Just Buy It: Nike Advertising Aimed at Glamour Readers: A Critical Feminist Analysis

Darin J. Arsenault & Tamer Fawzy. **Tamara : Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science**. Las Cruces: 2001. Vol. 1, Iss. 2; pg. 63-76, 14 pgs

Abstract (Article Summary)

The growing popularity of women's sports has helped steer fitness companies such as Nike to carefully craft advertising messages aimed at women. The current study assessed Nike's marketing campaign in Glamour, a popular consumer magazine aimed at women aged 18-34, using a rhetorical analysis known as the critical feminist approach. This approach was utilized as a means of discovering how the construction of gender was created in this Nike advertising campaign, how this construction represents a dominating ideology of patriarchy, and how this oppressiveness can be recast into a picture that is more positive toward women. A total of five Nike advertisements were discovered by the investigators in the 1999 issues of Glamour, and each was analyzed according to image and content. Results indicate that although this advertising campaign appears to represent positive images of women connected to their experiences, patriarchal values still exist within this campaign. Narrative storytelling offers a further explanation for understanding these advertisements in that Nike uses the strategic narrative of epic genre to appeal to women and to enhance the image of Nike as being supportive toward women.

Full Text (7,648 words)

Social Attitudes Toward Women in Sports

Social attitudes toward the participation of women in sports in general have become more positive over the past several decades at both local and national levels (Ebenkamp, 2000). Although this report states that currently twice as many men as women play sports frequently, it also notes that women are becoming more involved in organized sports. For example, high school teams during this decade reported an increase of 31% of girls, while that of only 9% for boys. Sports that were traditionally closed to women have more recently begun to open their doors to this group. In the past year, daughters of former boxing champions have begun professional boxing careers, or announced intentions to do so, including Laila Ali, Freeda Foreman, and Maria Johansson (Timmons, 2000). Movies such as "Love and Basketball" and "Girlfight" offer contemporary storylines of girls resolving romantic situations while making good in the court or in the ring (Carson, 2000). Women's Sports Network, an Internet company, went online in September 2000, and it features content, such as athlete news and information, audience chat areas, and personal club pages. It allows girls to register for local and national events, and brokers sponsors into its teen events (Petrecca, 2000a). Outward Bound has dispatched Girls on the Move, a team of women bicyclists, to cycle across the country to promote self-esteem for women through playing sports (Aanderud, 2000). Nike Corporation has also become involved in this arena. The purpose of this article is to report on the persuasive strategies

utilized by Nike in its 1999 advertising campaign in a woman's consumer magazine through a method known as critical feminist analysis, in order to gain a better understanding of its storytelling approaches. The value of this approach is that it helps to deconstruct the gender dimensions of this advertising campaign through deliberate role reversal of gender perspectives. By doing this, it is possible to understand Nike's use of narrative and storytelling to attract women consumers.

As we shall see, Nike's strategy involves transforming traditional patriarchal images and stories into images of female authority that are socially acceptable to its intended consumers. This article begins by reviewing how marketing groups target consumers through the use of persuasive strategies. Next, we discuss the critical feminist approach by way of introducing its application to Nike advertisements in a consumer magazine. After presenting our results, we conclude with a discussion of Nike's narrative and storytelling.

So, why are attitudes changing toward inclusion of women in sports? Some of the change appears to be based partly in public perceptions toward Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which mandated that institutions receiving federal funding cannot discriminate on the basis of gender. Suggs (2000) reports on a poll that surveyed public views toward Title IX and found that most Americans support Title IX. Yet, there is some concern about the mechanisms underlying this change in attitude. Cole (2000) argues that it is unfortunate that people are encouraged to think of Title IX as an expression of gender equality, particularly because gender equality does not exist. Rather, Cole charges, the multinational companies have encouraged the growth of girl’s and women’s sports solely to reap profits, rather than doing so for the public good, and they have used Title IX as a stepping stone toward this goal. Cole (p. 5) states that

> using sports, these corporations have found new arenas for profit in ways that range from using Third World Labor to creating new forms of feel-good consumption. Representations of women’s sports as more enlightened, authentic, and pure than men’s sports make it difficult to imagine the connections between women’s sports and multinational capitalism. Women athletes, like America’s most beloved sport icon Michael Jordan, are represented as "real athletes" dedicated to sport’s mythic norms. Never mind that these representations of women’ sports, touted as victories, are enabled by and help justify the gendered remuneration in sports, as they cultivate a particular fantasy of political efficacy through consumption.

In essence, Cole is arguing that social attitudes toward women are being changed by the persuasive strategies of organizations that are profit-seeking. These strategies distort and alter images of women. People identify and accept the images that are provided by profit-making corporations, and, in turn, consume their products. This is not a new idea. Increasing consumer identification with products in order to bolster sales is a traditional sales approach, and Nike is no stranger to it.

