

**Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres**

# **The brand image of Nike through its social networks**

Analysis of Nike's Twitter, Instagram and Facebook social networks and of how teenagers and young adults perceive Nike and its social networks

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Année académique 2019-2020  
Master [120] en communication multilingue  
Finalité spécialisée en langues des affaires



Université Catholique de Louvain

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## ABSTRACT

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**Keywords:** Corporate communication, marketing communication, brand, brand image, social networks, strategies

### [French]

De nos jours, les réseaux sociaux sont devenus pour les entreprises, aussi petites ou grandes soient-elles, un endroit où il est primordial d'être présent. En effet, dans le contexte de l'ère digitale dans laquelle nous vivons, nombreux sont les consommateurs qui possèdent un compte sur au moins un des réseaux sociaux en vogue, et d'autant plus les jeunes qui ont été immergés dans cette ère depuis leur naissance. Un des objectifs pour une marque est donc d'utiliser ces plateformes pour capter l'attention des individus, familiariser avec eux, construire une image positive de la marque, et tenter de les amener à choisir leurs produits ou services. Cependant, il va de soi qu'il ne suffit pas d'être présent sur ces réseaux sociaux, mais il s'agit de mettre en place les stratégies les plus efficaces pour tenter de se démarquer. Dans le cadre de ce mémoire, le cas de la marque Nike sera analysé. L'objectif est de déterminer les principales stratégies digitales mises en place par la « *marque au Swoosh* » à travers ses comptes Nike et Nike Football sur les réseaux sociaux Twitter, Instagram et Facebook. De plus, à travers une enquête en ligne visant les jeunes de 12 à 30 ans, il s'agira d'analyser la manière dont ces derniers perçoivent la marque ainsi que sa communication sur les réseaux sociaux.

### [English]

Nowadays, social networks have become for companies, whether large or small, a place where it is essential to be present. Indeed, in the digital age we live in, many consumers have an account on at least one of the trendy social networks, especially young people who have been immersed in this ultra-digitalized era since they were born. One of the objectives for a brand is therefore to use these platforms to capture the attention of individuals, discuss with them, build

a positive image, and attempt to convince them to choose their products or services. However, it goes without saying that it is not enough to be present on these social networks, but it is a matter of implementing the most effective strategies to stand out from the crowd. In the context of this dissertation, the case of the Nike brand will be analyzed. The objective is to determine the main digital strategies implemented by the “*Swoosh*” brand through its Nike and Nike Football accounts on the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Furthermore, an online survey targeting young people between 12 and 30 years old will analyse how they perceive the brand and its communication on social networks.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Over the last few decades, the digital age has transformed society and social networks have gradually emerged as a prominent means of exchanging information between individuals. Beyond individuals, companies have also established themselves on this type of platform (Balagué and Fayon, 2010). Indeed, the advantages that social networks represent for their business are numerous: it is, among others, a fast and free way to get in touch with their consumers or potential consumers (Balagué and Fayon, 2010), but also to establish or strengthen a positive image of a brand in the consumer's mind (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2013). However, it is not enough to simply be present on social networks, but it is essential to know how to strategically manage virtual identity, otherwise there would be a risk of having the opposite effect of what is expected and of having the image tarnished by critics (Hutter *et al.*, 2013). Numerous digital strategies can be put in place to attract Internet users, and thus create or reinforce a positive brand image and lead them to choose the brand rather than another competing one.

Each brand favours different strategies and, as part of this master's thesis, the case of the Nike brand will be analysed. This dissertation will aim to determine:

1. *Which social network (among Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) is the most used by the Nike brand? For which reasons?*
2. *What are the strategies of the Nike brand on its social networks (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook)?*
3. *How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive Nike's communication on social networks?*

Finally, as just pointed out, there is a link between social networks and a brand's image. This research will thus seek to identify:

#### 4. *How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive the Nike brand?*

In order to address these questions, it is essential to divide this dissertation into two parts: a theoretical part based on scientific articles that gathers expert opinion, and a practical part based on data that I will have collected.

In the theoretical part, the first chapter deals with corporate communication, which refers to communication about the company itself. Then, the second chapter focuses on one of the branches of corporate communication, namely marketing communication, and more specifically on “the brand” that this type of communication promotes. Finally, the last chapter of this theoretical part addresses the theme of social networks, which have become an essential tool for companies and their brands.

The practical part is divided into two data collections. Firstly, an analysis of the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook of *Nike* and *Nike Football* accounts was conducted in April 2019 in order to identify the brand's main digital strategies. Secondly, an online survey was conducted among teenagers and young adults aged 12 to 30 years old to determine how they generally perceive the brand and its communication on its social networks.

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## THEORETICAL PART

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### 2.1. Corporate communication

This first chapter will address corporate communication, which includes several communications related to the smooth running of the company. This chapter will develop the different branches and functions of corporate communication, the concept of corporate reputation and the establishment of an efficient corporate communication plan.

#### 2.1.1. A definition of communication

Corporate communication is a type of communication. Since the beginning of time, communication has always been ubiquitous. Human beings communicate at every moment of their existence, sometimes even without speaking or writing. Nearly everything can be interpreted as a message, and therefore as a certain kind of communication. Gerbner (1967, quoted in Heath 1994: 20) defines communication as an “*interaction through messages. Messages are formally coded symbolic or representational events or some shared significance in a culture, produced for the purpose of evoking significance.*” Cronen, Pearce and Harris (1982, quoted in Heath 1994: 20) add that “*persons create, maintain and alter social order, relationships and identities*” through communication. Communication has evolved over the centuries and now serves a variety of functions. In this regard, de Narbonne (1990: 3) asserts that communication can be recognized as “*a natural function of the individual, and as such, spontaneously accessible to all. The only innovation regarding it in the recent period is that it has finally been recognized as a corporate function*”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> My translation of [Une fonction naturelle à l'individu, et donc à ce titre, spontanément accessible à tous. La seule innovation la concernant dans la période récente, est qu'elle a été enfin reconnue comme une fonction d'entreprise] from de Narbonne, A. (1990), *Communication d'entreprise: conception et pratique*, Paris: Eyrolles, p.3

### 2.1.2. A definition of corporate communication

This corporate function that communication can take on, cited by de Narbonne, can be linked to what is called corporate communication. Companies need to communicate about themselves to their stakeholders. Van Riel (1995, quoted in Simcic Bronn 2013: 54) sees corporate communication as “*an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are “harmonized” as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent.*” Hutton *et al.* (2001, in Simcic Bronn 2013: 54) further consider corporate communication as “*the overall internal/external communication function of the organization*”. Nonetheless, the authors argue that, in some companies, corporate communication can also refer to public relations. Perol (1965: 633) defines public relations as having multiple objectives such as “*to integrate the individual or group into its environment, to multiply and harmonize its communications with its own environment. The condition for this integration is participation in all initiatives that aim at the well-being of people and their mutual understanding.*”<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, other authors, such as Steyn (2004, in Simcic Bronn 2013: 54), even assert that there is no real theoretical difference between public relations and corporate communication. As is clear from the above discussion, there is no consensus on how corporate communication should be defined. In this dissertation, Van Riel's definition will be used and corporate communication will be considered as a means of promoting the company, its identity, missions and values both internally and externally. The external dimension of corporate communication will be further developed in this master's thesis.

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<sup>2</sup> My translation of [*intégrer l'individu ou le groupe dans son milieu, à multiplier et harmoniser ses communications avec son environnement. La condition de cette intégration est la participation à toutes les initiatives qui visent le mieux être des hommes et leur compréhension mutuelle.*] from Perol, R. (1965). Les Relations Publiques, leur développement et leurs tendances., in La Revue Administrative, vol. 18, no. 108, available from internet: [www.jstor.org/stable/40779108](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40779108). (consulted on June 10, 2020).

### 2.1.3. The different branches and functions of corporate communication

#### 2.1.3.1. The branches of corporate communication

Van Riel (1995, cited in Simcic Bronn 2013: 54) regards corporate communication as being made up of three main communication branches: “*management communication, organizational communication and marketing communication.*”

##### 2.1.3.1.1. Management communication

James S. O’Rourke (2013: 73) describes management communication as “*the movement of information and the skills that facilitate it - speaking, writing, listening, processes of critical thinking. It is also about understanding who the organization is (identity), who others think the organization is (reputation), and the contribution individuals can make to the success of their business in light of their organization’s existing reputation.*” In other words, language plays an important role in this kind of communication and all managers have to find the most suitable ways to communicate and listen to both internal and external groups of stakeholders and therefore manage their company’s reputation. Werner (1975, in S. O’Rourke 2013: 77) also underlines the fact that managers have a large number of missions and are constantly confronted with the internal and external world of their company. The role of a manager is to take advantage of these relationships, to listen to and to talk with stakeholders and later take some actions that would be beneficial to the company. For instance, S. O’Rourke (2013: 78) highlights the fact that it is through having verbal exchanges with stakeholders that managers can establish and justify company’s meaning.

##### 2.1.3.1.2. Organizational communication

Another branch of corporate communication is called organizational communication. According to Van Riel (1995, cited in Simcic Bronn 2013: 54), it refers to “*all other forms of communication used by the organization, focused primarily on the stakeholders who are not customers*”. The same author (1995, quoted in Simcic Bronn 2013: 55) cites, for example, the

areas of “*financial communication, government relations, public relations and media relations*” as part of the organizational communication. Further, Ashcraft *et al.* (2009, quoted in Robyn Remke 2013: 34) assert that organizational communication “*can be a way to describe and/or explain organizations*”.

However, some people do not see organizational communication as being linked to corporate communication. For instance, D.T. de Jong (2011: 1) differentiates the two concepts by claiming that corporate communication is an external representation of the organization, and would therefore be more univocal; whereas organizational communication would be multi-vocal as it is linked to the different opinions of employees within the same organization.

#### 2.1.3.1.3. Marketing communication

This last branch of corporate communication is the one on which I will focus the most in the context of this master’s thesis.

Firstly, according to Van Riel (1995, cited in Simcic Bronn 2013: 54), marketing communication can be linked to sales of the company’s goods and services. The author asserts that most companies use advertising, part of marketing communication, to drive these sales. Nowadays, especially for commercial companies, advertising has become essential and takes up a large part of the communication budget. J. Varey (2013: 107) lists “*product advertising, product publicity, direct mail, personal selling, sponsorship activities, sales promotion activities, and packaging*” as main activities of marketing communication. All these activities mainly target consumers. The primary goal is to make consumers aware of the company’s products and services and awaken their desire and interest. Next to these activities, Fill (2011: 16) refers to media, which he describes as “*the means by which advertising and other marketing communication messages are conveyed*”.

Secondly, links can be established between marketing communication and the concept of "brand". J. Varey (2013: 109) argues that marketing communication combines attributes of a brand with positive emotions, thus strengthening brand image and impacting the customer’s motivation to choose this brand instead of another one. In addition, Keller (1993: 8) argues that

marketing communications will be better received by consumers if the brand is recognized by consumers. J. Varey (2013: 109) supports this idea by asserting that consumers will be more likely to pay attention to a communication and react positively to it if they have a sound underlying brand image. Further discussion around the idea of “marketing communication and brand” will be covered in the second chapter of this theoretical part.

Finally, it is important to point out that the three branches of corporate communication discussed above correspond to Van Riel’s view of corporate communication. As Johannes and Libaert (2016: 17) assert, corporate communication aims to reach the “*general public*”<sup>3</sup>, and could arguably encompass all branches of a company, which leads to a certain vagueness. Other authors may identify other branches than those selected by Van Riel. For example, Kitchen (1997, quoted in E. Carroll 2013: 55) sees corporate communication as having three different branches: “*public relations, marketing and human resource (HR) management*”. Moreover, there is an ambiguity around the question of marketing communication. Van Riel sees it as a component of corporate communication, but some authors, such as Schwebig (quoted in Johannes and Libaert 2016: 20), consider marketing communication and corporate communication as different. According to Schwebig (quoted in Johannes and Libaert 2016: 20), “*marketing reasons in terms of targets, markets on which to sell a given product, following a specific life cycle, and through a unique message, “a unique selling proposition”, while corporate communication addresses permanent or occasional audiences, to whom a standard message cannot be communicated, but rather a specific aspect of the company*”.<sup>4</sup> Johannes and Libaert (2016: 20) argue that a third trend exists that considers corporate communication as an extension of marketing. As part of this master’s thesis, I have chosen to adopt Van Riel (1995)’s vision, which I consider to be relevant as the promotion of a company’ products and services should, in my view, form an important branch of corporate communication and may not be seen as separate.

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<sup>3</sup> My translation of [*grand public*] from Johannes, K. and Libaert, T. (2016). *La communication corporate*, Paris: Dunod, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.17

<sup>4</sup> My translation [*Le marketing raisonne en termes de cibles, de marchés sur lesquels écouler un produit donné, obéissant à un cycle de vie bien déterminé, et grâce à un message unique, unique-selling proposition, tandis que la communication d’entreprise s’adresse à des publics, des audiences permanentes ou occasionnelles, auxquels on ne peut pas communiquer un message standard, mais bien un aspect précis de l’entreprise*] from Johannes, K., and Libaert, T. (2016), *La communication corporate*, Paris Dunod, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.20

#### 2.1.3.2. The functions of corporate communication

The scope of functions related to corporate communication depends on each company. The larger the company, the more functions it will tackle. However, a number of functions that generally take place in the context of corporate communication can be identified.

In his book *Corporate communication*, Argenti (2007: 49) highlights different functions that corporate communication handles. According to the “*Corporate Survey 2005*” conducted by Weber Shandwick (2005, quoted in Argenti 2007: 49)<sup>5</sup>, more than half of corporate communication departments listed the following functions in 2005: “*media relations, online communications, marketing, special events, product/brand communications, crisis management, employee/internal communications, community relations and product/brand advertising*”. Argenti (2007: 49) also reports that forty-seven percent of the companies surveyed listed “*reputation management*” as a function and thirty-two percent also mentioned “*public affairs/government relations*”.

#### 2.1.4. The importance of corporate communication

After discussing the various branches and functions of corporate communication, the question arises as to how important it is to manage corporate communication properly within a company. Corporate communication means that the company communicates about itself and this action will inevitably have an impact on the company's reputation, also called corporate reputation.

##### 2.1.4.1. Corporate reputation

###### 2.1.4.1.1 The building of corporate reputation

One of the most essential foundations of any business, whether a start-up or an already renowned company, is to create, manage or even maintain a good and strong reputation.

