to May 1st, 2024, 306 posts were collected by making screenshots and the sample unit was complete.

The reason for the decision to have from April 30th, 2023 to May 1st, 2024 as chosen sampling period, is that this period of a year captures how Nike reveals its brand identity over the last year. This makes it recent and relevant. Concentration will be on the components of the prism. These aspects together helped for an applicable descriptive thematic data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Ultimately, the researcher was through these aspects able to analyze the content that was uploaded by Nike on their Instagram in the last year and in turn derived a better understanding on their brand identity.

3.3. Sensitizing concepts

In general terms, sensitizing concepts offer a starting point for the data analysis and serves as assistance during the analytic process regarding interpreting the data (Bowen, 2019, p. 1). Thus, sensitizing concepts help to understand meanings within the data to the concept of brand identity. In this research, the sensitizing concept that is included are the elements of the brand identity model of Kapferer (2008), which are physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection, and self-image.

Firstly there is the element of 'physique'. This element of the model of Kapferer (2008) concerns the features of the brand that feel most tangible (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Also, these features are the characteristics of the brand that are most recognizable. Additionally, the physique element is where value is added to the brand (Janonis et al., 2007, p. 51). During the analysis, attention is to the physical aspects of Nike. Emphasis is for instance on the logo, colors, shapes, and choice of design.

Following, there is the element of 'personality', which involves that the core value of the brand is reflected by its character (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). During the analysis, attention goes particularly to aspects that convey the core value of performance in the case of Nike. Thus, the characteristics that give the notion of performance to the one that observes the post.

Further, the facet of 'relationship' involves what the consumer expects from the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Terms to describe what is expected of the brand are for instance friendliness, sustainable, or love. The focus on terms like these make it possible to analyze a post on

the relationship facet. Also, how good the relationship is, is determined by whether the relationship is positive and whether there is trust (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). To analyze whether the consumer feels a positive relationship towards Nike, attention is on the amount of likes of the post.

Then the element of 'culture' implies the values that give the brand its inspiration (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Examples of values that inspire the brand are inclusivity or fair trade. Values like this are looked out for during the analysis to find what brand culture Nike conveys through their content. Thus, focus is on Nike's projection of their ideology, heritage, and core values through their content (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 723).

The element of 'reflection' refers to what type of client is pictured by the brand itself (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). To analyze this component, focus is on the socio-economic aspects of the customers Nike seems to address (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). When analyzing the reflection, it is important to have emphasis on the 'who' (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 723). Further is attention to what kind of lifestyle suits customers of Nike.

Finally, the 'self-image' component, which entails how the customers perceive the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). This facet is hard to analyze using the thematic analysis, as reviews or comments are not particularly included in the analysis. Still, when Nike shares customer reviews of some sort on their feed, it is possible to effectively create meaning from the self-image component.

3.3.1 Sensitizing concepts

The model by De Chernatony (1999) will assist to deeper understand the meaning of the Instagram posts by Nike after interpreting it via the model of Kapferer (2008). Using this model, the focus is on four components, which are: personality, positioning, visions and culture, and relationship. Emphasis is on the vision and culture aspects of the model (De Chernatony, 1999 p. 173).

The first component, brand personality, mainly means consumers feel affiliated with the brand. When the brand personality is effectively worked out, consumers share the same notions and ideas as the brand, which is why they want to interact and purchase goods from the brand (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). To analyze this, attention should be at the likes, as through the likes it is possible to see how consumers agree to Nike.

Then, the second component of the model by De Chernatony (1999) is that of positioning, which involves the characteristics that are distinctive to the brand. It is how the brand makes itself different from other brands and is comparable to the 'physique' component of Kapferer (2008). During research, focus is on aspects like logos, colors, and phrases.

Following there is the aspect of vision and culture of the model of Chernatory (1999), which is seen as the most prominent component. It entails what direction the brand wants to go towards and what it wants to achieve. To analyze this aspect, focus is on the values conveyed by Nike through their Instagram content.

Lastly, there is the component of relationship of the model of Chernatory (1999). It involves the attitude of the consumers towards the brand and the other way around. To analyze this component, emphasis is on the interaction shown by Nike through their Instagram posts. They may show consumer interactions or post ideas that originate from customers.

3.4. Data analysis

Following is explained how the data analysis process went. The data analysis process involves the thematic analysis and its phases and the procedures of coding. The coding procedures include the processes of initial coding, the refinement of these codes, and the final coding procedure. Finally, from these processes came forth the final themes. To identify these themes, an inductive approach was used to analyze 306 Instagram posts of Nike. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) explain in their research six stages of thematic analysis, which were used to guide the researcher during the analysis. By using these six stages as assistance, relevant information and meanings were captured from the data to create the themes. Through these themes the research question should be answered.

3.4.1. Data analysis process

First, all 306 posts by Nike were closely observed. This way a well understanding of the content that needs to be thematically analyzed was gained. Following the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87), this is the first phase. As the researcher, you get familiarized with the data during this initial process. Because of the first phase, it is possible to have an idea of how the following initial coding process should be executed. Relevant notes and ideas were made of the Instagram content of Nike.

Then, when the familiarization phase was finished, initial codes were generated. All 306 posts were studied and initial codes were realized from the posts to discover patterns throughout the content. During this process, the sensitizing concepts, thus the six facets of the model of Kapferer (2008), were kept in mind to help understand Nike's brand identity. Interesting features of each post were created into the initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). For each post, attention is to decisions of what is included in the image or video. Further, the captions of the posts are read and noted down for interesting remarks. 119 original open codes were derived from the dataset. Examples of codes that are included are Nike related aspects, like the 'Swoosh' or #JustDolt.

Further the gender and ethnicity of those portrayed in pictures, as well as disabled people for instance.

Further, open codes were formulated, like 'high-performance', 'self-discipline', and 'celebrity athletes'. To create the codes, the research question was kept in mind and the sensitizing concepts assisted throughout the process. Also, notes were made to understand the meaning of Nike's brand identity through their Instagram content. Especially what patterns were most prominent. For instance, the amount of presentness of people of color, or what sports are shown the most by Nike.

Once the list of open codes was complete, 25 sub-themes were formed. The 25 sub-themes allowed for 7 initial themes. All codes were thoughtfully observed and analyzed to create appropriate sub-themes. To find patterns and relationships between the codes and the themes and combining these to create a general theme are needed in this phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Similarities and differences through each of the codes were critically examined. How open codes are merged to a sub-theme works for instance like, the codes 'wheelchair', 'paralyzed tennis', and 'prosthetic legs' that were merged together as the sub-theme 'disabled athletes'. The open codes, sub-themes, and initial themes are observable in the initial coding framework, which is included in Appendix A.

Next, the initial themes need to be evaluated and considered to be merged together, or to add new themes to the list (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The themes 'Inclusiveness' and 'All one global community' are merged together to the theme 'Everyone is included'. The final themes that arose are: 'Motivation for high performance', 'Tangible elements Nike', 'Promotion of sports', 'Everyone is included', 'Innovative vision', and 'Image arrangement'. These can be seen in Appendix B.

3.5. Credibility and ethical considerations

Regarding credibility in qualitative research, the concept knows two main aspects, which are reliability and validity (Babbie, 2017, p. 61). Credibility determines the quality of qualitative research. It is where claims and evidence come together by good argumentation (Silverman, 2011, p. 1). Thus, in this research, the results are supported by well argued evidence. Accordingly, the researcher is well knowledgeable about the core concept of brand identity. Lastly, critical thinking throughout the complete research process makes the outcome valid.

Transparency on theory and descriptions of how the research process proceeded enhance the reliability of the research (Silverman, 2011, p. 1). Regarding the transparency of the research process, the data collection section of the methodology offers explanation of the thematic analysis process. The coding process, but also the sampling strategy and the sampling unit itself were well

explained. Thus, as the choice for thematic analysis, the sampling strategy and unit, data collection, and process of coding are explained and justified, the reliability of the research is proper.

Then, concerning the transparency on the theoretical level, theories used in the study should be well known to have this right (Silverman, 2011, p. 1). Most importantly brand identity through the model of Kapferer (2008) is thoroughly explained. Additionally, the model of De Chernatony (1999) supports the understanding of the concept of brand identity.

Secondly, validity needs to be adequate for sufficient reliability. The validity of a study is of quality when the reality is accurately described through the research and results (Kesavan, 2021, p. 79). The prior theory explained in the research is considered of quality. Additionally, the thematic analysis has been carefully executed to gain the understanding of Nike's content, which is what they in reality convey themselves. Thus, the validity of this research is adequate, as it describes the reality in the best way possible.

Further, generalizability involves to what degree the results of a research from the sample that is studied can be applied to the entire population (Myers, 2000, p. 5). As this is qualitative research, generalizability is differently understood compared to a quantitative study. Because the sample is smaller than that of a common quantitative sample, the qualitative sample is less objective (Smith, 2017, p. 142). Still, the qualitative sample goes more in-depth. This research is in line with that notion, as the data is thoroughly analyzed and carefully coded into the final themes to gain a better understanding on the subject.

Lastly, there is the ethical concern of the research. Most importantly, the researcher's only intentions should be to uncover solely new information to answer the research question (Babbie, 2017, p. 62). There cannot be a personal aim in the study that is deviated from the research question at hand. This research has been conducted solely for the purpose of understanding how Nike creates its brand identity through their content on the platform Instagram. The content that the official account of Nike uploaded itself has been analyzed objectively. Further, no individuals have been included in this study that had their privacy damaged. The only individuals in this paper occur in examples of posts that Nike posted. These individuals are posted by the official Nike Instagram account. Thus, no ethical boundaries have been crossed in this research.