Marketing, Persuasion, and Nike

There is a large body of evidence regarding the utility and value of persuasive strategies in advertising. Only four studies are noted here because of the limited scope of this article. Tom and Eves (1999) compared the effectiveness of advertisements with and without rhetorical devices, and found that memorial recall and persuasion were enhanced when rhetorical devices were used. Mehta (1999) found that congruence between consumer self-image and perceived brand image resulted in higher recall, brand rating, and purchase intent. Curlo and Chamblee (1998) tested a model that integrated attitudinal and learning responses toward different advertisements and discovered that ads facilitating brand recognition appeared more credible and yielded enhanced persuasiveness. Finally, Wang, Bristol, Mowen, and Chakraborty (2000) examined connectedness-separateness dimensions of male and female Chinese and US college students, and they found that advertisements appealing to interdependence and togetherness appealed to more positive brand attitudes by Chinese and women students, whereas advertisements stressing independence and autonomy were more appealing to US and male consumers. The results of these studies indicate that recognition of brands and adherence to their message content results in increased persuasiveness of consumers. In essence, this research indicates the merits of marketing.

Apparently marketing groups are aware of persuasive appeals associated with the advertising of women's sports products, since mass consumption of women's sports products, such as running shoes and sports clothing, has increased over the past decade along with advertising expenditures (Klein, 1999; Petrecca, 2000b). Nike is a significant example of a company that has successfully participated in this expanding domain of women's sports. The remainder of this article will be oriented toward discussion and analysis of this organization's rhetorical approach toward women consumers of its sports products in its advertisements in Glamour magazine.

Founded in 1964, Nike currently boasts an approximate revenue of $8,776,900,000 (Reed Elsevier, 2000). These revenues are based on product sales of shoes, clothing, and other sports products, yet we were unable to find information that differentiated between sales for men and women. There are other statistics of interest, however. Advertising expenditures currently total $223,300,000 and include the following allocations: $64,975,000 for network television, $31,447,000 for consumer magazines, $7,700,000 for spot television, $343,000 for newspapers, $134,000 for outdoor postings, and $36,000 for radio. Nike advertisements are ubiquitously available for consumers. Indeed, despite negative publicity regarding their use of sweatshops in Asian countries, Nike has cornered the market in women's products (Klein, 1999). More investigation of this company is warranted, particularly in its use of persuasion to attract female consumers to its products, in order to glean how its marketing campaign crafts images to appeal to brand recognition and product consumption.

It is important to investigate Nike's use of persuasion in its marketing campaigns to better understand different aspects of how this organization achieves dominance in the

marketplace. Rhetorical criticism is a qualitative approach that is beneficial in providing understanding about how rhetors, or those who craft persuasive messages, utilize specific strategies to persuade others. As there is a lack of critical analyses of Nike's marketing campaigns aimed at women within magazines, particularly those purchased by women, it was determined that a need exists to better understand this domain. There are many ways to analyze campaigns, although feminist critical analysis, coupled with an investigation of Nike's use of storytelling, in this instance appears to offer the best fit for undertaking such an analysis.

Feminist Critical Analysis and Storytelling

Feminist critical analysis is based on a bifurcation of postmodern feminist theory and Derrida's deconstructionist approach (Foss, 1989; Stern, 1993). Derrida's approach offers a method to find meaning in artifacts by conceptualizing meaning as comprised of a spectrum or continuum in which the act of making sense of a message is anchored by the text at one pole and by the reader at the other. Feminist theory offers a further step in deconstructionism, in which the reader-text relation is further distinguished by the inclusion of gender as an interpretive criterion. In essence, feminist theory notes that (1) male patriarchy has permeated much of written and spoken discourse to the effect that it subordinates the experiences of women; (2) women's experiences are different than men's, not only in terms of their biological experiences, but also in terms of their sex-role socialization; and (3) women's experiences are not reflected adequately in culture, in that the voices and experiences of women are traditionally suppressed.

Feminist criticism offers a particular methodology for distinguishing meaning in artifacts. Its utility, as noted by Foss (1989), requires the following by investigators who attempt to make sense of rhetorical artifacts: (1) the analysis of the construction of gender in the artifact being studied, and (2) the assessment of either how patriarchy is created and managed, or how it can be challenged and altered. The critic is interested in determining how gender is being portrayed in the artifact and examining how the roles of men and women may be cast into dimensions of powerful and powerless.

There have been several studies examining artifacts from this perspective, including that of Trujillo (1991) and that of Stern (1993). Trujillo found that the media tended to present Nolan Ryan as an image of masculinity. The creation and maintenance of this iconization was one that reinforced the marginalization and subordination of women. Stern (1993) notes that personification of the Marlboro Man and the Dakota Woman were stereotypic in that traditional sex roles were presented and those that were not acceptable were cast as disparate. Both of these studies offer evidence that texts can be examined and deconstructed to determine the intent of the rhetor, particularly in terms of the message that is provided for the audience. In terms of the current study, Nike advertisements aimed at women in a popular women's magazine are assessed to understand what consistent images of women are portrayed and how they can be interpreted along the continuum of power. To this end, the prescriptions of both Foss (1989) and Stern (1993) were utilized. Although Foss is mentioned above, Stern has not

yet been delineated. Stern advocates the use of sex reversal, in which the traits and values as deigned as masculine and feminine can be unearthed and interpreted. Stern offers an example in which Captain Ahab of Melville's Moby Dick is sex reversed to be read as a woman who is obsessed in tracking down a white whale, which Stern interprets as ridiculous in that it is disconnected from women's experiences. Stern (p. 557) notes that by imaginatively transforming a hero/heroine into a member of the opposite sex, the behavior evaluated as appropriate to and desirable for each sex is exposed not only as a set of expectations determined by cultural conditioning but also as one that confines women more than it does men.