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<sup>5</sup> Weber Shandwick, “*Corporate Survey 2005*” from PRWeek (June 27, 2005)

According to Argenti (1998, quoted in V. Hamilton 1999: 10), corporate image and identity are elements that positively or negatively influence corporate reputation.

Firstly, Johannes and Libaert (2016: 40) argue that a company's image is the general impression of one stakeholder about the company. If the concept of image were to be reduced to a question, it would certainly be: "What is one's perception of a specific company when talking about it?". According to Johannes and Libaert (2016: 38), image can be based on information provided by the company or by other sources, as well as on experiences that stakeholders have had with the company. A marked difference can often be noticed between the image the company wants to project and the one which is really perceived by the stakeholders. This is why, Gilles Marion (quoted in Johannes and Libaert 2016: 38) distinguishes three different types of image: "*the desired image, the projected image and the perceived image.*"<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, according to Cornelissen (2004: 68), "*identity involves the act of expressing an image of the organization to stakeholders through all communications campaigns, employee behaviour and products and services. The management of all such communications and expressions towards stakeholders is conceptually referred to as corporate identity.*" Birkgit and Stadler (quoted in Johannes and Libaert 2016: 34) identify three aspects that can influence and define corporate identity: "*a behavioural aspect (Behaviour) - what the company does -, a communication aspect (Communication) - what it says through its communications -, and a symbolic aspect (Symbolism)- how the company is represented (name, logo, visual identity, etc.).*"<sup>7</sup> The difference between image and identity is captured as followed by Argenti (2007 : 50): the author points out that any company can have several images depending on the audience; whereas, logically, a company should only have one identity for all stakeholders as identity reflects the company's main attributes which should remain consistent.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the combination of the corporate image and corporate identity leads to the construction of corporate reputation. Fombrun (quoted in Cornelissen 2004: 83)

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<sup>6</sup> My translation of [*L'image voulue, l'image diffusée ou projetée et l'image perçue ou déposée*] from Johannes, K., Libaert, T. (2016), *La communication corporate*, Paris Dunod, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.38

<sup>7</sup> My translation of [*Un aspect comportemental (Behaviour) – ce que l'entreprise fait -, un aspect communicationnel (Communication) – ce qu'elle dit à travers ses communications – et un aspect symbolique (Symbolism) – comment elle se présente (nom, logo, identité visuelle, etc.)*] from Johannes, K., Libaert, T. (2016), *La communication corporate*, Paris Dunod, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.34

defines the general concept of reputation as “*a perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describe the firm’s overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared to other leading rivals.*” The same author (quoted in Cornelissen 2004 : 84) asserts that reputation is indeed based on “*the perception*” that stakeholders have of the company and the evaluation they make of it. Moreover, like Fombrun, Johannes and Libaert (2016: 43) assert that this corporate reputation is built over the long term. Devine and Halpern, Dolphin, Sanchez and Sotorrio (2001, 2004 and 2007, quoted in J.Varey 2013 : 115) state that “*strength in corporate reputation creates value in terms of the social capital of recognition and trustworthiness, so strengthening and protecting reputation is clearly a management strategy*”. In other words, if a company does not pay enough attention to its reputation, its reputation is unlikely to be strong enough and customers may not trust and support the company. It is important to mention that J.Varey (2013: 115) asserts that there is not “*one reputation but many*” according to the culture, the interests and the location of consumers. Finally, Johannes and Libaert (2016: 46-53) report that, in order to measure the popularity of companies, several international reputation rankings exist including: “*Fortune’s most admired companies*”, “*Interbrand’s best global brands*”, “*Global Reputation Pulse*” or “*Millward Brown BrandZ Top 100*”.

#### 2.1.4.1.2. The importance of corporate reputation

Cornelissen (2008, quoted in Peggy Simcic Bronn 2013: 56) stresses that corporate communication aims to build a positive reputation among a company’s stakeholders. It has been shown by Greyser (1999, quoted in E. Carroll 2013: 31-32) that if a company has a strong corporate reputation, customers are more likely to be interested in its products and services than other ones. Furthermore, the company will recover more rapidly from a crisis and will be supported by its customers if it has a positive reputation.

#### 2.1.5. The corporate communication plan

The last section related to this chapter on corporate communication would be how to build a successful corporate communication plan. It is worth noting that there are several steps to be followed.

#### 2.1.5.1 Objectives

According to Argenti (2007: 25), the first point the company should address is determining the main objectives of the communication. Each organization must ask itself what results they would like to achieve. Goedseels and Agie (LCOMU2310 *Organizations strategies and strategic communication* 2018-2019) highlight the fact that the objectives of the communication should be linked to the general objectives of the organization as one can not communicate for the sake of communicating, but one should always communicate for the organization and respect its values and missions. Libaert (quoted in LCOMU2310 *Organizations strategies and strategic communication* 2018-2019), who is an expert in the field of corporate communication, suggests four types of objectives. The first objectives are “*cognitive objectives*”, which consist in making the company known. Secondly, “*acceptance objectives*” try to make stakeholders adopt the vision of the company. Thirdly, there are “*emotional objectives*”, which are designed to create emotions towards the company. Finally, “*conductive objectives*” which push to act or to change an attitude. Gregory (quoted in LCOMU2310 *Organizations strategies and strategic communication* 2018-2019) discusses a different set of objectives which can be linked to those suggested by Libaert. Firstly, she suggests objectives on an “*awareness level*”. These objectives consist in informing and creating awareness. They can be linked to Libaert's cognitive objectives. Secondly, objectives on an “*attitudes level*”, more or less equivalent to Libaert's acceptance and emotional objectives, seek to create a particular attitude or opinion about a subject. Finally, Gregory's third type of objectives would be placed at a “*behaviour level*”. A link with Libaert's conductive objectives can be made: these objectives lead people to act or not act in a certain way.

#### 2.1.5.2. Resources

A second point is to be able to determine which resources the organization should provide for a specific communication plan. Argenti (2007: 25-27) distinguishes different types of

resources. One of these resources is money. He recommends not being too focused on the cheapest alternatives, but also thinking about long-term benefits. Secondly, human resources are highly significant in the process of achieving objectives. Argenti (2007: 26) argues that the best approach will vary according to "*the size of the company and its shareholders base*". Finally, time is also highlighted by Argenti (2007: 26) as an essential factor influencing the corporate communication strategy. Again, the focus should not be on short-term results, but on effective ones.

#### 2.1.5.3. Diagnosis of the company's reputation

As addressed in section 2.3, a company's reputation is based on several factors such as the company's image and identity. Argenti (2007: 27-28) argues that reputation, if damaged or limited, can negatively affect the strategic communication plan. It is therefore crucial to make a diagnosis before launching the plan. For example, according to the author, it can be done through a survey among stakeholders or employees. Thanks to this diagnosis, the different stages can be adapted if the company is in a weakened situation.

#### 2.1.5.4. Constituencies

Constituencies are people to whom the communication is addressed. Argenti (2007: 29) mentions that there are different types of constituencies. For instance, primary constituencies, who are considered to be the main stakeholders of a company, can include employees or shareholders; while secondary constituencies, on which certain communications can be focused, are, for example, media or suppliers. The author also underlines that the constituencies of a company may vary over time.

#### 2.1.5.5. Messages and channels

According to Goedseels (quoted in LCOMU2310 *Organizations strategies and strategic communication* 2018-2019), a message is "*the announcement the company wants to make*".

Argenti (2007: 32) asserts that a message can not be communicated without paying attention to the channel and the structure of it. First of all, it is crucial to determine how the message will be presented. Communication is ubiquitous; each company should therefore find a method to stand out from the others. According to Argenti (2007: 33), communication channels should be carefully chosen to have a strong impact. Some potential questions introduced by Argenti (2007: 33) that companies may ask themselves include: “Should the communication be internal or external? Should it be written or spoken? Should it have an impact locally, nationally or internationally?” These questions can help communication managers to find the best channel of communication among many. Moreover, in order to be convincing, Argenti (2007: 34) asserts that the message must be properly structured. Argenti emphasizes two types of messages: the direct ones, presenting the main point first and then the reasons, and indirect ones, presenting the reasons and then the main point. According to the author, generally speaking, a message should be as direct as possible so as not to be too confusing for constituencies.

#### 2.1.5.6. Monitoring

It is important to examine the results of a communication plan. Given the fact that every communication is set within the framework of certain objectives, every communication manager should ensure that the results produced are the desired ones. Argenti (2007: 35 - 36) makes a distinction between cases where results can be checked immediately, such as certain cases of internal communication, and other cases where it takes much longer, such as those related to advertising. According to the author, from the moment the company receives the results, results must be analysed in depth to assess whether the main objectives have been achieved.

## 2.2. Marketing communication and the concept of brand

As mentioned in the first chapter of this theoretical part, marketing communication is a component of corporate communication. This section focuses on marketing communication, and especially its relationship with the concept of brand.

Yeshin (1988, quoted in Banerjee 2009: 4) states that marketing communication is *“the collective term for all the communication functions used in marketing a product, and the purpose of marketing communication is to add persuasive value to a product for both customer and company”*. Banerjee (2009: 4) adds that marketing communication is *“one of the major elements of four ‘P’s of marketing literature, and is popularly termed as ‘Promotion’”*. Todorova (2015: 369) argues that the “P” of “Promotion” refers to the development of messages to promote products and services of a company, but also messages to promote the brand and differentiate it from its competitors. According to Banerjee (2009: 4), marketers linked with marketing communication aim to *“inform, persuade, incite and remind consumers - directly or indirectly - about their marketing offers”*. In addition, marketing communication takes the role of the *“spokes person of the brand”* and maintains relationships with the various consumers. According to Fill (2011: 11), this form of communication makes it possible to *“reinforce memories and understanding, inform and make audiences aware of a brand’s presence and finally persuade an individual to buy and consume a product or service.”*

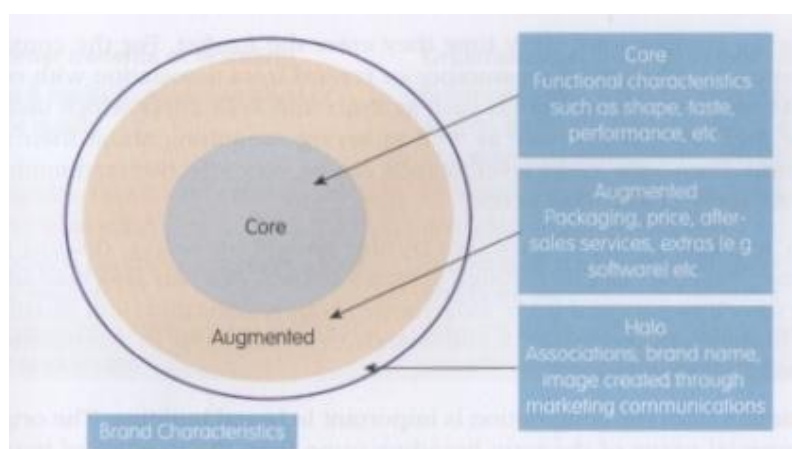


Figure 1: Brand Characteristics, Egan (2020 : 85)

Further, in Figure 1, Egan (2020: 85) imagines the brand as a "halo" with a "core" part and an "augmented" part. The "core" refers to everything that is more functional, such as "*basic product/service, shape/texture, performance and physical capacity*"; while the "augmented" refers to "*packaging/presentation, price/terms, guarantees, extras and after-sales support*". The "halo" is what is projected to the external world with the help of marketing communication. According to the author, it can be "*image management and the promotion of the benefits, brand personality and brand associations*". In other words, marketing communication is the link between the brand and the external world.

### 2.2.1. Brand

As part of this master's thesis, the focus will be on how a brand is articulated, its relationship with the consumer, its benefits and the communication around it.

#### 2.2.1.1. Definition of the concept "brand"

Lewi and Lacoëuilhe (2018: 13) point out that there are several approaches to defining a brand, leading to a multitude of definitions. For the purposes of this dissertation, the American Marketing Association's definition will be chosen. According to the Association (quoted in Chinomona 2014: 126), a brand can be defined as "*a name, term, sign, drawing or any combination of these, that serves to identify a firm's goods or services and differentiate them from those of competitors*". This definition already draws a distinction between the company (or "*the firm*"), which encompasses the entire business, and the brand that represents one or more goods of a firm. It should be noted that in some cases, such as the case of the Nike brand which is analysed in this master's thesis, the company name and the brand name are the same.

According to Lewi and Lacoëuilhe (2018: 60 - 94), a brand is made up of tangible and intangible assets. The authors (2018: 60) describe tangible values as being "*the rationally measurable and comparable qualities of a brand's product or service compared to its competitors*".<sup>8</sup> These may

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<sup>8</sup> My translation of [Les qualités mesurables et comparables rationnellement d'un produit ou d'un service d'une marque par rapport à ses concurrents.] from Lewi, G. and Lacoëuilhe, J. (2018). *Branding management, La marque, de l'idée à l'action*, France: Pearson, 3e edition, p.60

be products or services, notoriety or objective qualities. With respect to intangible values, the authors (2018: 72) describe them as “*non-measurable characteristics that often touch on the intimate memory or emotion of each individual.*”<sup>9</sup> They can be “*the sensoriality of the brand*”<sup>10</sup>(2018: 72), such as taste, touch or sound, or the “*associative values*”<sup>11</sup> (2018 : 94) reflected in the product or service.

Riezebos *et al.* (2003: 14) explain that the brand is becoming more and more associated with a concept. They define this as being based on an approach “*that one develops a strong and attractive idea that is not so much rooted in product advantages but more in a lifestyle associated with the brand*”, and cite the Nike or Swatch brands as examples to illustrate this definition.

#### 2.2.1.2. Concepts around brand

Secondly, this section discusses a series of key brand-centric and consumer-centric concepts.

Barry and Howard (1990, quoted in Hutter *et al.* 2013: 343) describe the “*hierarchy of effects*” as comprising three sequential parts: “*first cognitively (thinking), second affectively (feeling), and third conatively (do)*”. These steps would mean that, in this specific order, consumers would first have some knowledge of a product, then feelings about the product would be aroused, and these feelings would eventually turn into action, such as buying products or using services from a particular brand. Besides, according to Fill (2011: 58), “*marketing communications is an audience-centered activity so it is vitally important to understand the way in which audiences’ process information prior to, during and after making product/service purchase decisions.*” The author (2011: 58-62) dictates three approaches: “*awareness, perception and attitudes*”.