3.6. Summary

To summarize, the study made use of a qualitative approach where a thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data, which is conducted to understand the patterns of meaning of Nike its online strategy that creates its brand identity through the platform Instagram. The sampling was done on the Instagram posts of Nike of a specific time frame on their official account. With the sensitizing concepts in mind, the data was critically and on in depth level observed. Regarding the

sensitizing concepts, most importantly the model of Kapferer (2008) was used to guide during the inductive data analysis. Finally, a total of six themes came forth from the coding process of the thematic analysis, which can be observed in Appendix B.

4. Results and discussion

For this part of the research, six themes came forth from the analysis of 306 Instagram posts of Nike. The five themes are: ‘Motivation for high performance’, ‘Tangible elements Nike’, ‘Promotion of sports’, ‘Everyone is included’, and ‘Innovative vision’. Thus, this chapter is a discussion of how the findings from the research indicate that Nike represents its brand identity through motivation of high performance, tangible elements of its brand, the promotion of sports, inclusivity of everyone, and an innovative vision. The facets of the model of Kapferer (2008) are implemented in each section of this chapter. Additionally, De Chernatony’s model (1999) also is present as support. So, each section represents one of the six themes and is supported by the facets.

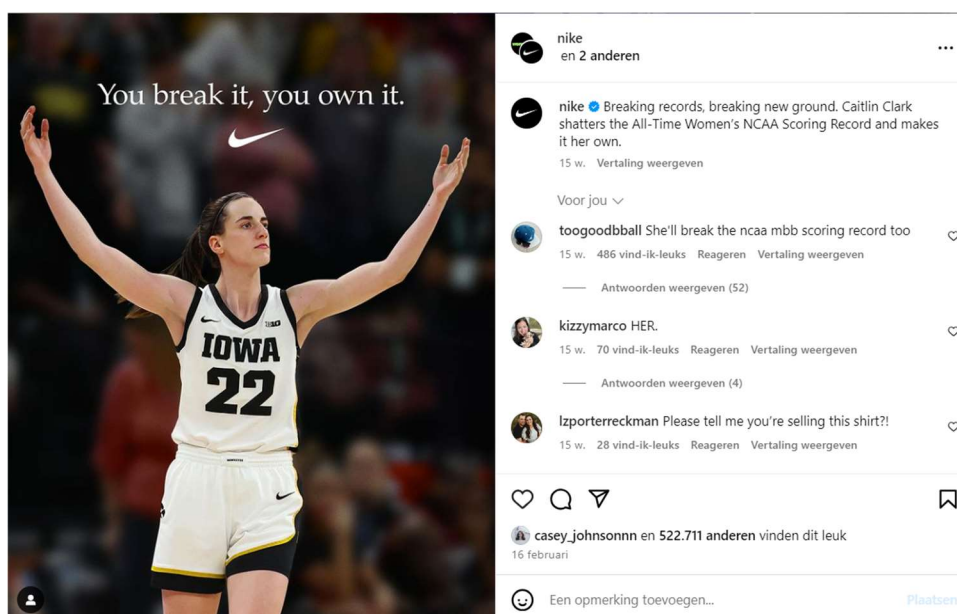
Nike’s emphasis on promoting ‘motivation for high performance’ throughout their content is communicated by implementing their core values of determination and achievement into their posts. Further, ‘tangible elements Nike’ focuses on physical aspects of Nike, like the recognizable characteristics. Moreover, ‘promotion of sports’ applies to close to all Nike’s Instagram content, as Nike revolves mainly around sports. ‘Everyone is included’ appears throughout Nike’s content in a wide variety of ways, as a range of different kinds of people are shown. Lastly, ‘innovative vision’ conveys Nike’s identity of improvement, with a general direction to the future and promoting innovative products. Each of these themes is thoroughly discussed in the next sub-sections of this chapter to help answer the research question The themes and sub-themes can be observed in Table 4.1 below.

Motivation for high performance	Tangible elements Nike	Promotion of sports	Everyone is included	Innovative vision
Dedicated performance	Nike shoes	Different sports	Different countries	Innovative products
Push yourself as athlete	Promoting Nike branches through hashtag	Famous people	Different ethnicities	Promoting innovation
Motivational phrases	Signature elements Nike	Promotion of sports events	United mentality	
Winning			Friendliness/community	
Athletic build			Socio-economic variety	
			Disabled athletes	
	Emphasis on women			
	Inclusion of all age groups	Inclusivity sexual preference	Gender inclusion	

Table 4.1. Themes and sub-themes

4.1. Motivation for high performance

The first theme that came forth from the analysis is called 'Motivation for high performance'. Throughout the data set of Nike's Instagram posts were elements to motivate someone to perform the best they can. The majority of the posts have phrases that contain terms like: 'high-performance', 'break a record', or were about disciplining oneself. These are present in the images as well as the captions of Nike's content. Motivational phrases are a very prominent aspect of their Instagram content. In figure 4.1., examples of these motivational phrases can be observed. In the image it says: "You break it, you own it" (Nike, n.d.) as a motivational phrase. Additionally, in the caption is mentioned how this basketball player is breaking records, which also compliments one of the sub-themes of this theme. Another sub-theme of the theme 'Motivation for high performance' is that of 'winning'. In the first screenshot of figure 4.1. is seen how the basketball player, Caitlin Clark, scored a new record in that field and that way implies that she won over other record holders. Lastly, the sub-theme 'push yourself as athlete' can be observed as well, because this is a basketball athlete and she keeps on doing better. This can be seen in the caption, as it says she keeps on breaking the records. The second screenshot in figure 4.1. reads the phrase: "Dreams don't happen overnight" in the image as well as the caption (Nike, n.d.), which is another example of how Nike wants to motivate its followers to do better in their performance. Lastly the sub-theme of 'athletic build' can be noticed through the majority of Nike's Instagram content. Many posts feature athletes (Nike, n.d.). The basketball player in figure 4.1 is an example. The athletic build of the athletes can be understood as motivations to also achieve that build to someone who engages with Nike's Instagram feed.



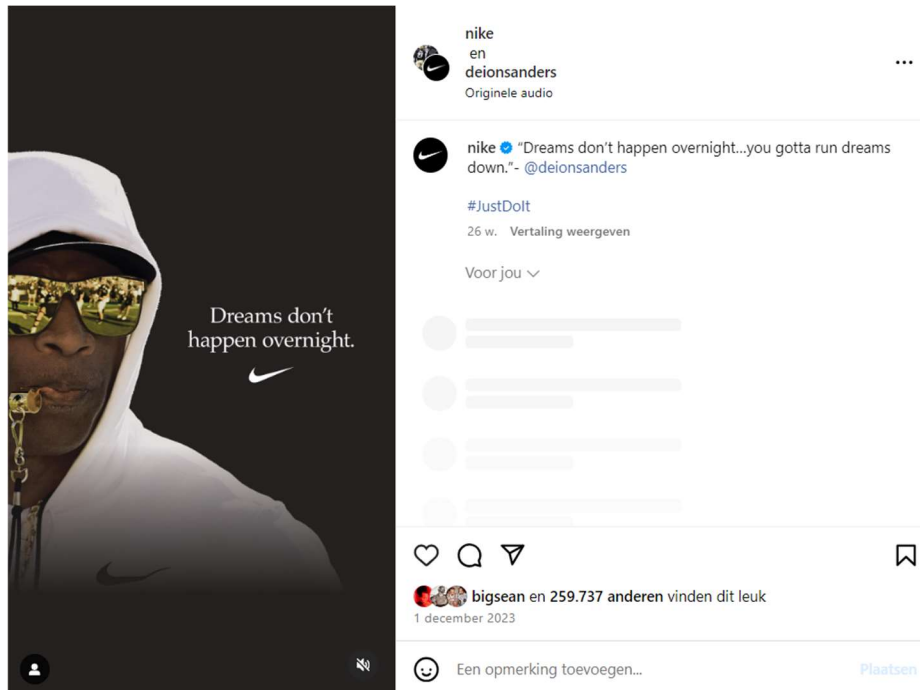


Figure 4.1. Motivational phrases

As Kornum et al. (2017, p. 435) mentioned, Nike sees itself as a performance brand. This notion of the brand is clearly visible in their Instagram content. The phrases in figure 4.1. are understood as motivation for those interacting with Nike as a brand to perform the best they can. Thus the theory is in line with the findings.

Further, of the model of Kapferer (2008) the two facets of personality and culture are present in regard to this theme. The facet of personality represents the core values of the brand (Kapferer, 2008, p. 1). The ex-president of Nike, Trevor Edwards, expressed that one of the main values Nike stands for is their aspiration for performance (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Additionally, their brand value of performance is conveyed in their advertising, namely by showing the notions of determination and achievements. This theme of 'Motivation for high performance' confirms this. For instance, the phrase "Dreams don't happen overnight...you gotta run dreams" as observed in figure 4.1. conveys the message of achieving your goals. Thus, the notion of achievement, like mentioned by Kornum et al. (2017, p. 435), is well present in Nike's Instagram content. Furthermore, the core value of performance that shows the personality element of Nike's brand identity is seen through their content of elite athletes and what they achieve. As seen in the first screenshot of figure 4.1., Caitlin Clark is a top female basketball player. Additionally, in the caption of the post they highlight how she broke the record of all time scoring in women's basketball, which conveys the message that she performs at the highest level in her field.

Then, the facet of culture is clear through the Instagram content that Nike posts. The culture facet is about the values that provide inspiration to the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p.

310). The brand’s culture develops through the principles and values that guide it (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 729). This refers to the brand’s ideology and core values. To portray the culture as a brand, these need to be well embedded in the content. For Nike, one of its core values is the notion of performance like mentioned above. Nike’s brand culture is visible through their posts, as the motivation to perform better in sports is present in close to every post (Nike, n.d.). The figure 4.1. shows by the texts in the image, and as well in the caption, their culture of performance. Also the inclusion of the top scorer in women’s basketball conveys their culture of performance.

