

Chapter 11

Analysis of the Approach to Online Advertising of Leading Sportswear Brands

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ABSTRACT

Brands like Nike or Adidas are predominant in almost every country. One of the keys of their success is due to the investment in advertisement and to their different strategies of promotion. This research analyzed 117 ads of five important sports brands (Nike, Adidas, Puma, Reebok, and Converse) with the higher number of views in YouTube. Within the numerous variables, the study of the main important characters, the duration of the advertising, the year or decade of creation, the presence of violence, the context or environment where they were developed, the gender that is predominant (masculine or feminine), or the character's age stand out. The results showed that women still have a secondary role in sport advertisement and that younger and celebrities have the leading role, especially in the football scope, in the majority of the observed videos. It is concluded that brands are increasingly stand up for the feminine public and gradually are spreading out in the search of new market niches in order to keep innovation in promoting youth trends with this sport brands as promoters.

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INTRODUCTION

Sports clothes manufacturing, as a specialized sector within the textile industry, has its origin in the 19th century following the increase in the leisure time of workers. Since then, this market has grown steadily to become one of the most important economic sectors worldwide. At the same time, the purpose of this industry has also changed: while the sports outfit appeared in the modern age as an innovation destined to improving sporting performance, in post-modernity it has been used as a vehicle to spread commercial and political messages (Esparza, 2010).

Throughout the 20th century, sports have taken on an increasingly influential role in the development of fashion to such an extent that sports have become the driving force behind various tendencies, including the success of the casual outfit as the daily choice of millions of consumers, the rise of youth fashion culture (Badaoui, Lebrun & Bouchet, 2012; JenB, 2015), and above all, the association between specific dress styles and a sense of vitality (Riello, 2016). The relation between youth culture and fashion was established in the adapted model of Robertson, Zielinski and Ward, put forward in 1984, suggesting that subculture leads to a series of values, which in turn lead to a certain life-style choice, all of which influence consumer purchasing behavior (Luna-Arocas, 1998). To this we must add the evolution and increase of women's sportswear, a market widely developed in the twentieth century and that for years has marked different trends in women's sportswear (Campbell, 2006; Smith & Burton, 1998). In short, an authentic culture of consumption framed in the global capitalism of the last decades (Smart, 2007).

As part of the marketing of these garments, targeted advertisements emerged at the very inception of the sports textile industry. Initially, these were limited to posters and announcements in the press, but today the variety of marketing strategies is not only extensive but highly developed, with audiovisual advertisements having the greatest impact on creating brand awareness and influencing mass purchasing behavior (Berger, 2008; Blakey, 2011; Smith, 2012).

Sportswear marketing relies heavily on the use of celebrity athletes. Indeed, almost from the outset, the textile industry has recognized the importance of associating sportsmen and women with a particular brand. The identity that certain sports professionals project generates a strategic value for the brand image (Smart, 2005); in other words, a brand exists when it means something to the consumer, this identity and the brand image are successful when the consumer relates it to their own values and experiences (Marín, 2010).

The use of the image of sportsmen and women also carries with it a focus on the athlete's physique, which is visually spectacular and, for many consumers, unattainable, leading to an inevitable conflict between the buyer's reality and their ideals (Barreto, 2006). This is one of the key concepts of sportswear marketing: to provoke in consumers a desire that goes beyond merely meeting common clothing needs such as comfort. Rather, it instigates in buyers a quest for individual or collective identity through identification with athletes, always mediated by the filter that each brand wishes to associate with its image.

The first athletes used in product promotion were drawn from the game of tennis, but this practice has since spread to the use of almost all sports, with elite, male soccer players now the dominant figures in sports brand advertising. Sportswomen remain comparatively marginalized in sports marketing although this situation is constantly changing (Garton & Hijós, 2017). Mass media carries much of the blame for this situation by systematically ignoring sportswomen instead of promoting them, and is also at fault for encouraging negative stereotypes (Ordóñez, 2011). Celebrity sportswomen are frequently promoted as models rather than athletes (Ibáñez, 2001); a clear example of this was the Russian former tennis player Anna Kournikova, whose physical image as a model on the catwalk was more important for advertising than her sporting abilities (Marín, 2010).

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