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<sup>9</sup> My translation of [*caractéristiques non mesurables entre elles qui touchent souvent à la mémoire intime ou à l’émotion de chaque individu.*] from Lewi, G. and Lacoëuilhe, J. (2018). *Branding management, La marque, de l’idée à l’action*, France: Pearson, 3e edition, p.72

<sup>10</sup> My translation of [*La sensorialité de la marque*] from Lewi, G. and Lacoëuilhe, J. (2018). *Branding management, La marque, de l’idée à l’action*, France: Pearson, 3e edition, p.72

<sup>11</sup> My translation of [*Les valeurs associatives*] from Lewi, G. and Lacoëuilhe, J. (2018). *Branding management, La marque, de l’idée à l’action*, France: Pearson, 3e edition, p.94

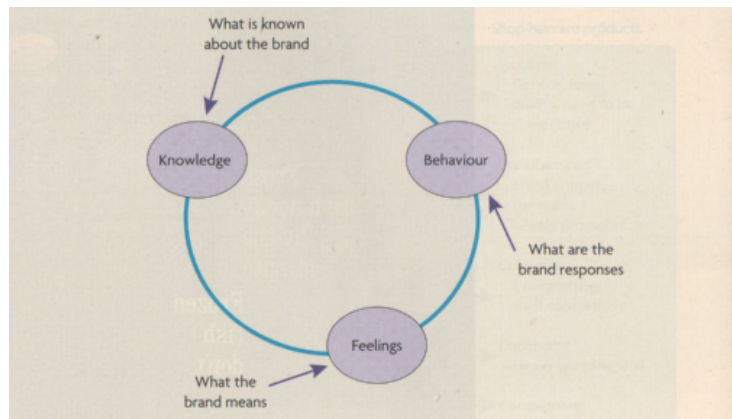


Figure 2: The attitude construct, Fill (2011 : 64)

Through this figure, Fill (2011: 64) demonstrates the cycle of a brand leading to "*attitudes*". It is composed of three stages: a cognitive component, an affective one and a conative one. Firstly, the consumer must have "*knowledge*" about the brand, secondly, this consumer will develop "*feelings*" (positive or negative) about this brand so that finally these feelings lead to "*behaviour*" and potential actions.

Links could be made to the various concepts that will be cited in this section. It should be noted that many other brand-related terms exist; however, I have selected those that were the most relevant in the context of this research.

#### 2.2.2.1.1. Brand awareness

Brand awareness, as pointed out by Bhatti (2017: 63), is placed within the relationship between the brand and the consumer. According to the author, it refers to the "*complete knowledge of brand in the perceptions of the end users*". In other words, it is connected with whether the consumer is able to recognize the brand or not. The author claims (2017: 63-64) that brand awareness can be built on the basis of the name, logo or symbol of the brand, but also on the colours or shape associated with it. According to Bhatti (2017: 64), brand awareness is related to the "*acknowledgment, familiarity, supremacy and reminds of the brand in the knowledge of individuals*". L. Keller (1993: 3) states that brand awareness is composed of two parts: "*brand recognition*", which the author describes as "*consumers' abilities to confirm prior exposure to*

*the brand when given the brand as a cue", and "brand recall", which the author describes as "consumers' ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue".*

According to L. Keller (1993: 3), brand awareness plays a crucial role in purchasing decisions. First of all, if the customer is thinking about buying a particular product, for instance new sneakers, it is beneficial for the company that the customers think about its brand. Secondly, the fact that the customer is familiar with the brand is sufficient to influence purchasing decisions. Finally, the author (1993: 3) states that *"brand awareness affects consumer decision making by influencing the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image"*. According to Egan (2020: 100), these brand associations can be created on the basis of *"sponsorship, co-branding, geographical identifiers, ingredient brands, support services and award symbols"*.

Fill (2011: 58) states that marketing communication activities are aimed at building awareness of the company or brand and getting consumers to retain the desired messages. O'Flynn (2012, in Tsimonis and Dimitriadis 2013: 332) asserts that social media can for example help to increase brand awareness as the more people circulate on social media, the more they see the brand, and the more they retain it.

#### 2.2.1.2.2. Brand image

Keller (1993, quoted in Bruhn *et al.* 2012: 774) defines brand image as *"the consumer's associations linked to a brand"*. Bhatti (2017: 63) concurs with this idea and defines brand image as *"the consciousness about the brand personality in the minds of the consumer"*. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990: 117) also underline the subjective aspect of brand image by stating that *"brand image is largely a subjective and perceptual phenomenon that is formed through consumer interpretation, whether reasoned or emotional"*. Subjectivity is where the difference with the concept of *"brand identity"* lies. Brand identity, according to Aaker (1996, quoted in Malik *et al.* 2012: 13070) is linked to the image that wants to be projected by the company, whereas brand image is *"how a brand is perceived by consumers"*. Brand identity, according

to Egan (2020: 87), “*is a composite of those features of a brand that make it recognisable.*” According to Pickton and Broderick (2005, quoted in Egan 2020: 87), brand identity can be based on “*design elements*”, i.e. elements such as the logo that make a brand recognizable. Secondly, the brand identity can refer to “*statements*” which can be linked to the slogan of the brand. Finally, “*application*” which, according to the author, “*refers to corporate advertising, stationery, signage, livery, etc. and is not so much a separate category of design as a reminder that all organisational messages affect the image of the company/brand, not just the planned communications associated with advertising, public relations, etc.*” Roy and Banerjee (2006, in Banerjee 2009: 5) argue that one of the missions of a marketer is to integrate the brand identity with the brand image. Indeed, according to Lewi and Lacoeylue (2018 : 125), if the brand identity is well received by consumers, then the brand will be strong and bring many benefits to the company.

Keller (1993, quoted in Riezebos *et al.* 2003: 64-65) considers brand image to be based on three principles: “*content, favourability and strength*”. The first point, content, refers to what the brand name inspires. According to the authors Riezebos *et al.*, this can be “*both cognition (knowledge) and feelings, but also, for example, to smells and sounds*”. The second point, favourability, is the next step, i.e. how do consumers feel about the associations they make with the brand name: is it positive or negative? Finally, the third point is defined as “*the extent to which an association is linked with the brand*”. Akinson and Shiffrin (1971, quoted in Riezebos *et al.* 2003: 67) consider memory to be divided into three concepts, on which consumers base their image of the brand: “*sensory memory*” which is purely related to sensations, “*short-term memory*” which refers to short moments and “*long-term memory*” which is related to the long term. Riezebos *et al.* (2003: 68 - 69) insist on the long-term aspect and state that “*brand images are networks of knowledge elements stored in long-term memory. The core of such a network is a brand name, which is linked to a number of other knowledge elements (and/or associations).*”

Dolich (1969, in Malik *et al.* 2012: 13070) points out that marketing managers in companies have quickly given much attention to brand image as it plays an important role in consumers' purchasing decisions. Keller and Aaker (1993 and 1991, in Gulzar 2011: 75) also state that brand image forms a large part of a company's marketing department. The advantages of a

strong brand image are many. Anselmsson, Vestman Bondesson and Johansson (2014, quoted in Bhatti 2017: 61) emphasize its importance by citing for example the fact that a strong brand image helps to strengthen the brand environment, fight competitors, build up in the market and have solid relationships. It helps to attract potential consumers as well. Kwon and Lennon (2009, in Chinomona 2014: 127) assert that a strong brand image can frame and soften the cognitive risk that consumers may feel and make them take the plunge towards the product or service. Moreover, L. Keller (1993: 9) cites the fact that having a good image "*should enable the brand to command larger margins and have more inelastic responses to price increases*". According to this author, consumers having a good image of a specific brand will develop a positive brand attitude and will seek to favour that brand, even if it sometimes means adding a certain price. The author (1993: 9) goes on by claiming that a positive brand image can "*yield licensing opportunities and support brand extensions*".

To create a good image of their brand, marketers can use a technique which is called "*positioning*". Ries and Trout (1981, in Malik *et al.* 2012: 13070) assert that positioning revolves around the target audience: it is about introducing the product in a certain way in the mind of the consumer. The positioning strategy is increasingly used in companies and people responsible for this function must remain innovative regarding how to promote products and create or keep a strong image in the minds of potential or already loyal consumers.

Consumers, on the other hand, rely on different notions to build the image of a specific brand in their mind. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990: 116) state that the factors influencing the development of the brand image are, among others, "*the product's attributes, the sponsoring organization, the marketing mix, the modes through which people tend to perceive, personal values, experience, the types of people associated with use of the brand, and a number of context variables*". Dobni and Zinkhan (1990: 113) claim that the brand can sometimes be seen as human and thus be personified. According to the authors, there are two different perspectives. A first way of personifying is to view the product as a human with its own personality. A second type of personification is to associate the personality of the consumer with the image of the brand. In the same vein, L. Aaker (1997: 347) considers "*the set of human characteristics associated with a brand*" as belonging to "*brand personality*". As an example, the author cites the bottles of the "*Absolut Vodka*" brand that are often described as a "*cool, hip, contemporary*

25-year old". Rook (1985, in L. Aaker 1997: 347) underlines that customers sometimes see the brand as some celebrities. Fournier (1994, quoted in L. Aaker 1997: 347) adds that customers even link brands to "*one's own self*". L. Aaker (1997: 347) argues that this phenomenon is due to the different strategies used by marketers who give the brand some personality traits. According to Plummer (1985, quoted in L. Aaker 1997: 348), "*perceptions of brand personality traits can be formed and influenced by any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand*". L. Aaker (1997: 348) adds that a direct contact could mean that the personality traits attributed to the brand come directly from the people who are themselves associated with the brand; the author gives the example of the CEO or the brand endorsers. Batra, Lehmann, and Singh (1993, quoted in L. Aaker 1997: 348) argue that, in addition to those direct contacts, personality traits can come from more indirect contact through "*product-related attributes*", such as "*product category associations, brand name, symbol or logo, advertising style, price and distribution channel*".

A final question about the brand image that might arise is "How could it be measured?". In their study, Malik *et al.* (2012: 13074) address two ways of measuring brand image. They state that research has shown that it can be measured either on the basis of "*attitudinal scales*" or on the basis of "*projective techniques*". If the method based on attitudinal scales is applied, then the focus is on understanding how consumers "*know verbally and consciously about the brand*". If the projective techniques-based method is used, the unconscious thoughts of consumers are studied. This is this projective techniques-based method which was the most widely used at the time (2012).

#### 2.2.1.2.3. Brand knowledge

According to Tufekci (2012, quoted in Bhatti 2017: 62), the concept of brand knowledge is based on brand image and brand awareness.

Bhatti (2017: 64) points out that "*after having knowledge about a particular brand users become competent to rememorize the information regarding the brand efficiently and quickly*". Although the author demonstrates in his research that there is a correlation between brand

awareness and brand knowledge, brand knowledge is more related to words such as *"responsiveness, elements, familiarity, feeling, reflection as well as repute of the brand"*. L. Keller (2009: 143) argues that brand knowledge is linked with *"thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences and so on that become linked to the brand in the minds of consumers"*. Brand knowledge plays an important role in the position of the company in the market, and therefore arguably in its success.

#### 2.2.1.2.4. Brand loyalty

According to Augun (2019: 140), this concept can be considered as an *"output"*. On the other hand, *"brand communication is a predictor whilst brand image and brand trust are supporting variables or mediator"*. According to the American Marketing Association (quoted in Agung 2019: 140), brand loyalty is *"a special privilege where a customer repeatedly buys from a supplier instead of from other suppliers"*. This means that consumers view the brand as trustworthy, which can be related to *"brand trust"*, and this makes them want to buy a product or use a service from the brand again. This is called being a loyal customer.

Jacoby and Kyner (1973, quoted in Shang *et al.* 2006: 401) distinguish two kinds of loyalty: *"behavioral and attitudinal loyalty"*. The first kind of loyalty refers to the fact that *"consumers will repeatedly purchase the same brand"*; while the second kind of loyalty refers to the fact that the consumer will prefer and engage with the brand and take into account its values that he or she sees as unique. Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004, in Shang *et al.* 2006: 401) claim that attitudinal loyalty has an impact on behavioral loyalty.

#### 2.2.1.2.5 Brand equity

L. Keller (1993: 1) points out that brand equity is *"defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand- for example, when certain outcomes result from the marketing of a product or service because of its brand name that would not occur if the same product or service did not have that name"*. Riezebos *et al.* (2003: 8) claim that having a positive and successful brand is one of the best assets a company can have, and this can be

referred to as brand equity. Egan (2020: 98) sees brand equity, in economic terms, as “*the sum of future profits associated with the brand discounted over time*”. Fill (2011: 158) also considers brand equity as “*an assessment of a brand’s wealth and health, sometimes referred to as goodwill*”.

L. Keller (1993: 2) adds a definition which focuses more on the customer: “*customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand*”. The author says that a brand can have a positive customer-based brand equity, if the consumer reacts more favourably to the marketing mix of that particular brand than if it were an unknown brand. For example, Nike could be said to have good customer-based brand equity, if consumers respond more favourably to the promotion of their new sneakers than they do to another brand of sneakers. Bruhn *et al.* (2012: 774) concurs with Keller's definition of customer-based brand equity by stating that “*consumer-based brand equity is the result of both consumer reactions to a company’s brand-based activities and the consumer response to the brand-based communication of other consumers on social media platforms compared to the consumer reactions that an equivalent non-branded product receives*”.

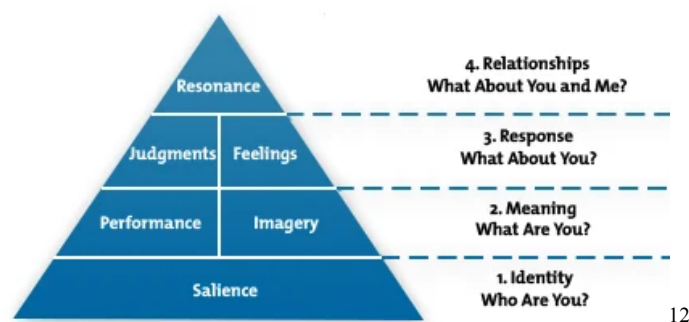


Figure 3: Keller’s Brand Equity Model

According to L. Keller (1993: 9), to create customer-based brand equity, it is important to base oneself on a brand that echoes strong brand associations for the consumer. As seen in figure 3, the choice of a strong brand identity should be considered. This can be the choice of a logo, a

<sup>12</sup> Keller, Kevin, Strategic Brand Management: Global Edition, 4<sup>th</sup>, 1901, retrieved from <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/keller-brand-equity-model.htm>, (consulted on July 25, 2020)

symbol or even a name. The purpose of this first step is to make sure that consumers recognize the brand. L. Keller (2009: 143) argues that it is also necessary to establish a "*brand meaning*" among customers, that is to say, to give meaning to the brand, which can be done "*by strategically linking a host of tangible and intangible brand associations*". Egan (2020: 96) describes the brand meaning as based on the two principles of "*performance*" ("*how well your product meets your customers' practical needs*") and "*imagery*" ("*how well your brand meets your customers' needs on a social and psychological level*"). In addition, it is advisable for the company to keep in mind the consumer responses it wishes to have and make every effort to obtain them. According to Egan (2020: 96), consumers could respond with some "*judgments*" or "*feelings*". Finally, these consumer responses, if positive, should allow the company to create a stable and loyal relationship between the brand and the customers, which can be called, according to Egan (2020: 96) "*brand resonance*". Egan (2020: 96) points out that this model asserts that to have a strong brand, you have to play on "*how customers think and feel about your product*". The stronger the brand equity, the more naturally consumers will choose the brand, recommend it to other consumers, and be more loyal to it.