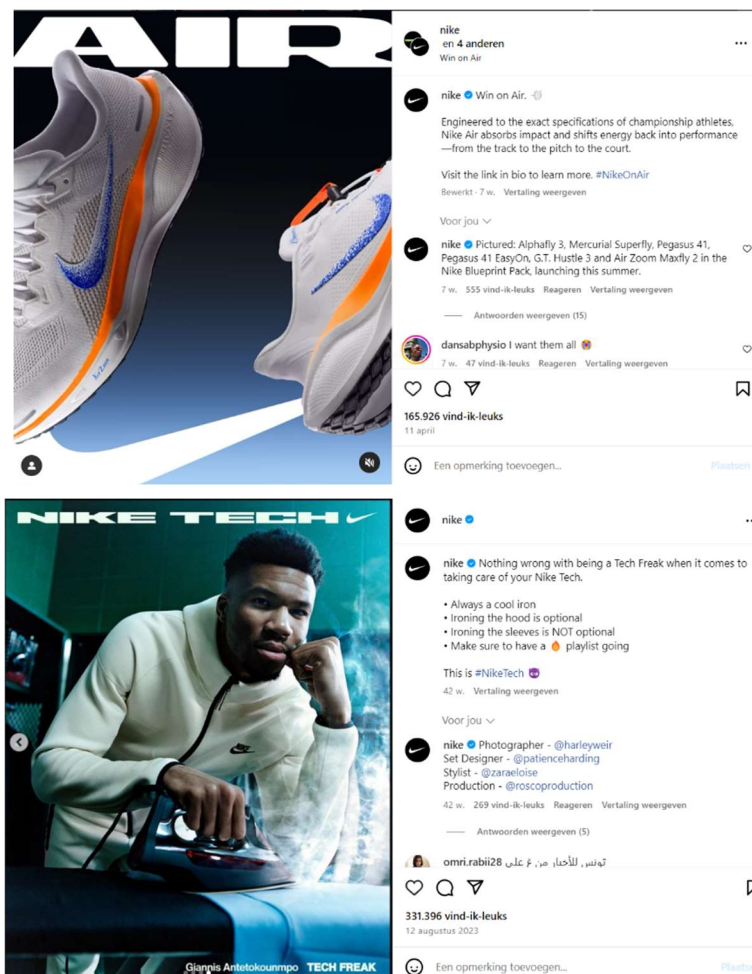
Implementing the model of De Chernatony’s model (1999), there are some aspects of the personality facet that are emphasized like in that of Kapferer (2008). Hence, De Chernatony’s model (1999) mentions about the personality element that it is chief to humanize the brand. Consumers should share the same or similar notions as Nike to have an effective brand identity. In figure 4.2. can be seen that the image shows a regular gymnastics class of children. It gives a notion of what people can observe in everyday life. This decreases the distance a consumer can feel between the brand and them (Rauschnabel et al., 2016, p. 3079). Additionally, the caption of that post says “You have the potential to do anything you put your mind to”. This falls into the theme of motivation for performance, as it simulates you to perform your best self. But also, it speaks directly to the consumer, and in this case not via a supreme athlete. This comes closer to the average consumer of Nike and makes the brand more human-like, which complements the notion of personality by De Chernatony’s model (1999).



Figure 4.2. Humanizing brand

4.2. Tangible elements Nike

The second theme that was generated from the analysis is named 'Tangible elements Nike'. This theme was found through the high amount of posts by Nike that contain elements like their products, recognizable logos or slogans, and their promotions of their own branches. These elements make Nike as a brand feel tangible. Throughout Nike's content, new products are promoted, for instance "The Nike Air Max Dn is designed to give you a brand new sensation of comfort..." (Nike, n.d.), which indicates a new version of The Nike Air Max shoe type. An example of the promotion of Nike shoes can be observed in figure 4.3. Apart from products from Nike itself, branches of Nike are promoted. In figure 4.3. in the second screenshot, Nike Tech is promoted. This can be observed in the image where the person is wearing a product of Nike Tech and in the image it is also written out. In the caption it is also promoted with the hashtag #NikeTech and in the text itself. Further, the slogan: 'Just Do It.' and the 'Swoosh' logo of Nike are promoted throughout all of the Instagram content of Nike. The swoosh logo is visible in all screenshots of figure 4.3., just like the profile picture of Nike shows solely the swoosh logo. In the third screenshot of figure 4.3., the phrase 'Just Do It.' is highlighted in the image.



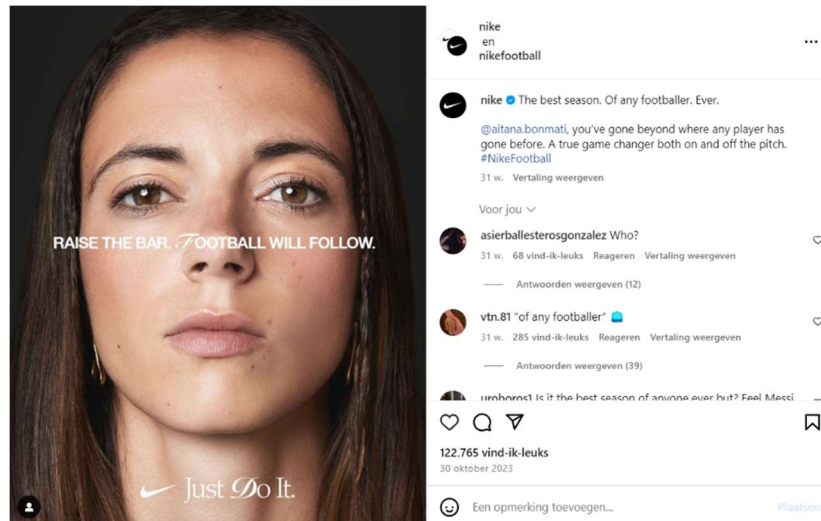


Figure 4.3. Tangible elements Nike

The most relevant facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) in connection to the theme 'Tangible elements Nike' is that of 'physique', as this facet refers to what the brand does and looks like (Janonis et al., 2007, p. 51). Thus, the features of the brand that feel most tangible that make it recognizable when compared to other brands (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). What gives a brand this tangible feeling are sensory or objective characteristics, like the shapes, colors, or designs (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 9). In all of the screenshots of figure 4.3. is the most important and prominent tangible element the swoosh logo. This enforces the brand identity of Nike strongly, as one of the greatest strengths a brand can have is to have a recognizable logo (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). The logo of the 'swoosh' is visible wherever you look on the Instagram feed of Nike. Thus, the physical characteristic of the logo is effectively carried out. Furthermore, the 'swoosh' symbol of Nike stands for a number of values, namely: performance, innovation, principle, change, and creativity (Nike, 2022, p. 1). This connects it back to the facets of personality and culture of the model of Kapferer (2008). These facets are about the core values of the brand. So, the 'swoosh' logo is one of the most recognizable features Nike has as a brand. Throughout the content Nike has posted, the swoosh symbol is constantly a prominent feature in the images. Also, the profile picture of the Instagram account is that of the swoosh logo, which makes it appear everytime a post is observed. The logo can be connected to the facet of physique of the model of Kapferer (2008), as it the logo is one of the most important tangible features of a brand. Further, the logo can be connected to the facets of personality and culture, due to it conveying the core values (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). On Top of the iconic swoosh logo of Nike, the slogan 'Just Do it' is recognized by most consumers (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Like visible in the third screenshot of figure 4.3., the phrase 'Just Do It' is embedded in a large amount of the imagery on the feed of Nike, just like the captions of the posts often contain the slogan. The slogan stands for performance

(Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435).

Furthermore, the name 'Nike' is always visible on every post. This is also a tangible part of the brand that is connected to the facet of 'physique' of the model of Kapferer (2008). When the brand identity is strong, the name is well used and effective in that way (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). This is decided by the brand's popularity among the consumers and how much dominance the brand has in the market. One way Nike's popularity can be recognized is the amount of monthly visitors the website Nike.com gets. This was in the month March of 2024 alone more than 124 million visitors (Sher, 2024, p. 1). This indicates that the name of Nike is well recognized and that the name of that brand is in turn effective. The brand identity is on the physical level thus very strong.

Next aspect of Nike their Instagram content that connects to the theme of the tangible elements of Nike is the high amount of posting of their products. Examples of how this is done can be observed in the first two screenshots of figure 4.3. As a company, brand identity is created through the unique products you develop that differentiate the brand from others (Nandan, 2005, p. 265). Nike has a large amount of products posted on their feed. These products are recognizable by just the swoosh logo, the name as the logo, or a combination of these two (Nike, n.d.). It makes the products distinguished from other products on people's Instagram feed. In turn it enforces Nike's brand identity strengthness on Instagram. Nike also posts branches of the brand regularly. In figure 4.3. is a promotion observable of Nike Tech for instance. As seen in the first two screenshots, they choose to promote these by '#NikeTech' or '#NikeOnAir'. These are both naturally recognizable by the user due to the effective name the brand has.

4.3. Promotion of sports

The third theme that came forth from the thematic analysis is called 'Promotion of sports'. Nike is on its Instagram feed highly affiliated with sports. These are mainly sports that they are involved with for clothing sponsoring. They promote specific sports, like basketball or tennis, but they also promote sports through famous athletes or celebrities, or they promote sports events generally. These observations came to the following sub-themes: 'different sports', 'famous people', and 'promotion of sports events'. The main sports that are featured throughout the content that are posted by Nike are basketball, tennis, golf, running track, football, and baseball. Three of these can be observed in figure 4.4. Further, athletes and celebrities are prominent among the Instagram posts of Nike. Often the athlete that is featured is subsequently a celebrity, like the golf player Tiger Woods featured in the second screenshot of figure 4.4. But also non-athlete celebrities, like the comedian and actor Druski who can be observed in the first screenshot of figure 4.4. Further, events are promoted by Nike on their Instagram. Especially events that have just

finished to congratulate the athlete with their accomplishment. For instance the third screenshot of figure 4.4. shows a track runner who set a new European record.