In short, rather than being sex neutral, literature provides a vehicle for conveying value systems that differ for men and women. The current study springboards off Stern's analysis of text deconstructionism in that, where Stern looked at one image of each advertisement, we followed one year of Nike advertising in Glamour magazine, to see if sex-specific personifications of men and women were consistently portrayed. Women's magazines, rather than those aimed at men, were selected for investigation of Nike's advertisements because of the recent incursion of this organization into the domain of products geared especially toward women.

In addition, besides utilizing a critical feminist approach, it seemed prudent to understand Nike's use of advertising through its storytelling strategies as well because this second approach would help to distinguish Nike's intentions behind its advertising campaign. Storytelling is the use of narratives to express specific information to others (Landrum, 2000). Storytelling utilizes strategies, or methods, by which messages are crafted for specific audiences in order to attempt to persuade them to make particular decisions about variables such as attractiveness, value, and usefulness. These messages are intentionally constructed with some purpose in mind. Mintzberg (1990) notes that organizations configure strategies which are episodic, distinguishable, related to the organization, and change over time.

Nike's use of storytelling has been studied through different mediums and approaches. Landrum's (2000) dissertation examined the letters Nike sent to its shareholders, and determined that Nike sought to create an image as a moral global citizen, using specific language choices to bolster its credibility. Boje's (1998) analysis of Nike's storytelling practices found that Nike crafted an image of itself as a virtuous ambassador, while simultaneously repressing stories that portrayed alternative realities, such as that of the life of Asian women in the sweatshops of Southeast Asia. Stabile (2000) found that Nike's attempts to legitimize itself as a global citizen using rhetorical claims alluding to social responsibility were fallacious on two counts: (1) Nike defended its labor practices as legitimate by claiming that wages paid out to Indonesian workers were higher than had been originally reported to the media, and that it was not Nike's responsibility to upgrade local labor wages; and (2) the use of PLAY (Participation in the Lives of America's Youth) program came upon a wave of media criticism aimed against inner-city violence, particularly reports depicting how inner-city youth asserted social status by robbery or purchase of the more expensive Nike shoe lines. Both of these acts represent avoidance of taking responsibility for actions, which is contradictory to what a

good citizen would display. In other words, Nike presented contradictory claims to the public. This claim seems supported by other researchers. For example, Klein (1999) discovered that Nike tends to address controversies in which it is embroiled only when there has been a substantive reporting made through the media. Yet there is often no way to substantiate claims made by Nike until a well-researched news account reveals discrepancies between what Nike says and what has been done.

Method

Magazine Choice

In order to find Nike advertisements aimed at women, we reviewed a variety of women's consumer magazines. Glamour magazine was finally selected as representative of Nike advertisements aimed at women in 1999 based on (1) a personal communication from a representative of Wieden & Kennedy, one of Nike's two advertising agencies, that listed a series of publications in which Nike advertises its products; (2) competitive circulation statistics of this magazine compared to other magazines similar in content (Katz & Katz, 1997); and (3) statistical extrapolations of women in the nation who read this magazine compared to other magazines aimed at women, based on findings of the Simmons Market Research Bureau (1994). First, communication from the aforementioned marketing agency listed Glamour amongst a variety of other magazines aimed at women in the 18-34 market. Second, Glamour appears to have subscription rates that are comparable, if not better, than many of these magazines (Katz & Katz, 1997). We reasoned that Glamour magazine must contain content that attracts a substantive proportion of readers. Third, to partially verify this rationale, a survey compiled by the Simmons Market Research Bureau (1994) was consulted. This source provides data from a survey on media consumption based on a national sample of 22,051 adults, which the Simmons Market Research Bureau has determined as projective to the contiguous population in the United States ages 18 and over. Results here indicate that more women in the 18-34 age range read Glamour compared to similar magazines such as Vogue or Seventeen. Because of its general competitiveness in terms of circulation, Glamour was determined to be the vehicle from which Nike advertisements would be assessed for this year.

More should be said about Glamour in order to provide a greater understanding of the impact of this magazine on its American audience. Established in 1939 and published monthly by Conde Nast Publications, Glamour sold a total of 2,200,304 magazines, accountable by individual subscriptions numbering 1,060,886 and single sales at 1,139,418 (Katz & Katz, 1997). Simmons Market Research Bureau (1994) provided more data, in that of the 18-34 age range of Glamour readers, 33.8% were aged 18-24 and 32.5% were aged 25-34. An examination of readership broken down by ethnicity indicated that 85.4% of its readers were Caucasian, followed by African-American at 12.2%, then by Latino-American readers at 11.5%, with Other category representing the remainder proportion. Finally, distinctions in readership based on educational attainment was as follows: graduated from high school only: 39.7%; attended some college: 26.6%; graduated from college: 20.4%; and attended some high school: 12.4%. It could be hence said, based on this data, that the average reader had a high school education, was Caucasian, and somewhere within the 18-34 age range. Katz and Katz (1997, p. 893)

offer further information about the quality of person who reads *Glamour*:

> *Glamour* is edited for the contemporary American woman. It informs her of the trends, recommends how she can adapt them to her needs and motivates her to take action. Over half of *Glamour*'s editorial content focuses on fashion, beauty, and health as well as coverage of personal relationships, career, travel, food and entertainment.

