

# Analysis of colin kaepernick in nike's just do it campaign



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In 2018, Nike recruited a series of sports figures for a slew of advertisements just in time for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Just Do It” campaign (Willingham). The most controversial and successful advertisement of the campaign belonged to Colin Kaepernick, who was fired from the NFL after taking a knee during the national anthem in multiple games. He was protesting police brutality against African Americans in the United States. Even though he was ostracized by the community that he expected love and praise from, he acquired an immense following for his courage to stand up for what is right; and Nike took note of that. The advertisement is a poster of his face, with black and white coloring, and words plastered in the middle that read “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.” The Nike advertisement utilizes minimalism, such as the lack of design and words, as well as color scheme, to effectively bring awareness to the social issues surrounding Kaepernick through its marketing of the brand’s products. Kaepernick’s face in the advertisement displays seriousness and determination, which lends to the importance of the message the ad is conveying. In addition, Kaepernick’s face occupies a large portion of the advertisement, further emphasizing his facial expression by displaying the clarity of his features. The reason for this emphasis is the absence of design or graphics known as minimalism. “Minimalism in advertising provides a transparent, modest design that limits potential distraction” (Margariti and Boutsouki). The Nike checkmark logo isn’t shown on the poster, neither is the fine print. The ad is focused on the reduction of textual and pictorial content to a few signs, since the larger the quantity of information is in the ad, the lower its quality is considered (Margariti and Boutsouki). The brand excluded

logos and fine print to highlight the significance of Kaepernick's social views, as a way to let the audience know that this is all they need to focus on, further publicizing their products. This type of advertising aims to strip out virtually all the visual noise that appears in many ads and focus on a lone visual message. A viewer of a more cluttered ad might spend a fraction of a second on each element, the viewer of a minimalist ad spends the entire time focused on the single message, often a logo and tagline (Margariti and Boutsouki). In regard to Nike, their entire brand is built on minimalism, from its logo to product design and architecture in its retail stores (Goldman). The words, even if a few, garner attention because it's in the field view of the audience. It also takes up the width of the visual so that it is not easy to miss. Text, just as images, complements space, and promotes visual simplicity. The quantity of text is also restricted to a few words and to a narrow extent in terms of the occupied space, providing ample room for the empowering image of Kaepernick (Margariti and Boutsouki). This is also significant in the millennial generation because of the quickness of information that an individual can consume and access. Individuals of this generation are trained to go through information quickly because of the amount of information thrown at them in a span of a minute. In order to leave a lasting impression, advertisements must use minimalism to communicate effectively and fonts that are easy to read, otherwise, it'll be too visually cluttered and then forgotten.

In addition to minimalism, the commercial utilizes the absence of intense colors and the prevalence of shades of gray to increase the impact of the ad. The significance of color is supposed to elicit an emotional response through

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color association and interpretation. The use of black and white is used for the purpose of provoking an emotional response, hence encouraging the controversial aspect behind the image. Even though there is a lack of color, it enhances the likelihood that the advertisement will be seen and read. In contemporary advertising, the use of different colors decreases the legibility of the headline and obscures the detail of the visual, which reduces advertising communication (Ahto). Hence, the recruitment of black and white colors. In addition, a 1967 research on the effectiveness in color on viewers' perception by a psychologist known as Scanlon, realized that the control group exposed to black and white advertisements wrote lengthy reports about them, indicating that they paid far more attention to the message of the commercial compared to the control group exposed to colorful advertisements (Donohue). Scanlon concluded that the control group with the colorful advertisements were distracted from the commercial's message and were rather enamored with the visuals and colors (Donohue).

Even though the font and color are simple, it speaks volumes. The words show association between Nike and Kaepernick by advising viewers to "Just Do It", even if it means sacrificing the things you love most. For Kaepernick, that was his football career. The Nike advertisement recruits minimalism, such as the lack of design and words, and color scheme of black and white, to effectively bring awareness to the social issues surrounding Kaepernick through its marketing of the brand's products. The advertisement succeeded in its effectiveness that it garnered negative and positive publicity. Opposers boycotted the brand and even posted videos of burning the brand's products. Support trumped the hate, as Nike's stock value hit an

all-time high (Goldman). It communicated to the audience in a way “ that is authentic, culturally relevant and emotionally engaging” (Goldman).

## Works Cited

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