The figure consists of three vertically stacked screenshots of social media posts from Nike. Each post features a photograph of an athlete and a corresponding text-based announcement or congratulatory message.

- Top Post:** A woman in a black top and pink shorts stands next to a man in a black and white Nike jacket and blue shorts, who is holding a basketball. The text reads: "nike en 2 anderen Originele audio", "nike These new basketball drills are getting a little out of hand 🤖 Luckily, @sabrina.j's game is crafted to do it all. Welcome to training day — @druski style. 🎮", "41 w. Vertaling weergeven", "241.219 vind-ik-leuks", "26 augustus 2023".
- Middle Post:** A photograph of Tiger Woods in a red Nike shirt swinging a golf club. The text reads: "It was a hell of a round, Tiger.", "nike Tiger, you challenged your competition, stereotypes, conventions, the old school way of thinking. You challenged the entire institution of golf. You challenged us. And most of all, yourself. And for that challenge we're grateful.", "22 w. Vertaling weergeven", "394 vind-ik-leuks", "8 januari".
- Bottom Post:** A photograph of track runner Jakob Ingebrigtsen in a green and yellow uniform holding a trophy. The text reads: "nike en nikerunning Hayward Field", "nike Yesterday, he ran the fastest mile in 24 years with a 3:43.73 finish. Today, he set a new European Record in the 3,000m. 🏆", "Why win one Diamond League trophy when you can win two? - @jakobing", "Congratulations, Jakob. The world is yours.", "Photo credits: @notafraid2fail", "Bewerkt - 35 w. Vertaling weergeven", "61.707 vind-ik-leuks", "18 september 2023".

Figure 4.4. Sports promoted by Nike

The most prominent facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) in connection to the theme 'Promotion of sports' is that of 'reflection'. The reflection facet involves what type of client is pictured by the brand as their customer (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Another term is customer reflection. To understand this dimension of the prism, the 'who' is considered (Armannsdottir et al., 2019, p. 723). Specifically, 'who' identifies with the brand. In the case of Nike, by analyzing their Instagram content it can be said that those who engage with sports are the customers in the eyes of Nike as a brand. All posts are related to sports in some way. Or it is the direct promotion of sports, like is shown in figure 4.4. Or products that are meant to be worn during sports are promoted in Nike's posts, which can be observed in figure 4.3. for instance. The brand reflection dimension of the model of Kapferer (2008) portrays in what way a consumer desires to be perceived by others (Zwakala & Steenkamp, 2021, p. 9). By analyzing Nike's content, it can be argued that those who engage with Nike as a brand desire to be perceived as healthy or athletic individuals. All posts promote to be fit or to perform the best one can on an athletic level (Nike, n.d.). Hence, Trevor Edwards, who is the ex-president of Nike, explained once that consumers of Nike should understand that sports is what the brand revolves around (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). This is clear throughout Nike's content, as every post revolves around sports in some way. For example in the second screenshot of figure 4.1., a sports field with athletes can be seen through the glasses of the coach wearing them. Then, the reflection facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) also focuses on the socio-economic level of the consumers of the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). In the case of Nike, there is no clear socio-economic level that is observable that interacts with the brand. The content that is shown can be interesting to all levels. So, for the reflection facet, from the content can be derived that the consumer who is pictured by Nike as a brand are ones that like to be healthy, athletic, and perform the best they can in sports.

Then, Nike their Instagram content contains many posts that feature celebrities and famous athletes. In all screenshots in figure 4.4. and figure 4.5. famous people are featured. Brands collaborate with celebrities who know positive associations, and in turn through the collaboration, the brand's products that are promoted see an enhancement in their position in the market (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2074). As mentioned earlier in the research, Nike once collaborated with famous golf player Tiger Woods and the sales of Nike's golf balls increased significantly (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2074). Still, another instance when Nike collaborated with the famous golf player, it was disadvantageous due to allegations of affairs and drug abuse towards the athlete (Robertson, 2021, p. 22). In the second screenshot of figure 4.4., Tiger Woods is featured. This means that even though the collaborations between Nike and the athlete were not always beneficial, Nike still chooses to keep Tiger Woods as one of the brand's endorsers. It shows that the collaborations have been rather successful than disadvantageous, as otherwise they would not still work together.

Then, Kennedy et al. (2021, p. 2073) claimed that it is chief regarding celebrity endorsements that the collaborations feel genuine and real to maintain authenticity. The consumer needs to be convinced that the celebrity is acting out of their true self and that it does not feel forced (Kennedy et al., 2021, p. 2073). For the second and third screenshot of figure 4.4, it can be said that this is the case, as those are both top performing athletes. The athletes directly stand in line with Nike's identity of performance and sport. Yet, in the first screenshot of figure 4.4. and figure 4.5., celebrities are featured that are not directly linked to sports. Still, the collaboration should work as the consumer sees the celebrity as their true self. For instance the caption of the post that features Megan Thee Stallion (figure 4.5.), the text is set in the kind of language the famous artist would use. This way, the user gets the notion that the celebrity conveys her own personality in the post of Nike.

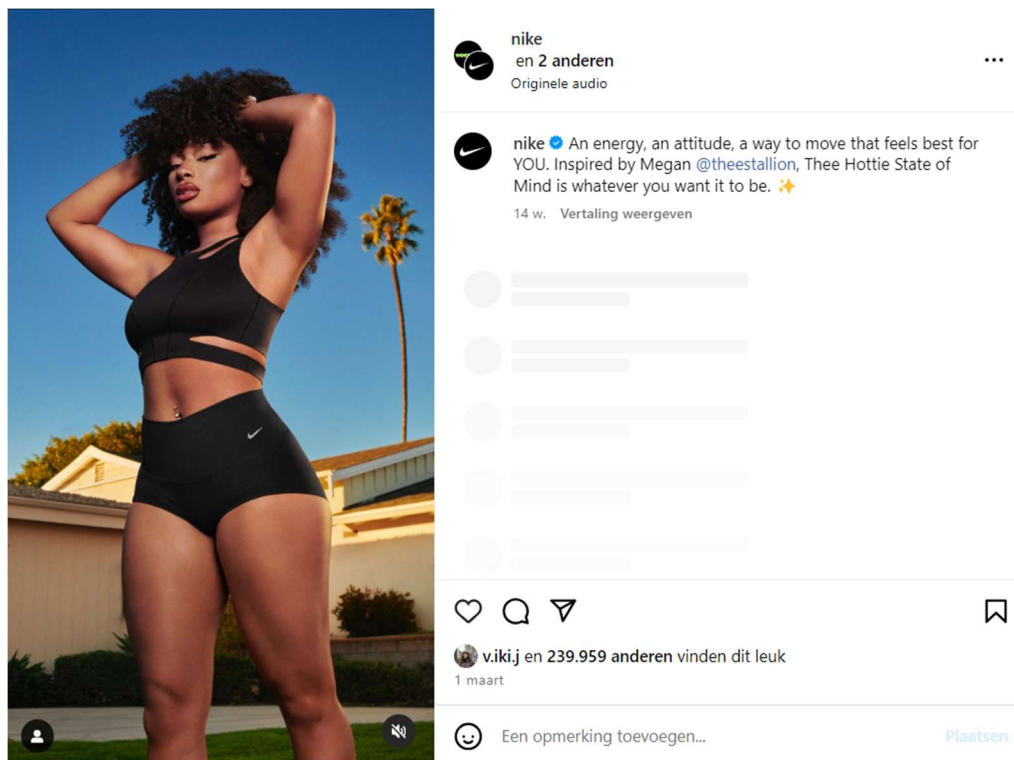
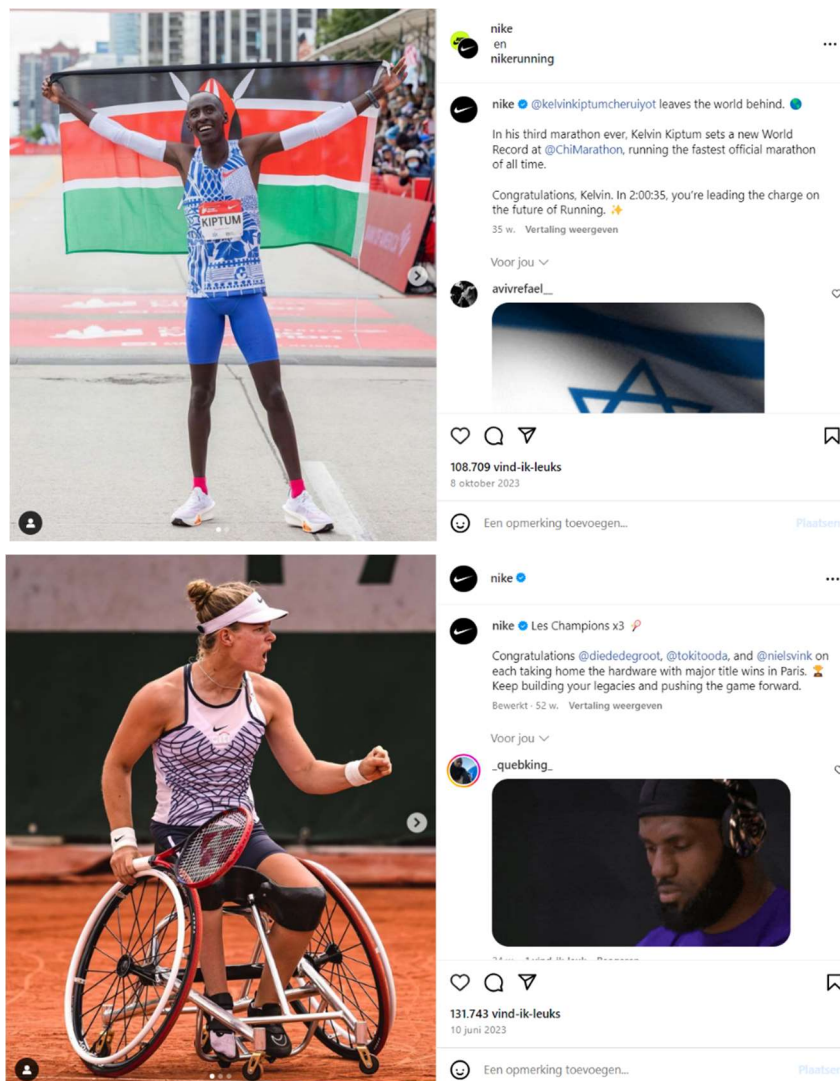