Data Collection

Data in the form of Nike advertisements was collected from Glamour magazine for the year 1999, and this year was chosen solely because of convenience. Every issue of Glamour for 1999 was reviewed for Nike advertisements. Issues were checked with the publication schedule of Conde Nast Publications as reported by Katz and Katz (1997) to ascertain that all issues were accounted for. The authors browsed page by page in each issue until an advertisement was located or the issue was exhausted. Issues that did not hold a Nike advertisement were checked by the other author to be sure that an advertisement was not missed by accident, or because pages were missing. Issues with missing pages were cross-checked by one author by checking another repository source for parallel issues and browsing those issues for content. Certain criteria, per Boston, Chambers, Canetto, and Slinkard (2000), was determined a priori, in that (1) advertisements were at least one-half page in size; (2) advertisements with more than one person had a clearly identifiable number of people; and (3) advertisements had recognizable human figures and features were clear enough to code. However, this third Boston et al. criterion was dropped when it was realized that there was a large proportion of Nike advertisements without human figures, and the inclusion of this criterion may not be representative of Nike content. One final criterion was added, however, during selection of artifacts: the Nike advertisement must be solely representative of Nike, and not of a joint venture with another company. For example, it was noticed that some Nike advertisements were found in Lady Footlocker content. Hence, these advertisements were dropped from the sample. The net result was a total of five advertisements, each of which ranged between two and four pages.

Results

This section refers to a description of the data as well as the basic findings of the rhetorical analysis. For convenience, the study authors chronologically labeled each of the five advertisements A, B, C, D, or E based on their order of appearance in Glamour. Advertisement A runs three pages, and it depicts three distinct pages of a well-worn photograph album. The first page of the ad contains a color photograph of a young girl from the waist up wearing a red and black jersey and a red baseball cap, and her baseball mitt is hugged to her torso as if she is about to throw a ball. There is text below this photograph. The second page displays a photograph album page with a flower in the upper left-hand corner, the Nike swoosh with the slogan "Just Do It" in the bottom left-hand corner, and text in between. The third page is a photograph of an attractive young woman with brown hair and red lips wearing a green windbreaker with the Nike logo, yet no text.

Advertisement B shows two pages of a photo-album. On the first page is a color photograph of a female child wearing a dress and standing in what appears to be the outside of a barn entrance with hay piled up behind her. The second page of the advertisement is a photograph album page with a torn piece of paper pinned to the photograph. There is text on the photograph album page as well as on the piece of paper.

Advertisement C shows two pages of a photograph album. The first page is a photograph of a stack of weights that one might find on a restricted movement weight apparatus, such as a triceps or rowing machine. The upper three weights are raised as if they are in motion: the stamp on these three, and the top weight resting below these three, reads "Toned." The remaining weights read "Manly." Page two contains a photograph of a running sneaker with Nike logo on it at approximately three-quarters near the bottom of the page. This picture is affixed to the album with burlap tape. There is text on the photograph of the sneaker and above it. In addition, there is the Nike slogan "Just do it" attached at a 45-degree angle to the right and below the sneaker, with the Nike swoosh underneath this slogan.

Advertisement D shows three pages of a photograph album. The first page shows a black and white photograph of a young woman dressed in what appears to be a sports uniform that is comprised of a team shirt and a pair of shorts and shoes of an earlier time period, perhaps in the previous half of this century. The woman is standing up in a position as if she is pitching a softball. There are what appears to be bleacher stands behind her, and the ground appears to be packed dirt, as one would find at a baseball stadium. There is a caption at her torso that reads, "Is heroism genetic?" Page two depicts a photograph of two women, one in young adulthood, the other in advanced age, taped with what appears to be sports bandage tape to a plaid fabric background of the album. The younger woman is tilted slightly toward the older woman, and has her hand on her shoulder, and both are facing the photographer and smiling. The third page depicts a photograph of Mia Hamm running in a sports uniform and appearing as if she is about to kick a stationary soccer ball that has a giant Nike swoosh on it. There is a Nike swoosh on what looks like a piece of tape coming unattached at the top right hand of the album page, and in italics on the bottom right hand is the slogan "Just do it."

Advertisement E is a four-page advertisement. It uses the photograph album approach similar to the previous ads. Page one shows two photographs. The first, in the upper left-hand corner, is that of a young girl in a Comets' uniform—numbered 14, and she is holding a basketball under her right arm, while smiling at the camera. The second photograph depicts Cynthia Cooper of the Houston Comets holding up her hands as if she is greeting someone else. The background is blurred, but there appears to be people present. In addition, there is a person out of view of the photograph, but with his or her right arm positioned at what appears to be above the head. Page two is a page in the photo album with a half piece of what appears to be graph paper inserted in the album page and a corner of this paper is bent over. There is a similar piece of graph paper behind this first page. There is a pen attached by a string to the first page of graph paper at a curved angle to the page, as if the album is resting flat and the pen has been laid across it. There is a small smiley face that has been penned in on a piece of photograph

album paper that is different from the graph paper, and this symbol lies approximately three-quarters of the page down. The slogan "Just do it" is written on the paper near the bottom right hand side of the page, and the word "Nike" is at the top right of the page, "behind" the graph paper that is bent over. There is text on and below the graph paper.