Further, L. Keller (1993: 10) states that the company should develop marketing programs that will support the brand. Marketing serves to make the brand recognizable, unique and strong in the minds of consumers, and ultimately lead to purchasing decisions. The author cites ways to reinforce this image via marketing communications, such as TV commercials, but this can also come from "*word-of-mouth and other social influences*". The author then (1993: 10-11) argues that "*secondary associations*" should be taken advantage of. Secondary associations refer to the fact that "*the brand association itself is linked to other information in memory that is not directly related to the product or service*". These can be related to "(1) the company, (2) the country of origin, (3) the distribution channels, (4) a celebrity spokesperson or endorser of the product of service or (5) an event".

L. Keller (2009: 140) argues that brand equity is a key concept in the way a company establishes its advertising. According to the author (2009: 140), brand equity works "*either as a goal in itself or as a mediator to other goals*". In other words, brand equity is a goal to be achieved because it allows a brand to differentiate itself from others, and on the other hand, having good

brand equity allows the company to make its marketing communications more favorably accepted by its consumers.

It is important to note that all these brand-related concepts are naturally linked. For example, in his study called *Impact of brand image, trust, and affect on consumer brand extension attitude: The mediating role of brand loyalty*, Gulzar (2011: 77) states that "*brand trust and brand image have a positive impact on brand loyalty*". In his article on customer-based brand equity, L. Keller (1993: 8) states that if the brand has a considerable level of brand awareness and a positive brand image, then the consumer is more likely to choose that brand over another one, which also leads to brand loyalty.

#### 2.2.1.3. The advantages of a strong brand

This section deals with some of the advantages of having a strong brand.

Hoeffler and L. Keller (2003, quoted in L. Keller 2009: 140) list the following benefits of having a good brand: "*improved perceptions of product performance, greater customer loyalty, less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and marketing crises, larger margins, more elastic customer response to price decreases and inelastic customer response to price increases, greater trade or intermediary cooperation and support, increased marketing communication effectiveness and additional licensing and brand extension opportunities*". According to Delgado-Ballester *et al.* (2010: 46), brands that are more familiar have a head start on less recognized brands: those brands that are already in consumers' minds need to make less effort in terms of communication than less familiar brands. This study (2010: 46) shows that for familiar brands, "*the use of moderately consistent brand messages is the most effective way of building brand knowledge because brand recall and brand image are significantly better compared with the use of highly consistent messages*". L. Keller (1993: 9) shares this view and argues that if brand awareness and brand image are positive, it will be easier for the brand to convey its marketing communications and gain customer acceptance. Moreover, the author (1993: 9) states that "*consumers who are positively predisposed toward a brand may require fewer ad exposures to meet communication objectives*".

In their article, Agung *et al.* (2019: 138) claim that a "*strong brand could create greater future value to a company*". The authors add that a brand "*is also a necessary strategy which could help organization create on-going competitive advantage*". According to them, a company's brand should be synonymous with trust, as consumers will be more likely to choose a brand they already know and consider as trustworthy, in order to avoid disappointment or loss by opting for another brand. Hutter *et al.* (2013: 343) concur with this idea and add that consumers nowadays receive a great deal of information and have a huge amount of choice between different brands: having a strong brand can help differentiate.

#### 2.2.1.4. Communication around the brand

This final point is devoted to the communication aimed at positively promoting a brand.

According to L. Keller (2009: 141), marketing communication enables brands to connect with consumers and then build relationships with them. Further, marketing communication allows companies to "*create experience and build communities both on-line and off-line*". According to L. Keller (2009: 145-146), marketing communication makes it possible to raise the "*brand awareness*" of a brand, to establish a positive brand image with the right brand associations in consumers' minds, to build positive brand emotions, and to strengthen the link between the consumer and the brand in question.

Brand communication is a new term which could be added to this section. Sharma (2013: 6) states that brand communication is a key factor in the success of a brand and its various products. As pointed out by Bruhn *et al.* (2012: 775), communication, if well mastered, could have a positive effect on the consumer, and his or her perception of the brand could subsequently play a role on both the awareness and the general image of the brand. According to Yoo *et al.* (2000, quoted in Bruhn *et al.* 2012: 775), brand communication plays a role in brand equity, "*as long as the communication leads to a favorable consumer reaction to the product in question, compared to the equivalent non-branded product*". Chinomona (2014: 126) argues that brand communication aims to display and promote the image of a product or service, which would differentiate it from competitors in the market and be recognised by

potential consumers. According to Sahin *et al.* (2011, in Chinomona 2014: 126), brand communication is not only about recognition, but also about building, maintaining and/or strengthening a positive reputation.

From the definition above, one could conclude that brand communication aims to communicate about the brand and its values, to reinforce its image, and to promote it; whereas marketing communication aims to establish the link between this communication and the right audience.

Bruhn *et al.* (2012: 773) argue that the "*brand value chain*" (which "*takes account of different levels of effects caused by marketing mix efforts*") is often only associated with marketing communication that the company itself can control. However, one should also take into account what consumers emit themselves online (for instance, on social media). According to Bruhn *et al.* (2012: 773), a new structure of the brand value chain could be built on four levels: "*first, the sender of brand-based communication content (no longer solely the company as communicator via traditional and social media, but now also the consumer as content creator, e.g. brand weblogs and brand communities on online social networks); second, the consumers' mindset consisting of brand awareness and brand image; third, consumer behavior as reflected by word of mouth or purchase intention; fourth, company financial performance in terms of turnover and market share*". This new structure underlines the fact that the company, although playing an essential role in brand communication, is no longer the only one to manage the brand's fate. The various consumers who communicate about it on social media platforms also play a key role in brand communication. Bruhn *et al.* (2012: 774) call this communication "*user-generated social media communication*". Fill (2011: 141) also argues that consumers can now define a brand for themselves and can convey this meaning to their friends, relatives or acquaintances. Further, de Vries *et al.* (2012: 83) refer to fans who follow the brand on its social networks as "*brand fans*", and Dholakia and Durham (2010, quoted in de Vries *et al.* 2012: 83) point out that "*brand fans tend to visit the store more, generate more positive word-of-mouth, and are more emotionally attached to the brand than non-brand fans*".

## 2.3. Social networks

In this dissertation, particular attention will be paid to the way in which brands are communicated about externally. In his book *Communication externe des organisations*, Any-Gbayere (2016: 7) defines external communication as the communication about “*partners. These are: customers, suppliers, financiers and all the components of the economic and social environment.*”<sup>13</sup>

One way to communicate externally is by using social media. Bruhn *et al.* (2012: 784) argue that, nowadays, companies should consider social media as an important aspect of the “*marketing communication mix*” and integrate different social media platforms into their strategy “*to increase brand equity*”. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2013: 328) point out that companies are increasingly using social media as part of their “*marketing and brand building activities*”.

### 2.3.1. Social media

First of all, a distinction must be made between two concepts that are often used indistinctly: social media and social networks.

Mangold and Faulds (2009, quoted in Freberg 2019: 6) define social media as “*a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums and microblogs*” while social networks have been defined, among others, by Boyd and Ellison (2008, cited in Lipschultz 2014 : 42) as “*web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.*” In other

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<sup>13</sup> My translation of [*partenaires. Ce sont : les clients, les fournisseurs, les financiers et toutes les composantes de l'environnement économique et social*] from Any-Gbayere, S. (2016), *Communication externe des organisations*, Paris: L'Harmattan, p.7

words, the term social media brings together a multitude of digital tools which allow for social interactions between different web users. These interactions can be of any kind. On the other hand, the purpose of social networks is more precise as they serve to create social links and connections between different web users. It can therefore be argued that social media embrace social networks, but not only. Fill (2011: 364) sees social media as “*a broad range of web based applications*” and social networks “*one of the many applications that are available*”.

Within the framework of this research, the concept of social media will first be quickly put forward with its main characteristics. Then, one of the main channels of social media, social networks, will be discussed in depth, and more specifically those used by the multinational company Nike analysed in this dissertation.

#### 2.3.1.1. Key features of social media

One of the key characteristics of social media is that they allow users to be both the target of the information and the diffuser of the information. Mangold and Faulds (2009, in Freberg 2019: 7) assert that social media have enabled a profound revolution in communication. Nowadays, it is possible to communicate with millions of people at the click of a button. In his book *Social media: concepts, practices, data, law and ethics*, Lipschultz (2014: 52) sees the creation of meaningful communities as a consequence of this communication involving hundreds of people. This means that individuals come together in groups with common interests, they exchange ideas with each other and learn from each other. Tuten and Solomon (2015: 13) use the term “*user-generated content*” (UGC) to refer to the fact that each individual can create content. The authors (2015: 14) also point out that every user who reacts, and thus creates content, leaves a trace on the web and participates in a “*network effect*”. Through this user participation, social media have become a key element for companies or organizations. Freberg (2016, quoted in Freberg 2019: 7) underlines that social media allow companies to interact immediately with their community, but it also allows them to debate with their communities, share their arguments and try to convince them. Bhatti (2017: 61) also argues that it can help to receive feedback from the targeted audience. It is essential for companies to take

advantage of the potential that social media can offer to find their target audience and tailor their communication to them.

As I mentioned earlier, as part of this master's dissertation, I will focus on one of the subsets of social media: the social networks that allow individuals and businesses to communicate with each other. The next section discusses the characteristics of social networks, its benefits, its strategies and the different social networks of the Nike brand which I analysed.

### 2.3.2. Social networks

Nowadays, the importance of social networks can no longer be overlooked by any individual or company. Because of their omnipresence in daily life, it is essential to use them wisely in the hope of reaping some of their benefits.

#### 2.3.2.1. Key features of social networks sites

Boyd and Ellison (2007, quoted in Voorveld 2019: 14) assert that “*social networking sites are probably the most prominent type of social media*”. Several authors, such as Jeunejean and Ernoux (2012: 7), maintain that a social network, by its very nature, makes it possible to “*connect different people for a specific purpose*”<sup>14</sup>. Colantino and Leroy (2011: 46) add that they allow individuals to exchange with each other. They also point out that these contacts can be made between individuals, but also between companies and brands. A social network can thus take on a commercial character. As Jeunejean and Ernoux (2012: 32) point out in their book, social networks are the basis for a certain freedom of expression. Even if access to the Internet is not yet possible in all countries around the world, everyone who has access can express themselves instantly. On this type of platform, messages circulate much faster than at the speed of traditional media. Jeunejean and Ernoux (2012: 15) claim that social networks are constantly evolving and adapting to the changes around them.

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<sup>14</sup> My translation of [*Relie différentes personnes dans un but précis*] from Jeunejean, T. and Ernoux, G. (2012). *Facebook et les réseaux sociaux*, Bruxelles: de Boeck, p.7

Despite these many positive points, some critics of social networks reiterate the risks that these platforms can entail. Balagué and Fayon (2010: 1) highlight “*the superficiality of the exchanges, the time spent without contribution or benefit*”.<sup>15</sup> Susan Greenfield (quoted in Balagué and Fayon 2010: 2) also discusses concerns about addiction and the behavioural problems it can cause.

Another peculiarity of social networks is that the contacts between different users occur through a digital identity. Balagué and Fayon (2010: 53) define digital identity as “*the identity of a person (natural or legal), which is made up of all the traces left on the Internet by the person concerned and by third parties. It is partly constituted by the information that the person enters on various social networks on which he or she is registered (...). Digital identity is also made up of contributions on the Web (e.g. blogs) and the traces that the Internet user leaves on the sites consulted (e.g. comments posted, opinions on e-merchant or non e-merchant sites such as Amazon, Fnac.fr or TripAdvisor)*.”<sup>16</sup> It is a challenge for any user to protect this digital identity. In their book, the two authors (2010: 55-57) give three essential recommendations for handling this identity: people or companies with a digital identity must carefully determine their network, be careful with their content, and monitor and protect their virtual reputation.

Next, Balagué and Fayon (2010: 22-24) distinguish three ways of classifying social networks. The first is to differentiate “*specialized*” social networks (such as social networks of dating sites like *Meetic*) from the more “*general*” ones (such as those for sharing videos of all kinds like *Youtube*). The second is to distinguish those that are more “*private*” (such as *Habbo*) than “*professional*” (such as *LinkedIn*). Finally, Balagué and Fayon (2010: 24) underline that the last approach “*is based on the way in which people's identities are made visible on social*

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<sup>15</sup> My translation of [*la superficialité des échanges, le temps passé sans apport ni bénéfice*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.1

<sup>16</sup> My translation of [*l'identité d'une personne (physique ou morale), qui est constituée par l'ensemble des traces laissées sur Internet par la personne elle-même et par des tiers. Elle est en partie constituée par les informations que la personne saisit sur différents réseaux sociaux sur lesquels elle est inscrite (...). L'identité numérique est également constituée des contributions sur le Web (par exemple des blogs) et des traces que l'internaute laisse sur les sites consultés (par exemple les commentaires postés, les avis sur les sites e-marchands ou non comme Amazon, Fnac.fr ou TripAdvisor)*.] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.53

networks”.<sup>17</sup> According to the authors (2010: 26), this gives rise to four readings: “to hide, to see oneself”, (...), “to show everything, to see everything”, (...), “to show hidden”, (...) “to see oneself hidden”<sup>18</sup>.

In conclusion, social networks have made it possible to tighten the links between individuals or between individuals and companies through digital identities. There are naturally different types of social networks, each one with their own specificities.