Figure 4.5. Megan Thee Stallion as celebrity endorser

4.4. Everyone is included

The most prominent theme that was generated through the analysis is called 'Everyone is included'. The content on Nike's Instagram account knows numerous ways to convey the message that no one is excluded from engaging with the brand. Ten sub-themes came forth from the analysis that are connected to this theme, which are: 'Different countries', 'Different ethnicities', 'United mentality', 'Friendliness/community', 'Socio-economic variety', 'Disabled athletes', 'Emphasis on women', 'Inclusion of all age groups', 'Inclusivity sexual preference', and 'Gender

inclusion'. Throughout the content, elements of inclusivity can be observed. Regarding countries, especially the USA is featured, but also countries like Kenya and Nigeria are present (figure 4.6.). Hence, the ethnicities of people are well varied (Nike, n.d.). Especially people of color are prominently present throughout the content. Disabled people are also included in the feed, like people with prosthetic legs or tennis in wheelchairs (figure 4.6.). Regarding the ages of people in the feed, it ranges from children to adults (figure 4.6.). Nike has an emphasis on women throughout its content. Accounts like @nikewomen are promoted (Nike, n.d.) and also pregnant women are posted (figure 4.6.). The queer community is further featured throughout Nike's content. Especially during pride month the queer community is frequently posted (figure 4.7.). Finally, Nike conveys the message of 'one community' and 'friendliness' a lot. Also the notion of 'love' is indicated in various ways, like in figure 4.7.



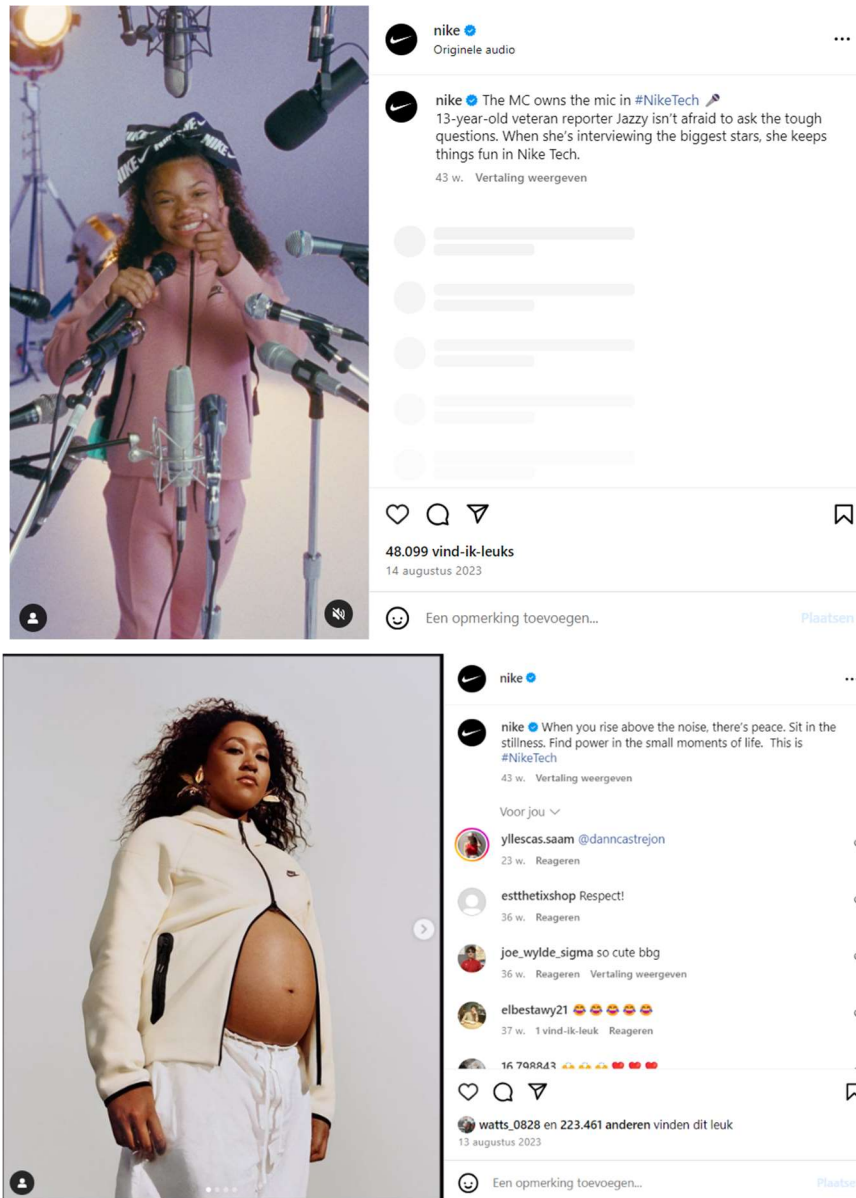


Figure 4.6. Various ethnicities, ages, and genders

For the theme ‘Everyone is included’ the ‘culture’ facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) is very relevant. The culture facet indicates what the values of the brand are (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). A brand’s culture that is applicable, is the desire to appeal to everyone. Thus, a brand culture where inclusivity is central (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Nike conveys the notion of inclusivity highly through their Instagram content. They have not stated clearly that one of their core values is inclusivity, like they have for their core value of performance (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Still, Nike shows clearly that they value inclusivity immensely. Like observed in figure 4.6., people all over the world are represented, just like different genders, age groups, and disabled people manifested (Nike, n.d.). In addition, the personality facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) and of De Chernatony (1999) also connects to the inclusivity aspect of Nike’s brand identity. The personality facet conveys the emotional characteristics that come forth from the main values of Nike (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Nike expresses values of love, friendliness, and community

feeling (Nike, n.d.). For instance figure 4.7. conveys the notion of love and the feeling of community. Further for this facet, through a true personality of the brand, consumer loyalty is maintained and enhanced (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). When observing the Instagram posts from Nike, the amount of consistency in regard to the amount of likes gives an indication of how loyal Instagram users are to engage with Nike's content. The posts score at the lowest around 30.000 likes, but it is not rare that posts go up in the hundreds of thousands of likes (Nike, n.d.). Thus, at least 30.000 users loyally keep on liking Nike's posts on Instagram.

Additionally, in connection to these aspects of the personality facet, the relationship facet overlaps. According to the model of Kapferer (2008), the relationship facet is about what the consumer expects from the brand. Examples of what a consumer expects from the brand in regard to the relationship, is a code of conduct of friendliness or love (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). The content of Nike clearly conveys the notion of love and acceptance. When the brand does what is expected of them, the trust is high and in turn the relationship is good (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Like previously stated, the amount of likes consist of numerous users that loyally engage with Nike's content. Which shows that many consumers of Nike act like Nike does what is expected of them. Thus trust is firm and the brand identity of Nike is strong in that way.

Finally, the 'reflection' facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) connects to the theme of 'Everyone is included'. Emphasis is on what type of client is pictured by the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Thus, Nike keeps in mind the 'who', in the sense of 'who' identifies with them. The 'who' in Nike's case is like previously said those who engage in sports (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Yet, from the content on Nike's Instagram, a wider sense of what kind of customer engages with Nike is observed. As also shown in figure 4.6. and figure 4.7., inclusivity of gender, ethnicities, age, and sexual preference are featured. It implies that Nike shares a wide image of inclusivity because Nike sees its customers as vastly varied demographic groups.