There are two other pages to this final advertisement. Page three of this advertisement depicts a picture of an audiotape with the title "Running Music" on it. Below it, and separated by text is a photograph of a running shoe. To the right of the running shoe is a picture of a brain. Below the running shoe photograph is a negative containing five photographs of a woman in a sports tank and shorts in different positions, as if she is running. Page four of this advertisement shows a photograph of a sneaker that is different from the previous one attached as if with tape to the album page. Below it a photograph of a weight with the inscription "25 Lb." Under and immediately below the weight is another photograph of a different running shoe placed on grass. Partly overlapping this final shoe photograph is a photograph of a hummingbird that looks as if it is flying: this photograph has been cut out and attached with no sign of tape. In addition, there is a picture of the front view of a human ribcage and vertebrae on the left border of the page, and a Nike swoosh has been placed on a piece of paper and affixed to the bottom right hand of the page.

There are several themes across this advertising campaign: the use of the photograph album as a rhetorical device, connectivity between past, present, and future with the use of photographs, and the presence in these advertisements of females only. Each is discussed in turn. First, each of the advertisements is conceptualized as a photograph album. The background for each page of each advertisement is the thick cardboard-type paper, with one exception, that of Advertisement D, which contains a plaid fabric-like background on one of the photograph album pages. The photograph album is connected where two pages meet with a metal spiral connector that holds the pages together. Affixed to the photograph album pages are various components, such as photographs, materials (such as the flowers in advertisement A or the pen in advertisement E), captions, and personal comments in the form of handwriting that would be inserted in a photograph album. The viewer of these advertisements is looking down at the album, as if it is laid out on a flat surface. At this angle one can see the sides of the photograph album, and these pages appear discolored and slightly tattered, as if the album is at least several years old and has experienced a great deal of use.

The use of photographs also reveals a theme, in which ties between past, present, and future are depicted through the use of youth, and young and older adult females. Advertisement A utilizes pictures of a young girl and a teenager; B shows a photograph of a young girl; and D contains an old-time photograph of a woman pitching a softball at the turn of the century, Mia Hamm and her grandmother in a granddaughter-grandmother portrait photograph, and a final picture of Mia wearing a uniform and running toward a soccer ball. Advertisement D is probably most indicative of connections between past, present, and future. Grandmother Carol Lychak Dillon is noted in the text as having participated in sports in her earlier years. Perhaps this photograph on page one of that advertisement is her in her youth playing ball. This would be representative of the past,

whereas the photograph of Mia Hamm and Carol Lychak Dillon together represents the present. A turn to the final page of this advertisement is a predictive glance of the future, such that it can be expected that Mia Hamm will continue to play soccer, and competitively. In this venue, the portrayal of granddaughter is similar to that of grandmother. A perusal of the other depictions of females in these advertisements reveals similarity. For example, the young girl playing ball in campaign A may conceivably mature into the athletic looking teen at the last page of that series. The young girl in the Comets' uniform in campaign E represents a link between the present experience of Cynthia Cooper and the future expansion of experiences for girls everywhere. With the inclusion of women as heroines for young girls, it blurs the boundaries between what women can do and ought to do, and it allows them more choice in their futures.

Finally, there is a lack of males in this campaign. Rather, there are only females depicted. This could be because the advertisements are geared for women, because they take place in a woman's magazine, or, alternatively, it could be because the rhetors were attempting to craft messages that were specifically designed to appeal to women who are attempting to achieve equality with men. All of these females appear physically fit: none are obese, they all look toned and athletic. It can be expected that Mia Hamm and Cynthia Cooper will look athletic: they are, after all, professional athletes, however, it is of interest that the rhetors did not include overweight, or unattractive children or teenagers in this campaign. Rather, the skin tones and body shapes of the characters herein are normative. It is not known why this approach was undertaken.

Discussion

Use of Stern's (1993) sex-role reversal reveals some interesting findings. First, if one re-conceives the females in this campaign as males, there would not be too many surprises. The girl in A who becomes a boy playing ball would not get a second glance; the little girl in the Comets' uniform transformed into a boy wearing a uniform would also appear normative. Yet, it is when the viewer questions what underlies the topography of this transformation do exceptions become clearer. For example, if the little girl in the Comets uniform was transformed into a boy wearing that same uniform, the audience might be curious as to why this is allowed. It would be difficult for many to understand why a little boy would want to emulate a woman sports heroine to the point of wearing the same uniform. Rather, it would be more acceptable for that same little boy to wear, for example, a Michael Jordan jersey. Thus, analysis through sex-role reversal reveals something of the rhetor's intended message: women who subscribe to the persuasive elements in this advertisement should be willing to accept females in positions of power. This message contrasts with traditionally accepted values for women in society.

Scrutiny of the dress of Carol Lychak Dillon is also implicative. If a man wore the necklace or sweater of Dillon, he would be perceived as feminine or alternative in style. However, the age lines and wrinkles of Dillon would be acceptable on a man. These wrinkles and age lines reveal a lifetime of experience and wisdom. Nike appears to have been able to manage the role reversal here as well, particularly in terms of how this transformation goes against the traditional normative rules of society that indicate that youth and women should be youthful in appearance. Rather than discarding Dillon as

unsubstantial, the rhetors depict her as a female who is of value, particularly to Mia Hamm, in that Mia is willing to emulate qualities of her grandmother's experience and utilize them as a springboard for her own action. The photograph of her and Dillon seems to indicate that these two are in a relationship and are comfortable enough with one another that Hamm can be allowed to place her hand on Dillon's shoulder. This same photograph would be acceptable if it was of two men, perhaps a grandson and his grandfather.