#### 2.3.2.2. The reasons for companies' presence on social networks and the benefits of it

First, there are many reasons for companies to be on social networks. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2013: 331) point out that most people have shifted to online websites and social networks. Authors highlight that people generally trust what their relatives and internet users publish on social networks, although this implies some risks as fake news often circulates on this kind of site. In addition, these online sites have gradually established themselves in the business world and have completely changed the way companies operate both internally and externally. Balagué and Fayon (2010: 69) observe and highlight the shift from CRM (“*Customer Relationship Management*”) to SNM (“*Social Networks Management*”) to maintain strong customer relationships. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2013: 333) also point out that as all information circulates faster on this kind of platform, this allows a brand name to become known more quickly. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2013: 334) further emphasize the fact that, if some brand competitors are present on social networks, it is a reason to be present on these platforms as well.

Secondly, the benefits for a company to be present on this kind of platform are many. Balagué and Fayon (2010: 71) note that it would help to publicize the reputation of an organization and

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<sup>17</sup> My translation of [se fonde sur la façon dont l’identité des personnes est rendue visible sur les réseaux sociaux] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d’entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.24

<sup>18</sup> My translation of [“se cacher, se voir”, (...), “tout montrer, tout voir”, (...), “montrer caché”, (...) “se voir caché”] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d’entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.26

its services. On this type of website, companies can easily communicate about themselves and get people talking about them. According to these same authors (2010: 72-73), the success of a company on social networks depends on how the company adapts to the mores of some specific social networks and if the company remains transparent about the information they convey. In addition, companies are successful when they are able to communicate without necessarily being seen as advertising, and therefore in a subtler way.

Balagué and Fayon (2010: 77-78) underline that these social networks enable companies to maintain relationships with their customers and interact with them on a regular basis. The authors talk about “*virtual communities*”<sup>19</sup> and identify three types of communities: “*transaction communities*”<sup>20</sup> based on rather weak links and the simple search for information, “*communities of interest*”<sup>21</sup> whose members share common interests, and finally “*communities of imagination*”<sup>22</sup> whose relationships between members are only virtual. These communities are important because they allow the building of trusting relationships between the company and consumers, but also because the members of the virtual community can be involved in the company's strategy. The members can exchange their own ideas as well as be representatives of the company's products or services and promote them. Any-Gbayere (2016: 131) claims that maintaining a strong relationship with its customers is essential for a company because they can become true ambassadors through word of mouth. Bronner and de Hoog (2010, quoted in Nick Hajli 2014: 391), in turn, argue that businesses generally encourage consumers to give their opinion on products or services, thus generating “*electronic word of mouth*”. Hajli (2014: 399) calls the fact that consumers influence each other, by recommending (or not) certain products or services “*social commerce*”. According to the author, this is a new way of doing business that now gives a lot of prominence to the consumer in the creation of value. Hajli (2014: 400) argues that consumer interactions lead to trust, which has then a positive impact on the purchasing decision. Balagué and Fayon (2010: 93) illustrate this idea of “*virtual*

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<sup>19</sup> My translation of [*communauté virtuelle*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.77

<sup>20</sup> My translation of [*communauté de transaction*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.77

<sup>21</sup> My translation of [*communauté d'intérêt*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.78

<sup>22</sup> My translation of [*communauté d'imagination*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.78

*community*” by reporting an interview with Michel Gotlib, former Marketing Communications Director of Coca-Cola France, in which the latter stresses the importance for a company, such as Coca-Cola, to be able to communicate regularly and dynamically with its audience, and all the more so with young people who are actively present on social networks.

Finally, Bhatti (2017: 71) demonstrates that social media communication can positively influence, if well managed, brand awareness, brand image and brand knowledge. Ryan *et al.* (2013: 147) add that being present on social media in a regular way can have an influence on consumer loyalty, and more precisely what they call "*consumer brand loyalty*". According to the three authors and their study (2013: 153), it is by asking questions, answering them in an original and personal way, proposing contests, engaging and following interesting accounts that the brand creates this loyalty.

However, Jaska and Werenowska (2014: 53) assert that the use of social media as part of a corporate strategy can sometimes take a negative turn. For example, the authors mention the case where the company does not know how to establish a good communication strategy, or where the company lacks expertise. If the company does not manage its social networks in the most efficient way, consumers will not trust it. Hutter *et al.* (2013: 348) even use the term "*annoyance*". Consumers can quickly become annoyed with a company's marketing communication and, consequently, social media activities will have a negative effect on the brand.

#### 2.3.2.3. The different strategies of companies on social networks

Even with a presence on various social networks, a company might not be able to take advantage of them if the networks are not handled properly. For instance, it is not enough to have a Twitter account, it is also crucial to be involved in it.

One of the strategies for a company to be successful on social networks is to offer content with added value. According to Balagué and Fayon (2010: 79), it is necessary to innovate, to be original, to differentiate oneself from other competing companies, while being consistent in the content. The two authors (2010: 66-67) assert that it is crucial to “*determine a strategy for its*

presence on the social network in question ("What for?", "What is the expected benefit?") and ensure that the image conveyed is in line with this strategy".<sup>23</sup> Tuten and Solomon (2015: 60-61) agree with this idea and add that it is essential for a brand to follow a course of action: How will the brand express itself on social networks? How often? How will the brand establish its relationships with its customers? The authors (2015: 60) call this approach the "*brand's social persona*", that is to say how the brand will be perceived by its social network audience. All this needs to be nurtured. In an excerpt, Tuten and Solomon (2015: 60-61) talk about the Nike brand, which seems to have chosen as a strategy "*providing value to the customer whether that value be function, information, or entertainment*". According to de Vries *et al.* (2012: 84), brands can communicate on what they call "*brand fan pages*" by opting for "*anecdotes, photos, videos or other material*". The followers can react to the brand's activities and discuss with other fans. The authors (2012: 84) claim that "*by liking or commenting on a brand post, brand fans state their opinion publicly*" and link this action to "*WoM communication*". Storytelling is also a technique that can be adapted specifically to social networks. The company here has to play on the emotions of its audience. Freberg (2019: 22) states that this storytelling technique can be used "*to allow users to be part of the experience, to listen and create relevant content, to showcase your studies and to share your point of view*". Colantino and Leroy (2011: 164) point out that storytelling is about drawing on the company's experience, then analysing a situation to understand it in depth and strengthening customer relationships by conveying emotions, without lying or exaggerating. The authors propose the "*5W*" rule ("*Who? What? When? Where? Why?*") to weave a story while being concise.

A second recommendation which is given by Balagué and Fayon (2010: 69-70) is to create databases gathering what is said by consumers on the different social networks, then to analyse them carefully and finally to intervene at the right time and place. The authors (2010: 70) use the term "*push strategy*"<sup>24</sup> to denote this idea of listening to both the customer and the non-customer, in order to chat with them and finally try to sell them the company's products or services. By listening carefully to customers, Balagué and Fayon (2010: 95-96) claim that

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<sup>23</sup> My translation of [*Déterminer une stratégie pour sa présence sur le réseau social considéré ("Pour quoi faire?", "Quel est le bénéfice escompté?") et s'assurer que l'image véhiculée est en phase avec cette stratégie*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), pp.66-67

<sup>24</sup> My traduction [*stratégie de push*] from Balagué, C., and Fayon, D. (2010). *Facebook, Twitter et les autres... Intégrer les réseaux sociaux dans une stratégie d'entreprise*, Pearson Education France (Paris), p.70

companies can also spot if negative elements arise. These may, for example, be “*customer complaints*”. It is crucial for companies not to neglect the customer complaints that can be found on social networks, as these ones risk giving a bad image of the company or brand. Moreover, the authors point out that if complaints have been well managed and customers are satisfied with the resolution of their problem, they could become ambassadors for the company and its brand(s). In this strategy called by the authors (2010: 79) “*customer listening*”, customers are placed in the middle: they are listened to and responded to. Nowadays, a function has even been created for this task: the “*community manager*”. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2013: 334) call the fact that companies give advice to their consumers and solve their problems “*complaint handling following users requests*”. Barcelos (2019: 86) talks about a more humanizing way of communicating, so that the consumer can feel closer to the brand. This can give consumers the impression that they are talking to one of their closest friends and thus give them more confidence in the brand. The author also states that the more a brand adds a human side to its communication, the more emotions it will provoke in the consumer.

Another strategy is to use what can be called “influencers” to reach the target audience. In his book *Social media for strategic communication: creative strategies and research-based applications*, Freberg (2019: 194-195) states that many influencers are present on social networks and that marketers must determine which one will be the most relevant to promote the brand. They advise professionals to look at “*which platforms they are on, what topics they are influential about, and what type of content (or history of content promotion partnerships) they have presented before*”. The main role of influencers is to help promote a company’s content and services. As Freberg (2019: 193) points out in his book, “*you can have the best content possible, but if no one sees it and shares it with their own networks, then it is a wasted effort*”. Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014: 592) also maintain that brands need to take advantage of online influencers (or bloggers) that can help them build trust among online communities. Gardner (2005, in Uzunoglu and Misci Kip 2014: 594) argues that companies are increasingly seeking to introduce these influences into their strategy to create interest, action, dialogue and desire among consumers. Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014: 592-593) also refer to the concept of “*opinion leaders*” who have some influence on the public. Katz (1957, quoted in Uzunoglu and Misci Kip 2014: 593) cites three characteristics and behaviours of these opinion leaders which are the “*personification of certain values (who one is); competence (what one knows); strategic*

*social location (whom one knows)*". Egan (2020: 42) considers "opinion leaders" as "connectors". According to him, the more these connectors have a large network of social contacts, the more power they will have to generate "trends". Further, Egan (2020: 226-227) explains that "*word of mouth has long been regarded as a powerful tool in the marketer's armoury*". The fact that the company or brand is mentioned in a positive way helps to build a good reputation. Online word of mouth has revolutionized the way marketers communicate. According to the author, the fact that certain influential personalities speak positively about a product or service on the internet has a positive impact on consumers and can even push them to consume. According to the author (2020: 227), these influencers can "*elevate the product from digital noise to brand reach target group, in an unobtrusive way*". According to the author (2020: 227), millennial and generation Z is particularly affected by this "*influencer marketing*". 85% of them are likely to seek and receive information on such online platforms. Fill (2011: 48) further argues that the fact that some celebrities wear a brand helps to give meaning and values to the brand, which are transferred from the celebrity in question.

#### 2.3.2.4. Description of the different social networks analysed

This section provides a description of the social networks analysed in the framework of this dissertation, namely Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

##### 2.3.2.4.1. Twitter

###### 2.3.2.4.1.1. Twitter's characteristics

According to Jeunejean and Ernoux (2012: 13), Twitter is a social network that was created in 2006. In his book published in 2018, Murthy (2018: 3) points out that 313 million people in the world (21% of whom are active in the United States) had an active account on Twitter at the time. Sook Kwon *et al.* (2014 - 659) describe Twitter as a mix of "*SNSs, blogging and text messaging*." Colantonio and Leroy (2011: 94) describe Twitter as "*a social networking tool*,"

*based on microblogging*"<sup>25</sup>. According to both authors, the term microblogging comes from the fact that the number of characters is limited (to 180). Murthy (2018: 10) also points out a difference between blogs and microblogs: microblogs are faster and more natural, which is more representative of social networking sites, than blogs, which are more writer-centred.

On this social network, Kwon & Sung (2011, in Sook Kwon *et al.* 2014: 659) assert that one of the strategies is to “*humanize*” the brand in order to have more natural interactions with consumers. According to Murthy (2018: 1-2), “*tweets can include emoticons and emojis as well as embedded hyperlinks, images, animated gifs, and/or video*”. Another of its features is that each individual or brand can create a hashtag (#) to create interaction about themselves or their activities and track what is said about them. Murthy (2018: 4) explains that when a Twitter user makes use of a hashtag, he or she enters into a larger conversation with people using the same hashtag.

Another characteristic is that it is a widely open social network. Murthy (2018: 5) argues that anyone can interact with others and adds (2018: 6) that “*the barriers between public and private become extremely blurred as anyone can see very specific conversations between individuals*”.

Chen (2011, quoted in Sook Kwon *et al.* 2014: 660) describes the main features as “*tweeting, messaging, retweeting and following*”. On this social network, consumers proactively choose to follow brands on their pages, where, according to Sook Kwon *et al.* (2014 - 660), discussions revolve around the brand itself, as a kind of “*open forum*”. In their study, Sook Kwon *et al.* (2014: 673) show that Twitter allows consumers to monitor what other consumers may say about the brand.

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<sup>25</sup> My translation of [Un outil de réseau social, articulé autour du microblogging] from Colantonio, F., and Leroy, A. (2011). *Communication professionnelle en ligne: comprendre et exploiter les médias et réseaux sociaux*, Liège: EdiPro, p.94

#### 2.3.2.4.2. Facebook

##### 2.3.2.4.2.1. Facebook's characteristics

According to Jeunejean and Ernoux (2012: 12), Facebook is a social network that was created by Mark Zuckerberg in February 2004. The social network emerged within the framework of Harvard University and at the initiative of Mark Zuckerberg under the name "The Facebook". Initially reserved for Harvard University, The Facebook quickly spread to universities in the United States and Canada, finally opening up to the world and renaming itself Facebook in 2005.

N. Smith *et al.* (2012: 103) sees Facebook as a "*social networking site*" that allows several actions, such as "*create profiles featuring personal information, interests, photos and the like, and can 'friend' other site users*". The authors explain that users can also "*participate in a wide range of activities such as writing on friends' walls, commenting on links, participating in forum discussions, and 'liking' brands.*" Freberg (2019: 11) insists that, unlike Twitter, Facebook users need to add other people as "*friends*" to be able to see the information they share on their wall. However, despite this "*symmetrical*" way of adding new friends, Colantonio and Leroy (2011: 92) explain that pages are "*asymmetrical*": one "*like*" is enough to follow pieces of information on a public page.

Colantino and Leroy (2011: 93) emphasize the social nature of Facebook, which is particularly noticeable in the fact that an individual with his or her own identity communicates with another user who also has his or her own identity. Behind these conversations, there is a human being with emotions, thoughts, career etc.

In 2016, when he published his book *Communication externe des entreprises*, Any-Gbayere (2016: 122) stated that Facebook was "*the world's leading social network*"<sup>26</sup>, which can not be overlooked. The author highlights that companies and brands communicate via public fan pages.