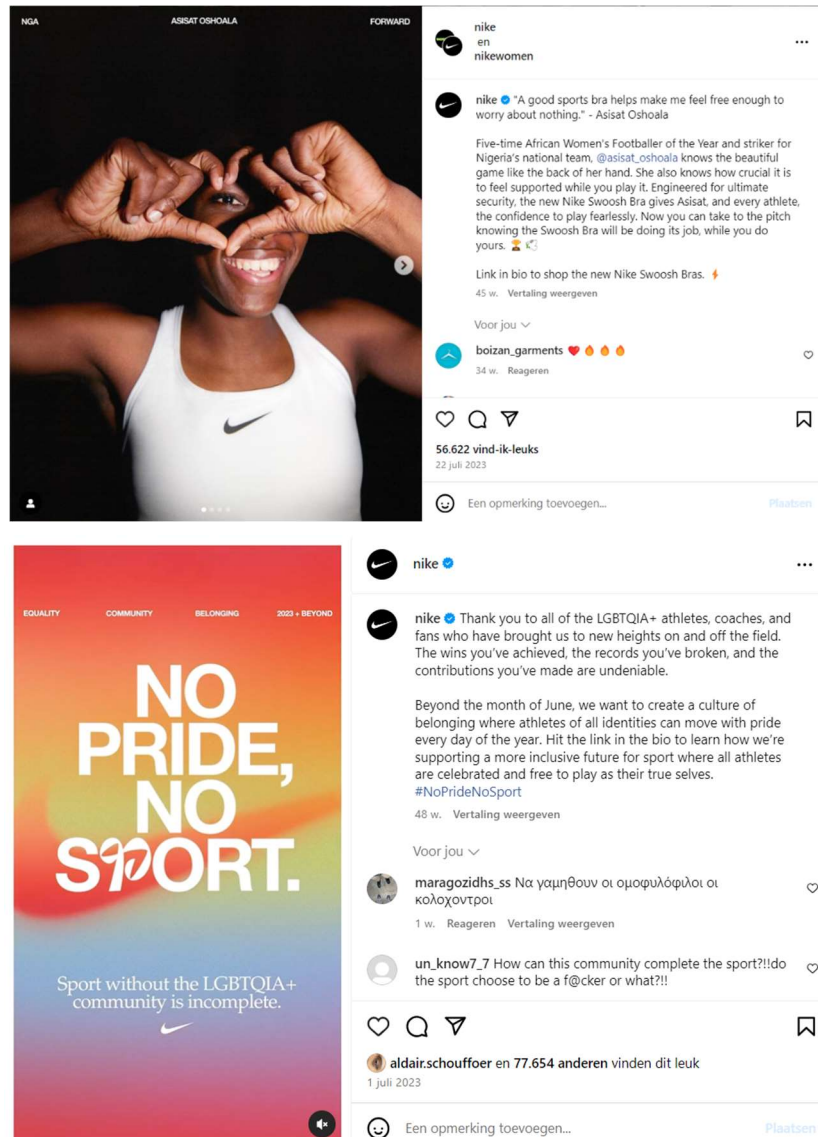


Figure 4.7. Love and pride

4.5. Innovative vision

The last theme is that of ‘Innovative vision’. Nike promotes many of their products on their Instagram and a large amount of which are claimed to be innovative. Additionally Nike has a vision towards the future, expressed in various ways in numerous posts (Nike, n.d.). The sub-themes that came forth from the analysis are that of ‘Innovative products’ and ‘Promoting innovation’. For instance in figure 4.8., it can be observed that the future is often mentioned. In the first screenshot of figure 4.8. can be read “This is the future of performance air” (Nike, n.d.). Just like the second screenshot of figure 4.8. read “they give to the future of football” (Nike, n.d.). Additionally, the second screenshot speaks about ‘a whole new generation’ and the hashtag #AllForTomorrow is included. This all gives the notion of a vision in the direction to the future. For the products of Nike that are promoted on the feed, like the shoe in figure 4.8., a more innovative view towards the future is implemented.

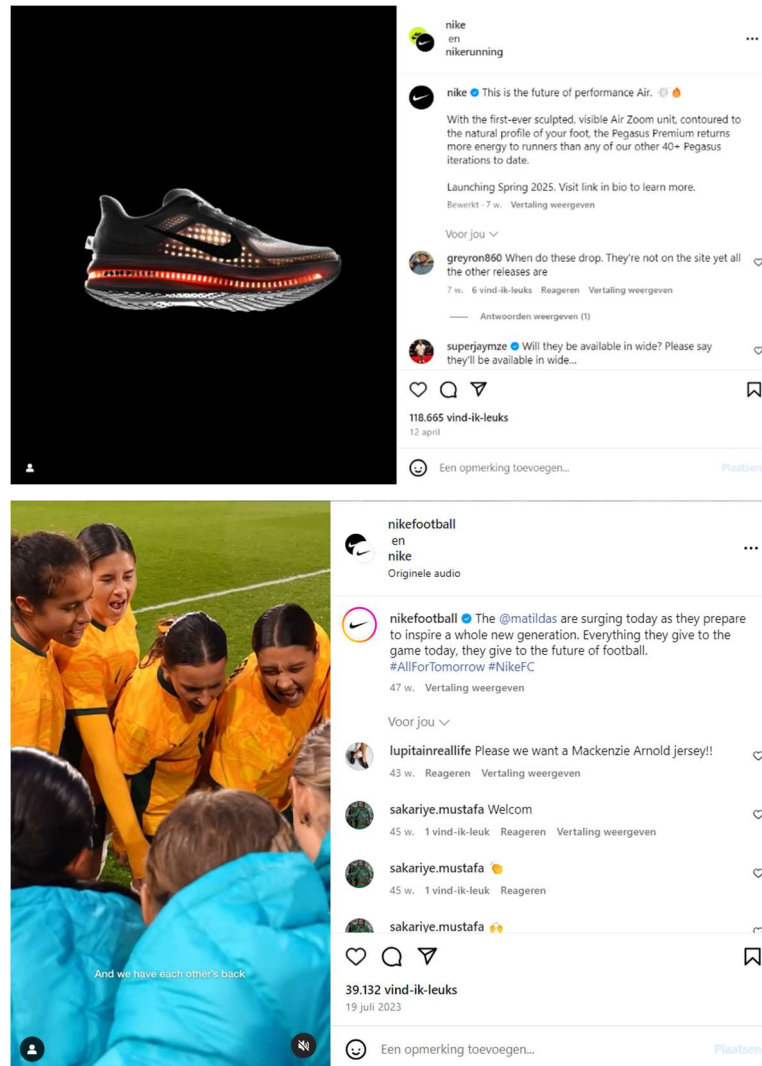


Figure 4.8. Innovative vision

Then, for the theme 'Innovative vision', the first facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) that connects to it is that of 'relationship'. The component of relationship involves what the consumers expect of the brand (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Nike's main selling point is that of shoes, clothing, and other sport related products; Nike revolves around sport (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Thus, consumers expect these kinds of products from Nike as a brand to offer. To remain relevant as a brand selling these products, Nike needs to keep on changing and innovating to maintain and to improve its position in the market (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 6). The brand needs to meet the consumers expectations to maintain an effective relationship. Nike remains very relevant with over 124 million people visiting their website in March, 2024 (Sher, 2024, p. 1). Thus, in this sense, Nike is innovating effectively as their place in the market remains relevant. Additionally, De Chernatony (1999) states that a better relationship comes with an increase of interaction and in turn stimulates the innovation and success of the brand. This is due to the fact the brand obtains a better understanding of its customers and with more information, products can be designed more

effectively (De Chernatony, 1999 p. 172).

Further, the personality facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) has some connection to the theme. The personality is about the characteristics of the brand that come forth from their values (Ross & Harradine, 2011, p. 310). Competition is one of the core values of Nike (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). To compete as a brand against other brands, innovation is key to be successful. In addition, characteristics of Nike's 'swoosh' logo are 'change' and 'innovation' (Nike, 2022, p. 1). These ways, an innovative personality can be ascribed to the brand (Zwakala and Steenkamp, 2021, p. 9). So, an innovative personality fits Nike's brand identity significantly.

4.6. Summary

To sum this chapter up, all five themes offer deeper understanding of the posting strategies of Nike, which conveys their brand identity on Instagram. Regarding the 'motivation for high performance' theme, Nike's core values are conveyed through its content and in turn promote motivation to those who engage with the brand to perform the best they can. Nike's Instagram content conveys the notions of determination, achieving goals, and the general aspiration for high performance. The personality facet is in this way featured, just like Nike's branding is humanized in certain posts, which enforces the brand identity. Additionally the culture facet is well developed through Nike's values and can be observed throughout all of the content.

The second theme is that of 'Tangible elements Nike', which refers to the tangible features of Nike that makes the brand recognizable. That physique facet is connected to this theme. The most prominent tangible feature of Nike is the swoosh logo that is embedded in close to every post, as well as the profile picture on Instagram. The logo stands for the values of performance, innovation, principle, change, and creativity. Aside from the swoosh logo, is Nike's slogan 'Just Do It' one of the main recognizable elements of Nike. The slogan is featured in most images and captions of each post. Lastly, the name 'Nike' is a super effective tangible element of the brand, as it one of the most recognized brand names in the world, which makes Nike's brand identity significantly strong. The swoosh logo and Nike's name is featured on all of the products promoted on the Instagram feed.

Next, the theme of 'promotion of sports', which is about the sports Nike is engaged with in general, but also their promotions through sports events, ethlites, and famous figures. For this theme, emphasis is on the reflection facet. Regarding this facet, those who engage with sports are those who identify with Nike as a brand. Through the analysis, it is derived that those who engage with Nike desire to be perceived as healthy or athletic individuals. Then, the famous figures and athletes Nike collaborates with need to know positive associates in the public. Consumers need to be convinced of the authenticity of the famous figure featured. As long as this is the case,

celebrities do not have to be directly linked to sports to be effectively featured in Nike's Instagram content.

The fourth theme of this chapter is 'everyone is included' stresses how noteworthy Nike's execution of inclusivity is. Nike does not state inclusivity as one of their core values, however, this is visible throughout all of Nike's content. Through the culture facet, the values of the brand are indicated. Inclusivity is one of them, as can be derived from the content. People all over the world are represented, just like different genders, age groups, and disabled people are manifested. Then for the personality facet, emphasis is on the emotional characteristics that come forth from the values. From the data the emotional characteristics of love, friendliness, and community feeling emerged. In addition, the relationship facet is intertwined with that of personality. Namely the emotional characteristics connect to the code of conduct that consumers expect of Nike. From the data can be concluded that the relationship is good and trust is firm, which makes Nike's brand identity strong in this way. Finally for the reflection facet, Nike sees its customers as immensely varied in demographic terms. Every gender, ethnicity, age, and sexual preference is featured throughout the content.