Investigation of elements other than human photographs in this campaign with the same sex-role reversals begin to show flaws in Nike's approach in that patriarchal aspects of the message become more obvious. First, the use of visual components such as the flowers in advertisement A, the plaid background in D, and the pen and smiley face in E, are indicative of women's, rather than men's experience. A sex-role reversal of these items in a man's photograph album would not be acceptable. The first author tested this evaluation by informally questioning familiar males and females in various age and ethnic groups in two geographic regions and found that men, despite ethnicity, tended to deposit pictures in photograph albums with simple captions depicting location, date, and participants, whereas women generally inserted captions and personal items to capture the quality of their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings toward each event. In this manner, a societal rule or norm has been captured and produced by Nike, in that females viewing this campaign would be more accepting of its messages because the use of these components is deemed socially acceptable. For example, the hummingbird flying away in Advertisement E would probably not be included by most men because it represents a feminine icon. To make this less obvious, perhaps, Nike used different types of sports tapes, rather than scotch adhesive, to tape the photographs, captions, and Swoosh logos into the various pages of the photograph album. This rough manner appears to be indicative of one who thinks and lives sports, in that sports are so important that even the act of connecting symbols of experience, such as photographs, into a memorial product, e.g. a photograph album, relies on the use of sports tape. The same aforementioned group of people were asked if they would use sports tape to affix photographs in an album. Both groups declined, and it was noted that even if participants were out of tape they would purchase regular adhesive or glue rather than utilize such an approach.

Second, the use of language throughout the advertisement campaign contains patriarchal messages that range between tacit and explicit. Only certain idioms are discussed because of the limited scope of this article: the contradiction between the phrase in Advertisement A "Will she look at magazines and think she has to be as thin as the models she sees?" and the photographs of females depicted in this campaign; the use of the word "hero", rather than "heroine"; the phrase "Man, that's who I want to be" in Advertisement E; and the phrase, "(DON'T ASK US HOW WE KNOW THESE THINGS, WE JUST KNOW.)" in Advertisement E. Each is discussed in turn.

In terms of the initial issue, it is surprising that the implication of the statement about looking at magazines and feeling social pressure to *conform* to the norms of ectomorphic body types supposes that the reader will be able to resist this persuasion, and be more willing to accept alternative images, which have been traditionally categorized

as those of mesomorphic or endomorphic types. However, none of the photographs depict body types that are anything other than mesomorphic. This in itself is noninclusive of endomorphic body types, which is interesting, because a large proportion of the United States has been noted to have problems with achieving weight loss and maintenance of those changes (Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999; Sokolov, 1998). Therefore, Nike refutes the normative hegemony of ectomorphism and instead substitutes mesomorphism as its protégé. This subscribes to patriarchal messages in that it continues to ensure the dialectic between what is and what is idealized, with little hope of rectification. Although it may be more dubious as to how those with endomorphic body types might achieve ectomorphy than how they might gain mesomorphic bodies, Nike sidesteps critical examination of this substitution. For example, it could offer advice about how cardiovascular fitness throughout the life span reduces health problems. Instead, it offers its sports products, such as the running shoe, as a *deus ex machina* to come in and rescue its hapless viewers.

In regard to the second issue, it is notable that Nike uses the term "hero" rather than "heroine" as a persuasive linguistic device to attract viewers. Women are heroines whereas men are heroes. It is of some question as to why Nike chose this approach. It is possible that Nike utilizes the term "hero" because it offers more powerful connotations than does the word "heroine." It is also possible that Nike is trying to avoid gynocentric language and substitute the term "hero" as one that is more androcentric. Such substitutions have been noted in the vernacular, such as the term "actor" being stated on public television to depict a female who acts, rather than using the more traditional term "actress."

Third, it was surprising that the phrase, "Man, that’s who I want to be" was offered as a statement in one of the advertisements. The use of the term "Man" is one that is rather antiquated, and is more noticeable, in persons whom are approaching middle age than might be heard in young people today. Regardless of the groups that use this lexicon, the term "Man" refers denotatively to a male respondent, usually one of some significance or power. It is here that the paradox arises. It is hard to believe that a male would make this statement to another male about wanting to be a player like Cynthia Cooper; it is far more fathomable that this gender of speaker would want to emulate another male sports star. Conversely, it is possible that a female might make this sort of statement to a male, rather than to another female, however, it is not clear as to why this more traditional term was offered rather than one that is more presently in vogue today. In this sense, Nike is relying on old phrases and expressions to get its point across, perhaps because they tie in with experience. It should be pointed out that lexical phrases and expressions tend to change with the incoming of new generations: sayings such as "Jeepers, Creepers" tend to be cast out unless they can transfix time because they are pan-traditional. It is questionable if the term "Man" will be one that continues to be used in the vernacular, particularly if people are becoming more aware of how language can be used to equalize class and group members.

Finally, the authors questioned why the phrase "DON’T ASK US HOW WE KNOW THESE THINGS, WE JUST KNOW" used in Advertisement E was offered.