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<sup>26</sup> My translation of [*Le réseau social leader dans le monde*] from Any-Gbayere, S. (2016). *Communication externe des organisations*, Paris: L'Harmattan, p.122

#### 2.3.2.4.3. Instagram

##### 2.3.2.4.3.1. Instagram's characteristics

Voorveld (2019: 15) characterizes the social network Instagram as "*a social networking site that provides users with video- and photo-sharing possibilities*". Freberg (2019: 12) describes Instagram as a platform that is becoming increasingly successful, especially among the younger generation. Elise Moreau writes in her 2020 article *What Is Instagram and Why Should You Be Using It?* that on Instagram, users create a profile on which they publish photos or videos. Instagram is also a place of interaction where users can "*follow*" others, like or comment on their photo and talk to them privately. According to Elise Moreau's article, an account can be either public or private.<sup>27</sup>

Bergström and Bäckman (2013: 12) assert that Instagram is used by companies to communicate with consumers in a more "*personal*" and "*honest*" way. Indeed, the fact that each publication is accompanied by one (or more) photo(s) gives the impression that it all happens on the spot.

## 2.4. Nike

Before tackling the practical part, it is important to describe the brand that will be analysed in the context of this dissertation: Nike. It should be noted that this section is essentially based on what Nike says about itself on its official web pages.

### 2.4.1. Description of the Nike brand

#### 2.4.1.1. Nike's history

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica website and its article called *Nike, Inc.*, Nike was first created in 1964 under the name *Blue Ribbon Sports* by Bill Bowerman, a field coach at the

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<sup>27</sup> MOREAU, E. (2020), *What Is Instagram and Why Should You Be Using It?*, Updated on June 12, 2020., available from internet: <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-instagram-3486316> (consulted on June 20, 2020)

University of Oregon, and one of his former students, Phil Knight.<sup>28</sup> The Nike official website mentions that Bill Bowerman's main purpose was to revolutionize the "*running spikes*" of the time (late 1950's).<sup>29</sup> According to the field coach, a shoe should be "*light, comfortable and it's got to go the distance*".<sup>30</sup> At that time, there was already a desire to revolutionize the world of sport and to focus on the comfort of the athletes. Despite a few rejections from some companies, Bill Bowerman remained determined and decided to create his first innovative pair of shoes himself. It was his former student, Phil Knight, who tried them on for the first time.<sup>31</sup>

At first, Nike's business model was based on a relationship built with Onitsuka, a Japanese shoe company. In 1964, Knight went into business with Onitsuka by importing and selling their running shoes. This also gave Bowerman a chance to propose and launch his own ideas.<sup>32</sup>

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica website, the Nike brand, which was first of all a shoe brand, was officially launched in 1972 and *Blue Ribbon Sports* was renamed *Nike, Inc.* in 1978.<sup>33</sup>

In the same article, it is pointed out that, at the beginning of the 21st century, Nike had stores in more than 170 countries and was considered to have an identity of its own throughout the world.<sup>34</sup> Over the years, Nike has enjoyed many successes and has established partnerships with world-renowned sportsmen and women. Today, according to the official website, the Nike company is based in Beaverton, in Oregon, and includes the *Nike*, *Converse* and *Jordan* brands.<sup>35</sup> John Donahoe has been the CEO of the Nike company since January 2020.

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<sup>28</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. (2019), *Nike Inc.*, available from internet: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nike-Inc> (consulted on July 2, 2020)

<sup>29</sup> Nike, *Bill Bowerman: Nike's Original Innovator*, available from internet: <https://news.nike.com/news/bill-bowerman-nike-s-original-innovator> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. (2019), *Nike Inc.*, available from internet: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nike-Inc> (consulted on July 2, 2020)

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Nike, *About Nike*, available from internet: <https://about.nike.com/> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

In short, Nike is a company created and currently based in the United States that specializes in sports goods, whether clothing, footwear or sports equipment, and whose international reputation has been established over the decades.

#### 2.4.1.2. Nike's missions and values

Nike's official "About Nike" web page first highlights its missions. The following message appears in large print: *"Our mission: Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world"*.<sup>36</sup> It also stresses that *"If you have a body, you are an athlete"*.<sup>37</sup> The missions therefore revolve around sport because of the word "athlete", but Nike makes it clear that every person with a body, and this includes every human being, is an athlete. No discrimination is thus made. Moreover, the missions not only involve offering the best equipment to athletes, but also innovation. Nike seeks to shake things up and make a difference. One example is the sports "hijab" designed by Nike for veiled women, which was totally innovative in the world of sports brands. Also, Nike seeks to be a source of inspiration for the different athletes of this world through its different values.

On the same "About Nike" page, the following paragraph can be found:

*"Our mission is what drives us to do everything possible to expand human potential. We do that by creating groundbreaking sport innovations, by making our products more sustainably, by building a creative and diverse global team and by making a positive impact in communities where we live and work."*<sup>38</sup>

In other words, Nike claims that it seeks to develop the best in every human being. Nike also emphasizes that they want to be more responsible in the way they produce their product, perhaps due to the scandals that Nike have experienced in the past. They want to offer the best to their communities, both where Nike lives and where Nike works.

Further on the corporate website, a "Purpose" tab is proposed:

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<sup>36</sup> Nike, *About Nike*, available from internet: <https://about.nike.com/> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Our purpose is to unite the world through sport to create a healthy planet, active communities and an equal playing field for all”*<sup>39</sup>

Five main words are then mentioned, all five of which evoke concepts that Nike is committed to.

**Equality** represents the way Nike fights for equality. On its website, the brand advocates “*the power of sport to unite everyone*”: Everyone is equal in sport.<sup>40</sup>

**Community** refers here to the fact that communities can serve as a basis for inspiration and self-development. One of Nike's struggles is that against physical inactivity, which is increasingly present, especially among children. Communities can help with this.<sup>41</sup>

**Manufacturing** means that Nike wants to pay more attention to the way their products are made: in a way that respects the environment and people.<sup>42</sup>

**Environment** which, like the previous one, refers to the concept of sustainability. Their wish is to see a planet where the athletes “*have access to safe places to play and train, enjoy sport and realize their full potential*”.<sup>43</sup>

**Product** which at Nike is synonymous with “*sustainability, style and performance*”. Nike continues to innovate for the well-being of their athletes and for a better future.<sup>44</sup>

Regarding Nike's values, Kornum *et al.* (2016: 4) underline that “*Nike states that it is a “performance brand”*”. Further in the article, it is underlined that Trevor Edwards, President of the Nike brand, “*articulates Nike values in terms of continuous performance improvements, as expressed in relation to elite athletes.*”

#### 2.4.1.3. Nike's identity

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<sup>39</sup> Nike, *Purpose Moves Us*, available from internet: <https://purpose.nike.com/> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

In their book *Nike Culture*, Goldman and Papson (1998: 1) see Nike as having a famous logo, which is none other than the upside-down comma, commonly referred to as "Swoosh". Already in the mid-1990s, Goldman and Papson (1998: 1) pointed out that Nike's logo could be used on its own, without having to add that it referred to Nike, as the logo already represented a great deal. In 1997, Nike even published an annual report stating that "*the company has come to be known by a symbol - the swoosh*".

The famous slogan "*Just Do It*" can also be cited as an integral part of the brand identity. Goldman and Papson (1998: 19) claim that "*Nike says its slogan 'is cemented in consumers' minds as a rallying cry to get off the couch and play sports*". Further on, the authors point out that "*Nike provides a language of self-empowerment - no matter who you are, no matter what your physical, economic or social limitations. Transcendence is not just possible, it is waiting to be called forth*". This slogan is a kind of call to movement and, once again, to the performance of athletes who are encouraged to surpass themselves.

Finally, Larson (2011, quoted in Kornum *et al.* 2016: 4) argues that Nike's name, which refers to the Greek word "*victory*", also supports Nike's core value of performance.

#### 2.4.2. Nike's success

Several factors determine the success of a company and its brand(s). In this section, literature aimed at explaining the success of Nike will be cited.

Firstly, in their research, Ly and Alliot (2018: 13) sought to understand the success of the Nike brand as well as the success of another competing brand, Adidas. First, they demonstrated that the business model of the Nike brand was based on making profits, cherishing their shareholders and increasing their sales.

Secondly, according to Ly and Alliot (2018: 14), Nike's success is due to the fashion effect its products cause. Nike shoes are a perfect mix of stylish clothing and sportswear, which is what

the authors call "*athleisure*". Moreover, according to Nike's corporate website, the brand is concerned with the comfort and well-being of athletes who wear its products.<sup>45</sup>

Third, Nike invests heavily in the marketing and promotion of their products. The authors (2018: 14) underline Nike's interest in promoting their products through well-known sportsmen and women. The Encyclopaedia Britannica article on Nike also points out that the success of the Nike brand is due to the "*endorsements*" of sportsmen and women (such as Michael Jordan or Roger Federer, who are quoted in the article).<sup>46</sup>

Finally, according to the article of Ly and Alliot (2018: 15), Nike uses the "*lean management*" technique. In other words, the authors (2018: 15) underline that they try to reduce production costs as well as lead times.

### 2.4.3. Nike's competitors

Nike enjoys undeniable success worldwide, but like most large companies today, the brand also faces some competition from other brands offering similar products.

For many years now, Nike's main competitor has been Adidas, which also specialises in sporting goods. According to the article in Capital, Nike and Adidas are similar in many ways: they are both lifestyle giants, they both spend a huge proportion of their turnover on marketing, they both use ambassadors to wear their brand, they both have strong values, and they both target a young audience.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nike, *Purpose Moves Us*, available from internet: <https://purpose.nike.com/> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

<sup>46</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. (2019), *Nike Inc.*, available from internet: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nike-Inc> (consulted on July 2, 2020)

<sup>47</sup> Emptaz, E. (2019), Nike vs. Adidas: le match des titans des sneakers, available from internet: <https://www.capital.fr/entreprises-marches/nike-vs-adidas-le-match-des-titans-des-sneakers-1346890> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

Nevertheless, according to a survey conducted in 2020 and published on the Statista website by data journalist Felix Richter, Nike remains dominant, just ahead of its main opponent, for this year with annual footwear sales of \$24.2 billion.

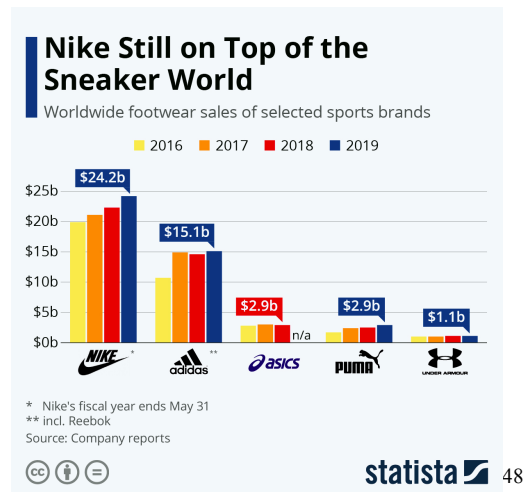


Figure 4: “Nike Still on Top of the Sneaker World” – Statista (2020)

<sup>48</sup>Richter, F. (2020). Nike Still on Top of the Sneaker World, available from internet: <https://www.statista.com/chart/13470/athletic-footwear-sales/> (consulted on July 1, 2020)

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## PRACTICAL PART

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### 3.1. Data and method

#### 3.1.1. Research questions and data

The practical part of this master's thesis aims to address major research questions which centre around two topics, namely Nike's social networks and Nike's brand image:

1) Nike's social networks

- ❖ Which social network (among Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) is the most used by the Nike brand? For which reasons?
- ❖ What are the strategies of the Nike brand on its social networks (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook)?
- ❖ How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive Nike's communication on social networks?

2) Nike's brand image

- ❖ How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive the Nike brand?

To answer these four research questions, it was necessary to divide the data collection into two stages. First of all, some social networks managed by the Nike brand have been analysed. These are the "*Nike*" and "*Nike Football*" accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Secondly, a survey was conducted among teenagers and young adults (12-30 years old) to explore how they perceive the Nike brand and its communication on social networks. The online survey was shared on the social network Facebook.

#### 3.1.1.1. Analysis of Nike's social networks

The first data collection done for this master's thesis involves some of the social networks used by the Nike brand. Data were collected to answer two research questions: "*Which social network (among Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) is the most used by the Nike brand? For which reasons?*" and "*What are the strategies of the Nike brand on its social networks (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook)?*".

The two Nike brand accounts that were analysed are "*Nike*" and "*Nike Football*" on the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The "*Nike*" account has 117 million subscribers on Instagram, 34 million on Facebook and 8.2 million on Twitter; while the "*Nike Football*" account has 43.8 million on Instagram, 43 million on Facebook and 3.6 million on Twitter.

Firstly, the choice of accounts needs to be explained. Nike is a brand that has different accounts on social networks. In addition to a core official account with the main values, the brand has segmented its social networks by creating different accounts mainly based on sport. Nike accounts related to football, golf or basketball can therefore be found on social networks. For the purpose of this master's thesis, I have chosen to analyse Nike's main account, called "*Nike*", and the account linked to football, called "*Nike Football*", which are two of the most followed accounts on Nike's social networks. Secondly, the choice of social networks can also be justified. Nike, in its strategy, has decided to engage on several social networks. I have decided to analyse the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook because they are currently some of the most talked-about and popular social networks among young people. I am also quite familiar with their use, which was helpful in the data collection.

#### 3.1.1.2. Survey among teenagers and young adults

The second data collection has been built through a survey that was administered online and aimed to address the following specific research questions: "*How do teenagers and young*

*adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive the Nike brand?" and "How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive Nike's communication on social networks?"*.

The questions in this survey are designed to capture the perceptions that consumers or potential consumers have of the Nike brand and its communication on social networks. The target audience is teenagers and young adults aged 12 to 30 years old. This age group was selected as I belong to this one and it seems to me that the Nike brand enjoys some success among teenagers and young adults. Moreover, it is also those same young people who use social networks the most these days.

The survey was conducted via the *Google Form* programme and was published on the social network Facebook. The choice of this social network was made because Facebook is the social network where I have the most contacts in this age group (12-30 years old).

### 3.1.2. Method

As mentioned earlier, the data collection is divided into two parts: data related to the analysis of some of Nike's social networks and data related to the online survey published on Facebook. In this section, I will discuss how the data was collected.