Lastly, the theme 'innovative vision' involves Nike convention of their innovative view and character. Nike claims their products to be innovative and they frequently mention 'the future'. The relationship facet relates to this theme, as what Nike's consumers expect from the brand is the newest and innovative products. Hence, in terms of sports, innovative products make them perform the best they can. Nike's brand identity is effective in this regard, as consumers greatly engage with the brand, which means the relationship is strong. Further, the personality facet connects to this theme, as one of Nike's core values is that of competition, which is part of their character as a brand. Nike needs to keep on innovating their products to compete with other brands. Thus, Nike fits the notion of an innovative brand personality.

5. Conclusion

This research is constructed with a focus to study how Nike creates its brand identity through their content on the platform Instagram. To examine this, a total number of 302 posts were gathered and analyzed. This was done by the use of a thematic analysis, from which five main themes came forth. These themes assisted in gaining deeper meaning into the subject so the goal of this study can be achieved. The components of the brand identity model made researching Nike's brand identity possible in an ordered manner. All of the components had meaning in their own and intertwined way. Finally, the theoretical information of previous research came out to be relevant to answer the research question. Regarding the international level of this study, Nike is one of the largest international companies in the world (Sher, 2024, p. 1). To get a better understanding on how this global company influences society through social media and their brand identity itself is valuable information.

Nike is a company that sees itself as a performance brand and shows this off through their content. Posts like shown in figure 4.1 give observers the feeling of motivation and to behave the best they can with an emphasis on sports. Nike does this by featuring high performing athletes and their achievements, as well as phrases with motivational meaning for its consumers. Like mentioned in the theoretical framework, Nike sees itself as a brand that involves mainly performance (Kornum et al., 2017, p. 435). Nike's old president, Trevor Edwards, explained that it is prominent for Nike that its consumers understand that brand is about performance. When observing Nike's content, it is clear this is the case. It is clear because their Instagram feed features top athletes and motivational phrases, but also their logo and signature phrase 'Just Do It' is close to always present (Nike, n.d.). These two elements of the brand both convey the performance value. Thus, on this subject Nike's content on Instagram is in line with what they claim about themselves as a brand.

As shown and explained in chapter 4.4, Nike shares the feeling of a community throughout their content. They convey the notion of a community where everyone is welcome, as came forth from the analysis findings. Nike features people of all ethnicities, genders, ages, and sexual preferences. Hence, in their phrases and captions is an emphasis on notions of 'togetherness' and to work as a team. Interestingly, Nike does not state themselves that inclusivity is one of their main values, still it is visible in close to all their content. As Yan (2011, p. 691) explains, when a company desires to effectively brand themselves on Instagram, an emphasis should be on generating a community feeling among their customers. Most importantly, the sense of 'we' needs to be created among the brand's community, as the organization can connect more easily to their customers and this creates more engagement and allows for a more devoted relationship (Yan, 2011, p. 691). Puey and Jiménez (2022, p. 193) and Okonkwo (2009, p. 23) also state that within the fashion industry, a

brand should not only be differentiated by their products itself, but also their emotional and symbolic associations. From the findings is understood that Nike does this by their convention of one community and inclusion and their logo that is recognizable and valued. Thus can be said that Nike's brand identity is strong due to the inclusive identity they know and convey. Still, it is remarkable that Nike does not clearly state inclusivity as one of their core values when they manifest this so greatly.

Then, the facets of the model of Kapferer (2008) were crucial to understand Nike's brand identity, with as the first facet that of *physique*. The facet is about the tangible elements of Nike, which are products like shoes and other sports clothing, but most importantly Nike's logo that is recognizable to the general public and visible throughout all of its content. The second facet is that of *personality*, which are the core values of Nike, namely performance, community, and innovation. Then, the facet of *relationship* is in Nike's case strong, as Nike's customers show to engage greatly with the brand, which in turn means there is trust in their relationship. For the facet of *culture* can be seen that the inclusivity and friendliness are humanized values conveyed by the brand. The final relevant facet of the model of Kapferer (2008) is that of *reflection*, Nike sees its customers as those who want to do sports and be healthy, without a particular demographic that is targeted.

To conclude and answer the research question: "How does Nike create its brand identity through their Instagram content?", Nike creates its brand identity via Instagram by conveying their core values of performance and friendliness by their motivational texts and inclusion of top athletes, accompanied by their love and inclusivity of all people. Nike is a brand that is about performance and promotes and motivates to do so. Additionally it is an organization that through its content includes all people and forms a notion where everybody is welcome to engage with the brand.

5.1. Social and academic implications

Regarding the social relevance of this research, the way social media exists in most of people's lives has made significant changes in the way people socially interact with each other (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 1). Additionally, social media has become part of what present-day society is. Instagram specifically knows over 2 billion monthly users (Dixon, 2024). Due to the frequently expanding influence of this platform, it is important for society to grow our understanding of it. In addition, mainly adolescents make use of social media to help define themselves (Hidayah & Huriati, 2016, p. 54). To research social media can help to understand new generations, for instance how they are impacted by it. Another social implication is that Nike as a company conveys values of healthiness and inclusivity. These are values beneficial to everyone. An understanding of how these values are promoted helps people to feel better of themselves and assists for a friendlier, more

socially inclusive society. Further academic implications from this study are firstly the findings are an expansion of the knowledge of the prism model of Kapferer (2008). The prism is a notably useful tool to gain understanding of organizations their brand identity. Every reuse of the model adds to understanding the use of the model better. Following, social media research is more and more important (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 1). Especially because Instagram is such an influential platform to the public. This academically benefits the field of social media research, as it gives meaning to how Instagram is used by an international company like Nike.

5.2. Limitations and future research

Limitations that should be mentioned for this study is the fact Nike's brand identity has only been analyzed via Instagram and not via different advertising mediums they use, like physical advertising or other online platforms. Also, the thematic analysis was focused on what Nike posts itself on its Instagram and customer reviews or comments have been excluded. For the facet of self-image of the model of Kapferer (2008), it would have been beneficial to get the consumers' perspective on the brand. Hence, the reliability and validity of the results from the analysis may have been influenced by the bias of the researcher. As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) state, the researcher during a thematic analysis always has some flexibility in deciding how to analyze the data. Still, the steps that have been taken during the analysis and the thought process during the research have been transparently stated by the researcher. This way it is clear what the decisions are by the researcher so the process to the results can be understood and be used for future research.

Future research that can work as an extension on this subject would be a focus on the customers view on Nike as a brand on Instagram. Further knowledge on brand identity using the model of Kapferer (2008) is useful to improve understanding of the model and of Nike's brand identity. On top of that, Instagram is a model that keeps on changing, thus to maintain comprehension on the matter, future research should keep on updating on this subject.

References

- Aaker, J. L. (1997) —Dimensions of Brand Personality||, *Journal of Market Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 347-356.
- Andersson, M. (2023, September 20). *Nike's marketing strategy that revolutionized the sports industry*. Simba Digital. <https://simba-digital.ch/en/nikes-marketing-strategy-that-revolutionized-the-sports-industry/>
- Armansdottir, G., Pich, C., & Spry, L. (2019). Exploring the creation and development of political co-brand identity. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 22(5), 716–744. [https://doi.org/10.1108/qmr-10-2018-0119\[DR13\]](https://doi.org/10.1108/qmr-10-2018-0119[DR13])
- Avis, M., & Henderson, I. L. (2021). A solution to the problem of brand definition. *European Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 351–374. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-09-2020-0700>
- Ayre, J., & McCaffery, K. J. (2022). Research note: Thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Physiotherapy*, 68(1), 76–79.a
- Azzaakiyyah, H. K. (2023). The impact of social media use on social interaction in contemporary society. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.61100/tacit.v1i1.33>
- Babbie, E. (2017). *The basics of social research* (7th ed.). CENGAGE Learning.
- Black, I., & Veloutsou, C. (2017). Working Consumers: Co-creation of Brand Identity, Consumer Identity and Brand Community Identity. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 416–429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.07.012>
- Bowen, G. A., (2019). Sensitizing Concepts, In P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J.W. Sakshaug, & R.A. Williams (Eds.), *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036788357>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage.
- Brennen, B. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for media studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Brigitte, S. (2015) Qualitative Research The “What,” “Why,” “Who,” and “How”!. *Research dimension*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1097/DCC.000000000000150>
- Bürgin, D., & Wilken, R. (2021). Increasing consumers' purchase intentions toward fair-trade products through partitioned pricing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 181(4), 1015–1040. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04938-6>
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

- Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10, 807-815.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019>
- Cohen, R., Irwin, L., Newton-John, T., & Slater, A. (2019). #bodypositivity: A content analysis of body positive accounts on Instagram. *Body Image*, 29, 47–57.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2019.02.007>
- da Silveira, C., Lages, C., & Simões, C. (2013). Reconceptualizing brand identity in a dynamic environment. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 28–36.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.020>
- De Chernatony, L. (1999). Brand Management through Narrowing the Gap between Brand Identity and Brand Reputation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, 157-179.
<https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870432>
- Dixon, S. J. (2024, April 24). *Topic: Instagram*. Statista.
<https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/#topicOverview>
- Dixon, S. J. (2023, August 29). Instagram users worldwide 2025. *Statista*.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/183585/instagram-number-of-global-users/>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and Research Propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- Eisend, M., Muldrow, A. F., & Rosengren, S. (2022). Diversity and inclusion in advertising research. *International Journal of Advertising*, 42(1), 52–59.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2022.2122252>
- Esposito, G., Perla, V., Passeggia, R., Fertuck, E., & Mergenthaler, E. (2021). Reflective functioning and personal recovery process of users with borderline personality disorder on Instagram: An explorative study using computerized and thematic analysis. *Research in Psychotherapy: Psychopathology, Process and Outcome*, 23(3). <https://doi.org/10.4081/ripppo.2020.463>
- Fournier, S., & Avery, J. (2011). The Uninvited Brand. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 193–207.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.001>
- Fischer, E., & Guzel, G. T. (2022). The case for qualitative research. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 33(1), 259–272. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1300>
- Ghodeswar, B.M. (2008), “Building brand identity in competitive markets: a conceptual model”, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 4-12.