Although this phrase may be given as a means of sidestepping providing a logical explanation for why Nike running products are better than those produced by other companies, it still offers a sense of the speaker's power. In a sense, this statement is an appeal to authority, in that the speaker refuses to offer justification and simply avoids the issue by pointing out its credibility. The viewer is expected not to question authority, and to agree with the premises and justifications of Nike superiority. Again this provides a sense of patriarchy, in that women are not to question arguments coming from authority. Although it is uncertain if Nike is attempting to portray itself as a genderized ideograph in this campaign, it can be seen that Nike seeks to persuade women to purchase its products by attempting to get women to be attracted to, and to identify with, its campaign. The use of this sort of argument only continues the patriarchal tradition, in that women are told not to question why, but to accept. This is hardly an empowering, and equalizing, approach that allows women to break the chains of patriarchy.

Narrative Storytelling

Narrative storytelling offers further explanation for understanding these advertisements (Boje, 1998; Landrum, 2000). It appears that in the current study, Nike uses the strategic narrative of epic genre to appeal to women and to convey the image of Nike as being supportive toward women. Women can be seen as being on a journey fraught with dangers at every step. Rather than capitulate to these dangers, however, the icon of Woman persists in her journey to overcome these obstacles and gains self-esteem, legitimization, and legend throughout these exploits. In the present campaign, Nike uses the photograph album as an attempt to legitimize and connect to women's experiences. It is through the use of narratives, stories, and symbols that can be shown to upcoming generations can legends remain, and offer mythical inroads to new traditions. Nike thus strategizes that by portraying woman athletes and attempting to connect to viewers with the background of a photograph album can the early adventures of woman as legend be recorded, with Nike remaining a visible spectator during these turbulent times. Yet, when a critical lens is opened on this stage it is discovered that the epic journey is not as dangerous as it seems. Rather than taking large steps to go off into the great unknown, Nike chooses to craft messages that are more connective, at times, with the patriarchal traditions. Perhaps this is prudent, as people are more willing to accept arguments that are closer to their belief systems than those which require greater leaps of faith (Gass & Seiter, 1999).

In essence, it seems as if Nike is attempting to offer women the opportunity to throw off the chains of patriarchy through its provision of a vision of woman as athletic and competitive, yet nurturing, capable of change, and cognizant of her role as a link between past and future. This vision is different from other visions that have been more conforming with the traditional image of woman as soft, effeminate, yielding, compliant, and submissive to men. This transformation can be achieved by the consideration of woman as equitable, and different, from man. The incursion of women athletes into the traditional male arena of sports is changing, and with it public perceptions of the roles of women. However, the gradual acceptance of women athletes does not mean a disregard for women's experiences, for connection between past, present, and future is still tied between generations. It is almost as if Nike is suggesting that the changes of today for

women will have an impact on the maturing children of tomorrow. In this sense, Nike is offering a transformation for women.

Nike appears to be adept at masking its strategic intent within its messages in this campaign. Nike seeks to sell its products by symbolically attracting potential consumers, yet it seeks to be non-contentious in its approach. Rather than taking bold steps to have women "throw off the chains of patriarchy," Nike uses a more conservative method, one that is more reflective of society's positive attitudes toward women's inclusion in sports. Hence, it is questionable if Nike is doing the storytelling to help the women's movement, to exploit a new consumer market, or an admixture of both. As Nike is a profit-making organization, it is more plausible that it seeks to corner the market in women's products, and it realizes that by symbolically connecting with its potential consumers, there is a greater likelihood of improving sales. And therefore, Nike treads carefully, as it has already received negative media attention for other actions.

Some limitations can be noted in the current study. First, an analysis is needed that is longitudinal because it will offer more insight as to the stability of images utilized within Nike campaigns. It is equally plausible that advertisements will change in image and content over a period of time to reflect changing social trends. In addition, it is possible that factors such as changing population demographics or shifts in production might prompt Nike's marketing agencies to change their crafting of rhetorical messages to certain audiences. Therefore, further assessment should look at periods greater than just one year. Third, comparisons of Nike advertisements aimed at men should be assessed and compared to those in magazines for women. This would offer a more well-rounded approach in that it would help evaluators to better understand whether content in men's magazines differed from that found in women's magazines and potential reasons for these differences. Fourth, the mode of communication should be investigated. There may be rhetorical differences in Nike messages crafted for consumer magazines than for radio or network television. These differences may be based partially on the mode of communication, that is, how the message is relayed to the audience. It is obvious that magazine advertising is visual, radio advertising is aural, and television advertising reflects both visual and aural content, yet there have not been any studies undertaken to determine how each modality might be utilized by Nike in its marketing campaigns. Such study would be beneficial, perhaps with the use of a method that is different from the feminist critical approach, such as with Boje and Dennehy's (1994) application of deconstructionism, which includes criterions, such as distinction of exceptions to espoused rules and the analysis of the under-representation of rebel voices and plots.

This paper offers a deconstruction of Nike advertising toward women, and results indicate that patriarchal values are embedded within this campaign, despite outward appearances.