#### 3.1.2.1. Analysis of Nike's social networks

Nike's social networks were analysed daily for a full month, that is to say during the month of April 2019. During this month, each publication on the "*Nike*" and "*Nike Football*" accounts on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook were carefully recorded in an Excel folder.

| Instagram publications    |  |  |  |  |                         |                                        |  |  |  |                              |  |                                 |  |  |  |                              |  |                                      |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
|                           |  |  |  |  | The date of publication | The type of publication                |  |  |  | The topic of the publication |  | The language of the publication |  |  |  | Reactions to the publication |  | Personal comments on the publication |
| Nike account              |  |  |  |  |                         |                                        |  |  |  |                              |  |                                 |  |  |  |                              |  |                                      |
| Post about Paris Marathon |  |  |  |  | 14/04/19                | Text with a picture, tags and hashtags |  |  |  | Paris Marathon               |  | English                         |  |  |  | 355343 likes - 617 comments  |  |                                      |

Figure 5: Instagram publications in the Excel folder - vertical columns (with one example)

| Twitter publications |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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Figure 6: Twitter publications in the Excel folder - vertical columns (with one example)

| Facebook publications |  |  |  |  |                         |                         |  |  |  |                              |                                 |  |  |                              |                                      |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nike account          |  |  |  |  | The date of publication | The type of publication |  |  |  | The topic of the publication | The language of the publication |  |  | Reactions to the publication | Personal comments on the publication |
|                       |  |  |  |  |                         |                         |  |  |  |                              |                                 |  |  |                              |                                      |

Figure 7: Facebook publications in the Excel folder - vertical columns

As shown in Figures 5, 6 and 7, the Excel folder consists of different vertical columns for each of the following subheadings:

- ➔ The date of publication
- ➔ The type of publication
  - Instagram: Text with a picture, tags and hashtags, text with a video, tags and hashtags, text with a picture and hashtags, IGTV
  - Twitter: Text, text with a video, text with a GIF, text with a link to the official website, text with picture
  - Facebook: No publications were identified on Facebook
- ➔ The topic of the publication
  - Instagram: Publication about top-level athlete, popular sport event, sporting victory, pair of shoes, IGTV
  - Twitter: Retweet about American football, publication about a new contract between Nike and an athlete, top athletes wearing Nike, release of a pair of shoes, reply to a customer tweet
  - Facebook: No publications were identified on Facebook
- ➔ The language of the publication
  - English
  - Spanish
  - French
  - Italian
- ➔ Reactions to the publication
  - Likes and comments
- ➔ Personal comments on the publication

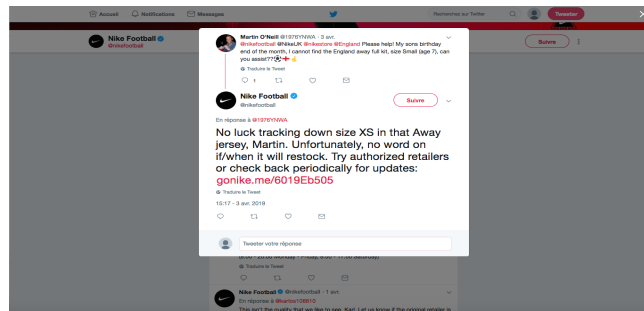


Figure 8: Example of a "screenshot" of a Nike Football's publication on Twitter

Each publication, whether on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook, was saved as a "screenshot" and placed in a folder, as figure 8. This was done in case Nike deleted one of its publications on its social networks.

### 3.1.2.2. Survey among teenagers and young adults

The second data collection consists of an online survey that was published on the social network Facebook via the *Google Form* programme, often used for this type of survey. This survey was published on Facebook on 19 April 2020 and responses were blocked on 5 May 2020. A total of 803 responses were collected.

Concerning the structure of the survey, it is divided into three parts: the respondents' personal data, Nike's brand image, and Nike's social networks. The questions are formulated in French, i.e. the native language of the targeted respondents, to make sure they would be comfortable answering them. The full survey is available in Appendix 1.

In the section on the respondent's personal data, general questions are asked (such as the respondent's gender and age) followed by more specific questions related to the Nike brand and sport.

3. *Avez-vous acheté au moins une fois un produit Nike? Si oui, le(s)quel(s)? Merci de préciser. [Have you purchased a Nike product at least once? If yes, which one(s)? Please specify.]*

4. *Faites-vous/avez-vous fait des études dans le domaine du sport? Si oui, quelles études? Merci de préciser. [Are you studying/ did you study sports? If yes, what studies? Please specify.]*

5. *A quelle fréquence approximative faites-vous du sport? [Approximately how often do you play sports?]*

*Some options were: Daily, 4 to 5 times a week, 2 to 3 times a week, ...*

6. *Quel(s) type(s) de sport pratiquez-vous? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [What type(s) of sport do you practice? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Football, running, basketball, golf, ...*

The second section focuses on the Nike brand image. At the beginning of this section, multiple-choice questions are asked. Participants were able to select multiple answers or to come up with new answers.

7. *A quoi pensez-vous lorsqu'on vous parle de la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [What do you think about when you hear about the Nike brand? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some of the options were: A brand with a background of social and ecological scandals, a brand engaged in various struggles (racism, sexism, ...), the slogan "Just Do It" as well as the logo, quality products, ...*

8. *Quel(s) adjectif(s) vous vient/viennent à l'esprit lorsque vous pensez à la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [Which adjective(s) come(s) to mind when you think of the Nike brand? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Ubiquitous, inspiring, innovative, hypocritical, strong, boring, good quality, dynamic, ...*

9. *Comment décririez-vous les produits proposés par la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [How would you describe the products that Nike sells? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Fashionable, banal, outdated, ...*

11. *Avez-vous déjà entendu ou lu des commentaires négatifs sur la marque Nike? Si oui, sur quelle(s) base(s)? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [Have you ever heard or read negative comments about the Nike brand? If yes, on what basis? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: The quality of the products, the price of the products, the working conditions of the manufacturers, ...*

Through these four questions, the aim is to understand how consumers perceive the Nike brand and its products both generally and specifically.

Question number 10 refers to a potential link between Nike's brand image and consumer purchasing decisions.

10. *Pensez-vous que l'image de la marque Nike a déjà eu un impact dans l'une de vos décisions d'achat d'un de leurs produits? Si oui, quel(s) produit(s)? Merci de préciser. [Do you think the Nike brand image has ever had an impact on any of your decisions to buy one of their products? If yes, which product(s)? Please specify.]*

At the end of this "brand image" section, statements referring to Nike's brand image were proposed to respondents. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 being "strongly disagree and 5 being "strongly agree").

12. *"Nike est une des marques les plus reconnues mondialement" [Nike is one of the world's most recognized brands.]*

13. *“Nike est une marque positivement différente de tous ses concurrents” [Nike is a brand that is positively different from all its competitors.]*

14. *“La marque Nike véhicule des messages positifs” [The Nike brand conveys positive messages]*

15. *“La marque Nike est une marque durable qui respecte la planète” [The Nike brand is a sustainable brand that respects the planet.]*

16. *“Les produits de la marque Nike sont achetés pour les valeurs qu’ils représentent plus que pour ce qu’ils ne sont” [Nike-branded products are purchased for what they represent more than for what they are]*

17. *“Les produits de la marque Nike sont achetés seulement car ils proviennent de la marque Nike” [Nike-branded products are purchased only because they come from the Nike brand.]*

The third section is dedicated to consumers' perception of the Nike brand on social networks.

First, respondents were asked if they follow the Nike brand's news. If the answer was positive, respondents were required to answer more specific questions on this topic. Participants were able to select multiple answers or to come up with new answers.

19. *Si oui, via quel(s) canal(aux)? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [If yes, via which channel(s)? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Newsletter, website, social networks, ...*

20. *Si vous suivez la marque Nike sur les réseaux sociaux, pouvez-vous préciser sur quel(s) réseau(x) social(aux) le faites-vous? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [If you follow the Nike brand on social networks, can you specify on which social network(s) you do so? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, ...*

*21. Sur quel(s) compte(s) suivez-vous l'actualité de la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [On which account(s) do you follow the Nike brand's news? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Nike, Nike Football, Nike Basketball, Nike Golf, ...*

Since the remaining questions deal with more specific details about Nike's communication on social networks, I requested that people who do not have a minimal knowledge of Nike's social networks answer "I don't know", so as not to answer randomly.

*22. Comment décririez-vous la communication de la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [How would you describe the communication of the Nike brand on its social networks? Several answers are possible.]*

*Some options were: Attractive, boring, close, cold, ...*

*23. Qu'est-ce que vous préférez dans la façon dont la marque Nike communique sur ses réseaux sociaux? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles. [What do you prefer about the way the Nike brand communicates on its social networks?]*

*Some options were: Attractive and neat content, inspiring legends, community spirit, ...*

*24. Considérez-vous que la marque Nike entretient une bonne relation avec ses abonnés sur ses réseaux sociaux? Merci de préciser la/les raison(s) de votre réponse. [Do you consider the Nike brand to have a good relationship with its subscribers on its social networks? Please specify the reason(s) for your response.]*

In question number 25, consumers were asked whether a link can be made between Nike's social networks and one of their purchasing decisions. If a link could be made, respondents were asked if the product purchased was worn by a famous athlete. This question makes a link with one of the social network strategies based on ambassadors, which was explained in the theoretical part.

*25. Pensez-vous que les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike ont déjà eu un impact dans l'une de vos décisions d'achat d'un de leurs produits? Si oui, quel(s) produit(s)? Merci de préciser.*

*Si oui, le produit était-il porté par un sportif connu? [Do you think that the Nike brand's social networks have ever had an impact on one of your decisions to buy one of their products? If so, which product(s)? Please specify.*

*If so, was the product worn by a famous athlete?]*

Question number 26 was asked in connection with one of the strategies used by companies on social networks, which was also underlined in the theoretical part, namely under customer listening.

*26. Avez-vous déjà posé une/des question(s) sur les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike? Si oui, quel(s) type(s) de question avez-vous posé(s)? Merci de préciser.*

*Avez-vous reçu une réponse? Si oui, quel(s) type(s) de réponse? Merci de préciser.*

*Si oui, étiez-vous satisfait(e) de la réponse donnée par Nike?*

*[Have you ever asked a question(s) on the Nike brand social networks? If yes, what type(s) of question(s) did you ask? Please specify.*

*Did you receive a response? If yes, what type(s) of response? Please specify.*

*If yes, were you satisfied with the response you received from Nike?]*

Finally, the third section on Nike's social networks includes statements for respondents to evaluate using a Likert scale.

*27. "En général, je dirais que j'aime suivre les publications de la marque Nike sur les réseaux sociaux" [In general, I would say that I like to follow Nike's publications on social networks.]*

*28. "La marque Nike fait bon usage de ses réseaux sociaux" [The Nike brand makes good use of its social networks]*

29. *“Suivre la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux a un impact positif sur moi, cela m’inspire et me motive” [Following the Nike brand on its social networks has a positive impact on me, it inspires and motivates me.]*

30. *“En suivant la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux, j’ai l’impression de faire partie d’une communauté” [By following the Nike brand on its social networks, I feel like belonging to a community.]*

31. *“Une marque telle que Nike ne devrait communiquer sur ses réseaux sociaux qu’à propos de ses produits” [A brand such as Nike should only communicate on its social networks about its products.]*

32. *“Les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike donnent envie d’acheter leurs produits” [The Nike brand’s social networks make consumers want to buy their products]*

The primary purpose of this questionnaire is to allow respondents to express themselves as freely as possible on the subject of Nike's brand image and social networks. Most of the questions in this online questionnaire are multiple-choice questions, and often, at the end of the proposals, a "Other: please specify" box is provided if respondents had ideas other than those included in the multiple choice. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were also offered the opportunity to leave a comment about the Nike brand, its image or its communication on social networks. Giving the respondents space to voice their question, through the "Other: ..." boxes or the last question for additional comments arguably make it possible for me to have access to data that I would not have thought of myself.

### 3.1.3. Challenges

One of the main challenges I encountered through my online survey lies in the section on social networks.

When I analysed the answers gathered in this section, I realised that there were discrepancies between some of the answers to the first set of questions on social networks, which aim to find out if the respondent was following the Nike brand's news, and the last statements, which aim at evaluating the brand's social networks. For example, some respondents answered that they did not follow the Nike brand's news on social networks and, these same respondents later answered "I don't know" in the multiple-choice questions. Nevertheless, these same respondents evaluated some of the statements they should not have as they were not following Nike on social networks. However, this concerns a limited number of respondents.

Comments left in the "remark" section at the end of the questionnaire helped me realise that I should have added a NA (non applicable) option for those who had no opinion on the statements because they are not following Nike.

*“Questionnaire clair, bien construit et pas trop long, très bien! Juste une petite remarque, mon cas (qui ne suit pas du tout Nike sur les réseaux) à bien été pensé lors des questions sur les réseaux, sauf pour la dernière partie où je n'ai pas eu le choix de mettre 1/5 à chaque réponse alors que je n'ai pas d'avis.. Bonne continuation!”*  
*["Questionnaire clear, well constructed and not too long, very good! Just a small remark, my case (I do not follow Nike on social networks at all) was well thought out during the questions on social networks, except for the last part where I had no choice to put 1/5 to each answer while I have no opinion... Keep up the good work!"]*

*“Pour les questions où on doit dire "À quel point êtes-vous d'accord avec les affirmations suivantes", il faudrait vraiment rajouter une possibilité de mettre "je ne sais pas" ou "je ne suis pas concerné”* [For questions where you have to say, "How far do you agree with the following statements", there should really be an option to put "I don't know" or "I'm not concerned"]

*“Pour les dernières affirmations il serait intéressant de mettre une case à cocher au cas où on ne suit pas les RS de Nike car je dirais que toutes mes réponses peuvent se résumer par "j'en sais rien”* [For the last statements it would be interesting to tick a

*“I do not follow the Nike social networks” case because I would say that all my answers can be summed up by "I don't know"]*

*“Les réponses précédentes sont faussées parce que je ne les suis pas du tout sur les réseaux sociaux, donc j'ai mis 3 partout” [The previous answers are skewed because I do not follow them at all on social networks, so I put 3 everywhere]*

The evaluations of the statements on social networks are therefore to be taken with some caution.

## 3.2. Analysis and discussion

This fourth chapter will focus on the analysis and discussion of the data collected during the analysis of social networks (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) of the "Nike" and "Nike Football" accounts as well as the data collected during the online survey conducted among teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old).

### 3.2.1. Analysis

#### 3.2.1.1. Analysis of Nike's social networks

In this first section, the focus will be on the social networks of the Nike brand, the different strategies that the brand uses on them and how young people perceive this communication.