- Graeff, T. R. (1996). Using promotional messages to manage the effects of brand and self-image on Brand Evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 13(3), 4–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/07363769610118921>
- Hidayah, N., & Huriati, H. (2016). Krisis identitas diri pada remaja “identity crisis of adolescences”. *Sulesana: Jurnal Wawasan Keislaman*, 10(1), 49-62
- Janonis, V., Dovalienė, A., & Virvilaitė, R. (2007). Relationship of brand identity and image. *Engineering economics*, 51(1).
- Kapferer, K. (2008), *New Strategic Brand Management – Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*, 4th ed., *Kogan Page, London*
- Kapferer, J. N. (2009). Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism Model. *European Institute for Brand Management*, 24, 2014.
- Kay, M. J. (2006). Strong brands and Corporate Brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8), 742–760. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560610669973>
- Keller, K. L. (2003). Understanding brands, branding and brand equity. *Interactive Marketing*, 5(1), 7–20. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.im.4340213>
- Kennedy, A., Baxter, S. M., & Kulczynski, A. (2021). Promoting authenticity through Celebrity Brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 55(7), 2072–2099. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-10-2019-0802>
- Kesavan, P. (2021). *Enablers of organisational learning, Knowledge Management, and innovation: Principles, process, and practice of qualitative data*. Springer.
- Kornum, N., Gyrd-Jones, R., Al Zagir, N., & Brandis, K. A. (2017). Interplay between intended brand identity and identities in a Nike related brand community: Co-existing synergies and tensions in a nested system. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 432–440.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.06.019>
- Lou, C., Xie, Q., Feng, Y., & Kim, W. (2019). Does non-hard-sell content really work? leveraging the value of Branded Content Marketing in brand building. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(7), 773–786. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-07-2018-1948>
- Louis, D. and Lombart, C. (2010), “Impact of brand personality on three major relational consequences (trust, attachment, and commitment to the brand)”, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 114-30.
- Liu, L. (2016). Using generic inductive approach in Qualitative Educational Research: A case study analysis. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(2), 129.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n2p129>
- Myers, M. (2000). Qualitative research and the generalizability question: Standing firm with proteus. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2000.2925>

- Nandan, S. (2005). An exploration of the brand identity–brand image linkage: A communications perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12(4), 264–278.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540222>
- Nike [@nike]. (n.d.). Posts [Instagram profile]. Retrieved May 31, 2024, from
<https://www.instagram.com/nike/>
- Nike. (2022, May 16). *Never done leaving a mark: Swoosh*. Swoosh . Nike.com.
<https://www.nike.com/a/never-done-leaving-a-mark-swoosh>
- Okonkwo, U. (2007). Luxury Fashion Branding: trends, tactics, techniques. *Palgrave Macmillan*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-59088-5>
- Puey, F. C., & Jiménez, A. I. A. (2022). La Comunicación de la Identidad de la Marca Gucci en Su Perfil de Instagram. *Doxa Comunicación. Revista Interdisciplinar de Estudios de Comunicación y Ciencias Sociales*, 177–200. <https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n34a847>
- Rauschnabel, P. A., Krey, N., Babin, B. J., & Ivens, B. S. (2016). Brand Management in higher education: The University Brand Personality Scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 3077–3086. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.01.023>
- Robertson, J. A. (2021). Celebrity capitalism. *Strategic Direction*, 37(11), 22–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/sd-10-2021-0110>
- Ross, J., & Harradine, R. (2011). Fashion value brands: The relationship between identity and image. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15(3), 306-325.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/13612021111151914>
- Sher, D. (2024, April 2). A statistical analysis of Nike’s rise to the top of the sporting industry. Investing.com. <https://www.investing.com/academy/statistics/nike-facts/#:~:text=With%20a%20market%20capitalization%20of,sports%20brand%20in%20the%20world>
- Silverman, D. (2011). Credible qualitative research. In *Interpreting qualitative data. A guide to the principles of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Smith, B. (2017). Generalizability in qualitative research: Misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and Exercise Sciences. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(1), 137–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2017.1393221>
- Southgate, P. (1994), *Total Branding by Design*, Kogan Page, London
- Swaminathan, V., Stille, K. M., & Ahluwalia, R. (2009). When brand personality matters: The moderating role of Attachment Styles. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(6), 985–1002.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/593948>
- Yan, J. (2011). Social Media in branding: Fulfilling a need. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(9), 688–696. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2011.19>

- Yuan, R., Liu, M. J., Luo, J., & Yen, D. A. (2016). Reciprocal transfer of brand identity and image associations arising from Higher Education Brand Extensions. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 3069–3076. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.01.022>
- Zwakala, K. M., & Steenkamp, P. (2021). Identity-based brand differentiation : Brand Identity Prism Application in south african banks. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 18(1), 121–141. <https://doi.org/10.35683/jcm20051.99>

Appendices

Appendix A. Initial coding framework

Theme name	Sub-themes	Open codes
Motivation for high performance	Dedicated performance	High-performance
		Winning/greatness
		Self-discipline/virtue
		Push yourself as athlete
	Break a record	Raise the bar
	"Stronger"	
	Motivational phrases	
		"whatever you want to be"
		Inspirational quotes
	Winning	Trophies
		"women's world number one ranking"
		new European Record
Tangible elements Nike	Nike shoes	Nike Air Max
		"This a REAL sneaker"
		Air technology
	Promoting Nike branches through hashtag	#NikeTech
		#NikeSB
		#NikeOnAir
	Signature elements Nike	Swoosh logo
		#JustDolt

		Just Do It (implemented in image)
Promotion of sports	Different sports	Tennis
		Basketball
		Football
	Famous people	Celebrity athletes
		Non-athlete celebrities
		Celebrities who passed away
	Promotion of sportevents	Promotion of event
		Congratulating winner of prior event
		Olympic games
All one global community	Different countries	America
		Nigeria
		France
	Different ethnicities	Black/African ethnicity
		White ethnicity
		Asian ethnicity
	United mentality	"victory for all"
		"together"
		Teamsports
	Friendliness/community	friends
		community
		creating a heart with hands

	Socio-economic variety	Showing poorer countries
		Millionaires
		Average teenagers
Inclusiveness	Disabled athletes	Prosthetic legs
		Wheelchair
		Paralyzed tennis
	Emphasis on women	@nikewomen
		Girls
		Pregnancy
	Inclusion of all age groups	Children
		Babies
		Older age athletes
	Inclusivity sexual preference	Homosexuality
		(she/them)/queer identity
		"NO PRIDE, NO SPORT."
	Gender inclusion	Unisex
		(they/them)
		"For all"
Innovative vision	Innovative products	Introducing new product
		Next generation of shoes
		Innovative aspects product
	Promoting innovation	creativity
		'Change the world'

		boundless possibilities
Image arrangement	Variety in color usage images	Black/white colors
		Bright colors
		Neon colors
	Athletic build	Muscles
		Flexible stance
		High jumping
	Background image	One color background
		Nature background
		Sport field background

Appendix B. Final coding framework

Theme name	Sub-themes	Open codes	
Motivation for high performance	Dedicated performance	High-performance	
		Winning/greatness	
		Self-discipline/virtue	
	Break a record	Push yourself as athlete	Raise the bar
			"Stronger"
			Motivational phrases
	Motivational phrases	"Dream"	
		"whatever you want to be"	
		Inspirational quotes	
	Winning	Trophies	
		"women's world number one ranking"	
		new European Record	
Tangible elements Nike	Nike shoes	Nike Air Max	
		"This a REAL sneaker"	
		Air technology	
	Promoting Nike branches through hashtag	#NikeTech	
		#NikeSB	
		#NikeOnAir	
	Signature elements Nike	Swoosh logo	
		#JustDolt	
		Just Do It (implemented in image)	

Promotion of sports	Different sports	Tennis
		Basketball
		Football
	Famous people	Celebrity athletes
		Non-athlete celebrities
		Celebrities who passed away
	Promotion of sportevents	Promotion of event
		Congratulating winner of prior event
		Olympic games
Everyone is included	Different countries	America
		Nigeria
		France
	Different ethnicities	Black/African ethnicity
		White ethnicity
		Asian ethnicity
	United mentality	"victory for all"
		"together"
		Teamsports
	Friendliness/community	friends
		community
		creating a heart with hands
Socio-economic variety	Showing poorer countries	
	Millionaires	

		Average teenagers
	Disabled athletes	Prosthetic legs
		Wheelchair
		Paralyzed tennis
	Emphasis on women	@nikewomen
		Girls
		Pregnancy
	Inclusion of all age groups	Children
		Babies
		Older age athletes
	Inclusivity sexual preference	Homosexuality
		(she/them)/queer identity
		“NO PRIDE, NO SPORT.”
	Gender inclusion	Unisex
		(they/them)
		“For all”
Innovative vision	Innovative products	Introducing new product
		Next generation of shoes
		Innovative aspects product
	Promoting innovation	creativity
		‘Change the world’
		boundless possibilities
		Black/white colors

Image arrangement	Variety in color usage images	Bright colors
		Neon colors
	Athletic build	Muscles
		Flexible stance
		High jumping
	Background image	One color background
		Nature background
		Sport field background