Feminist critical analysis, coupled with storytelling analysis, provides a methodology that was powerful enough to tease apart aspects of the message. By reversing the sex roles found in this campaign, and questioning the values espoused, the authors were able to better understand the strategic intent of Nike's marketing agency. It

must be noted again that this paper offers a brief snapshot of Nike advertising. It will be interesting to see if Nike continues to stand behind such values in surrounding campaigns, and to ascertain how this organization changes its marketing strategies over time to reflect changing social attitudes.

References

[Reference]
Aanderud, E. (2000, September). Girls on the move. Womens's sports and fitness, 26.

[Reference]
Boje, D. M. & Dennehy, R.F. (1994). Managing in a Postmodern World. Des Moines, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

[Reference]
Boje, D. M. (1998). Nike, Greek goddess of victory or cruelty? Women's stories of Asian factory life. Journal of Organizational Change Management, 11, 461-480.

[Reference]
Boston, L.B. , Chambers, S., Canetto, S.S., & Slinkard, B. (2000). That kind of woman: Stereotypical representations in computer magazine advertising. Poster presented at the annual conference of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

[Reference]
Carson, T. (2000, July). The feminine physique. Esquire, 33, 40-43.

[Reference]
Cole, C.L. (2000). The year that girls ruled. Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 24, 3-8.

[Reference]
Curlo, E., & Chamblee, R. (1998). Ad processing and persuasion: The role of brand identification. Psychology & Marketing, 15, 279-299.

[Reference]
Ebenkamp, B. (2000, April 17). Battle of the sexes. Brandweek, 41, 24.

[Reference]
Foss, S.K. (1989). Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

[Reference]
Gass, R.H., & Seiter, J.S. (1999). Persuasion, social influence, and compliance gaining. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

[Reference]

Klein, N. (1999). No logo: Taking aim at the brand bullies. Boston, MA: St. Martin's Press.

[Reference]
Landrum, N.E. (2000). A quantitative and qualitative examination of the dynamics of Nike and Reebok story-telling as strategy. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.

[Reference]
Malkin, A.R, Wornian, K., Chrisler, J.C. (1999). Women and weight: Gendered messages on magazine covers. Sex Roles, 40, 647-655.

[Reference]
Mehta, A. (1999). Using self-concept to assess advertising effectiveness. Journal of Advertising Research, 39, 81-89.

[Reference]
Mintzberg, H. (1990). Strategy formation: Schools of thought. In J.W. Fredrickson (Ed.), Perspectives on strategic management (pp. 105-135). Boston, MA: Ballinger.

[Reference]
Petrecca, L. (2000a). Women's sports group teams with Gatorade. Advertising Age, 71, 8-12.

[Reference]
Petrecca, L. (2000b). Sports site tries to win favor of female athletes. Advertising Age, 71, 94.

[Reference]
Reed Elsevier (2000). Standard Directory of Advertisers: Volume 1: Business classifications. New Providence, NJ: National Registry Publishing.

[Reference]
Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc. (1994). Simmons study of media and markets. Publications: Total audiences. USA: Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc.

[Reference]
Sokolov, R. (1998). Culture and obesity. Social Research, 66, 31-36.

[Reference]
SRDS (2000). Consumer magazine advertising source. Des Plaines, IL: SRDS.

[Reference]
Stabile, C. A. (1990). Nike, social responsibility, and the hidden abode of production. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 17, 186-204.

[Reference]

Stern, B.B. (1993). Feminist literary criticism and the deconstruction of ads: A postmodern view of advertising and consumer responses. Journal of Consumer Research, 19, 556-566.

[Reference]
Suggs, W. (2000). Poll finds strong public backing for gender equity in college athletics. Chronicle of Higher Education, 46, A40.

[Reference]
Timmons, H. (2000). Daddy's little girls come out swinging. Business Week, 3689, 69-72.

[Reference]
Tom, G, & Eves, A. (1999). The use of rhetorical devices in advertising. Journal of Advertising Research, 39, 39-43.

[Reference]
Trujillo, N. (1991). Hegemonic masculinity on the mound: Media representations of Nolan Ryan and American sports culture. Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 8, 290-308.

[Reference]
Wang, C.L., Bristol, T., Mowen, J.C., & Chakraborty, G. (2000). Alternative modes of self-construal: Dimensions of connectedness-separateness and advertising appeals to the cultural and gender-specific self. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 9, 107-115.

[Author(s) Affiliation]

. Darin Arsenault is a 2nd-year doctoral student in the Clinical Program in the Department of Psychology at the University of Maine. His research interests include developmentally appropriate clinical and community-level interventions for child and adolescent criminal offenders; models of conflict-resolution and forgiveness, including Native Hawai'ian Ho'oponopono ; types of inscriptions and their bearing on the demarcation between science and non-science; and the rhetoric of organizations. He can be contacted at darin.arsenault@umit.maine.edu

Tamer Fawzy is a 3rd-year masters degree student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Maine. His current research interests include cognitive processes and specific phobias and efficacy of self-help treatments for anxiety disorders. Tamer can be contacted at tamer.fawzy@umit.maine.edu

Subjects:

People: Arsenault, Darin; Fawzy, Tamer

Author(s): Darin Arsenault & Tamer Fawzy

Publication title: Tamara : Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science. Las Cruces: 2001. Vol. 1, Iss. 2; pg. 63-76, 14 pgs

Source Type: Periodical

ISSN/ISBN: 15325555

Text Word Count 7,648