As a reminder, the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook of the Nike and Nike Football accounts were analysed daily during the month of April 2019.

#### 3.2.1.1.1. Most used account and social network

First of all, the data collected enables us to determine which social network is the most frequently used by the Nike brand. Table 1 includes the number of posts per account (*Nike* and *Nike Football*) on each social network (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook).

| Number of posts |           |         |          |       |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|
|                 | Instagram | Twitter | Facebook | Total |
| Nike            | 4         | 102     | 0        | 106   |
| Nike Football   | 7         | 21      | 0        | 28    |
| Total           | 11        | 123     | 0        | 134   |

Table 1: Total number of posts for the month of April 2019 per account and by social network

The figures in Table 1 reveal that the corporate account of the Nike brand (*Nike*) is used more than the one focused on a specific sport, i.e. Football (*Nike Football*): there was a total of 106 posts on the *Nike* account and 28 posts on the *Nike Football* account (for the three social networks).

Secondly, as is clear from the table, the social network favoured by the Nike brand is Twitter with 123 publications (for the two accounts *Nike* and *Nike Football*), out of 134 publications for the whole month of April 2019. Of the 123 publications on Twitter, 102 come from the *Nike* account and 21 from the *Nike Football* account.

The brand's second most frequently used social network is Instagram with 11 publications for the two accounts analysed. However, unlike Twitter, out of the 11 publications, it is on the *Nike Football* account that the brand communicated the most with a total of 7 publications in one month compared to 4 on the *Nike* account.

Finally, there was no publication for both the *Nike* and *Nike Football* accounts on the Facebook social network for the whole month of April 2019.

#### 3.2.1.1.2. Type of publication

The following sections (i.e. "type of publication", "topic of publication" and "language of publication") will be structured around each of the social networks under study: Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

| <b>Type of publication on Twitter</b> |      |                                          |                 |                   |                     |       |
|---------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------|
|                                       | Text | Text with a link to the official website | Text with a GIF | Text with a video | Text with a picture | Total |
| Nike                                  | 50   | 39                                       | 8               | 4                 | 1                   | 102   |
| Nike Football                         | 12   | 7                                        | 1               | 0                 | 1                   | 21    |
| Total                                 | 62   | 46                                       | 9               | 4                 | 2                   | 123   |

Table 2: The type of publication of *Nike* and *Nike Football* on Twitter

Firstly, the figures in Table 2 reveal that, on the social network Twitter, 50 out of the 102 *Nike* publications are text-only, 39 have a link to the official website (<https://www.nike.com>), 8 publications include a GIF, 4 a video and 1 a picture. Of the 21 *Nike Football* publications, 12 are text-only, 7 have a link to the website, one includes a GIF and one includes a picture.

| Type of publication on Instagram |                                        |                                      |                                  |      |       |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------|-------|
|                                  | Text with a picture, tags and hashtags | Text with a video, tags and hashtags | Text with a picture and hashtags | IGTV | Total |
| Nike                             | 2                                      | 1                                    | 0                                | 1    | 4     |
| Nike Football                    | 4                                      | 1                                    | 1                                | 1    | 7     |
| Total                            | 6                                      | 2                                    | 1                                | 2    | 11    |

Table 3: Type of publications of *Nike* and *Nike Football* on Instagram

Secondly, the figures in Table 3 show that, with regard to the social network Instagram, half of the posts (2 out of 4) on the *Nike* account are "text with a picture, tags and hashtags" (cf. figure 9) one is "text with a video, tags and hashtags" (cf. figure 10), and another one is an IGTV video (Instagram TV). As far as the *Nike Football* account is concerned, 4 out of the 7 publications correspond to "text with a picture, tags and hashtags", another publication corresponds to "text with a video, tags and hashtags", another "text with a picture and hashtags" (and therefore no tag) and finally one publication refers to an IGTV video.



Figure 9: Text with a picture, tags and hashtags on Instagram



Figure 10: Text with a video, tags and hashtags on Instagram

No publications were identified on Facebook.

### 3.2.1.1.3 Topic of publication

| Topic of publication on Twitter |                                 |                                            |                           |                            |                           |       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
|                                 | Retweet about American football | A new contract between Nike and an athlete | Top athletes wearing Nike | Release of a pair of shoes | Reply to a customer tweet | Total |
| Nike                            | 1                               | 1                                          | 5                         | 0                          | 95                        | 102   |
| Nike Football                   | 0                               | 0                                          | 0                         | 1                          | 20                        | 21    |
| Total                           | 1                               | 1                                          | 5                         | 1                          | 115                       | 123   |

Table 4: The topic of publication of *Nike* and *Nike Football* on Twitter

On the *Nike* Twitter account, there is a retweet about American football that highlights the brand slogan "*Just Do It*," a publication about a contract between Nike and an athlete wearing

Nike, five publications about top athletes wearing Nike (see Figure 11), and the rest of the publications on this account are based on replies to customer tweets. "Reply to a customer tweet" refers to the fact that Nike responds directly to consumers who tag the brand on its social networks. These are Nike's most numerous types of publication on Twitter and they can take many different forms: Acknowledgment, availability (see Figure 12), support (see Figure 13), defective product (after-sales service) (see Figure 14), technical problem, new pair of shoes, discount, family picture, ordering problem, marketing question, partnership request, application request, funny answer, welcome, recommendation, information, sponsorship request. On the *Nike Football* Twitter account, only one tweet is about the release of a pair of Nike shoes and the rest of publications are of "Reply to a customer tweet" type. They also take different forms: Defective product (after-sales service), availability, recommendation, price, application request.

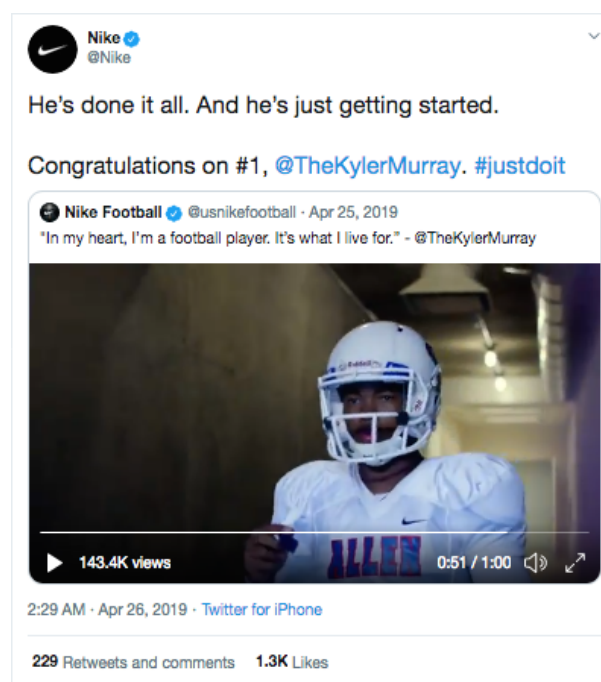


Figure 11: Publication about top athlete wearing Nike

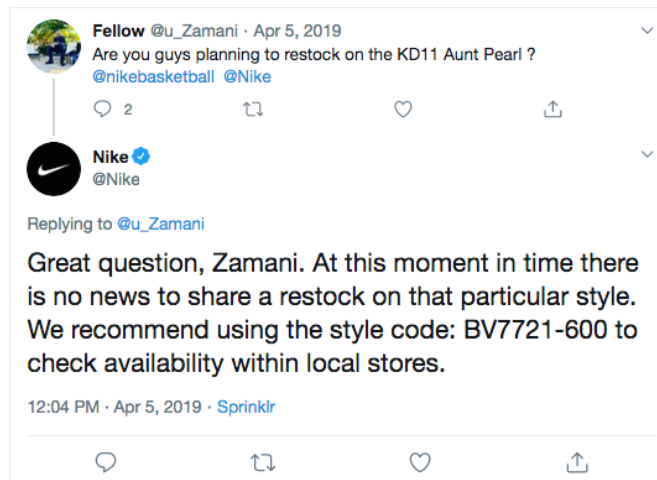


Figure 12: Reply to a customer tweet - Availability

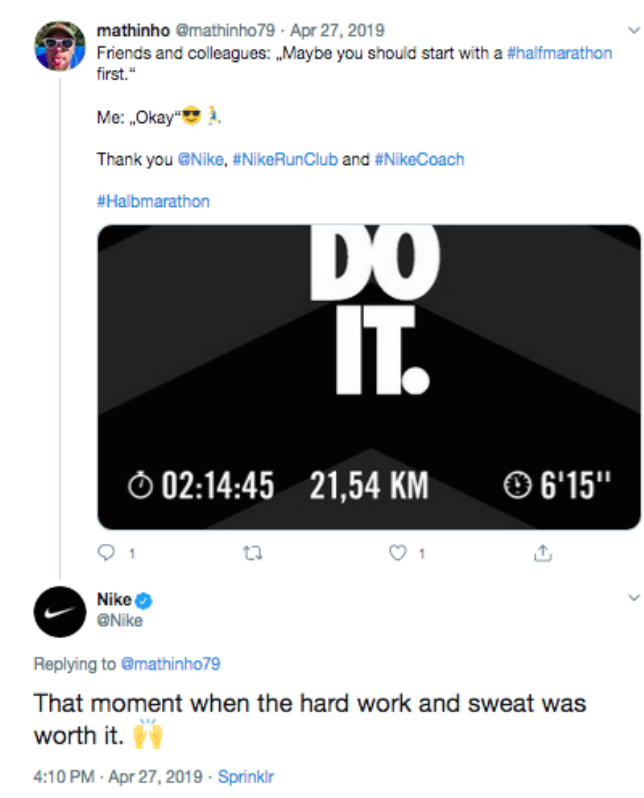


Figure 13: Reply to a customer tweet - Support

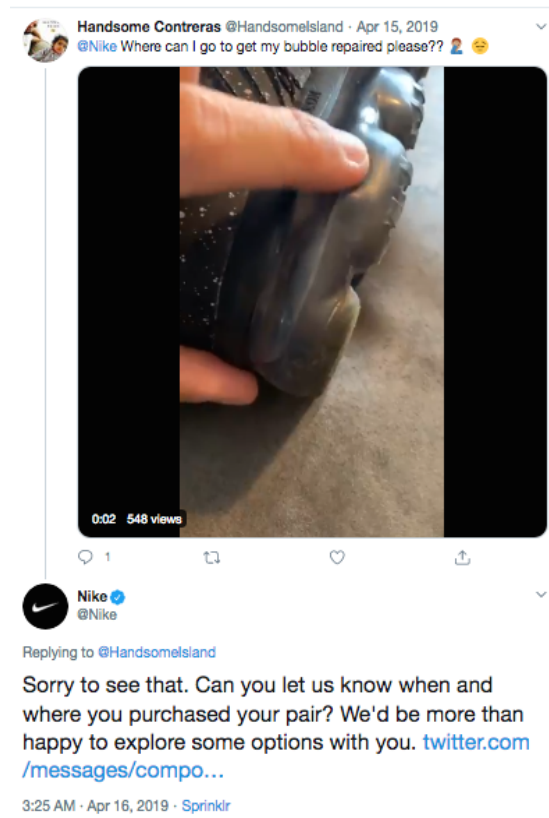


Figure 14:Reply to a customer tweet - Defective product (after-sales services)

| Topic of publication on Instagram |                   |                     |                  |               |      |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|------|-------|
|                                   | Top-level athlete | Popular sport event | Sporting victory | Pair of shoes | IGTV | Total |
| Nike                              | 3                 | 1                   | 0                | 0             | 0    | 4     |
| Nike Football                     | 2                 | 0                   | 2                | 2             | 1    | 7     |
| Total                             | 5                 | 1                   | 2                | 2             | 1    | 11    |

Table 5: The topic of publication of *Nike* and *Nike Football* on Instagram

As far as *Nike*'s Instagram is concerned, 3 out of the 4 publications mention a top-level athlete; the remaining one talks about the Paris Marathon, and is therefore also related to popular sport

events. On *Nike Football*'s Instagram, 2 publications show top-level athletes wearing the Nike brand, 2 discuss the victory of a Nike-sponsored football team (see Figure 15), 2 are about Nike football shoes and an IGTV video is based on "*Crazy Dreams*".



Figure 15: Nike's publication on Instagram about the victory of Spurs Football Team

No publications were identified on Facebook.

#### 3.2.1.1.4. Language of the publication

| Language of publication on Twitter |         |         |         |        |       |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
|                                    | English | Spanish | Italian | French | Total |
| Nike                               | 85      | 14      | 3       | 0      | 102   |
| Nike Football                      | 15      | 3       | 1       | 2      | 21    |
| Total                              | 100     | 17      | 4       | 2      | 123   |

Table 6: The language of publication of *Nike* and *Nike Football* on Twitter

On Twitter, they sometimes get the Nike brand to respond in the customer's language. Thus, 14 publications on *Nike* were answered in Spanish (see Figure 16) and 3 in Italian. On the *Nike Football* account, 3 were answered in Spanish, one in Italian and two in French.



Figure 16: Reply to a customer tweet in Spanish

All the publications collected from Instagram are written in English.

Finally, no publications were identified on Facebook.

#### 3.2.1.1.5. Reactions to the publication

The publications that generated the most reactions from Nike's social networks followers are the publications generated by the account itself on an athlete, sporting event or product, as opposed to responses to clients. In publications designed to respond to clients, those with a touch of humour are the most successful. For example, in Figure 17, the brand used a GIF to humorously respond to a consumer's tweets, which generated 20 likes and 2 retweets.

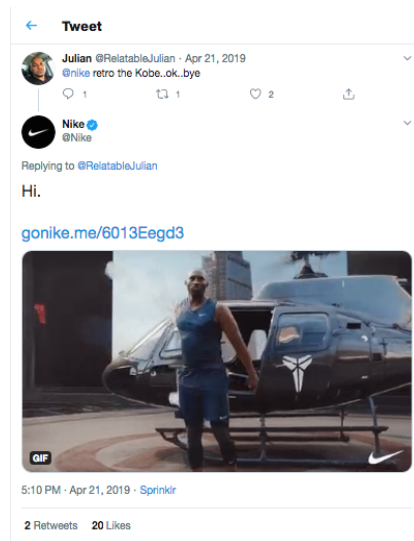


Figure 17: Reply to a customer tweet - humor

### 3.2.1.1.6. Personal comments on the publication

The comment I made the most is that replies to customers on the social network Twitter are often informal. An example of these informal responses is Figure 18 in which the brand speaks with some abbreviations, a smiley and a GIF.

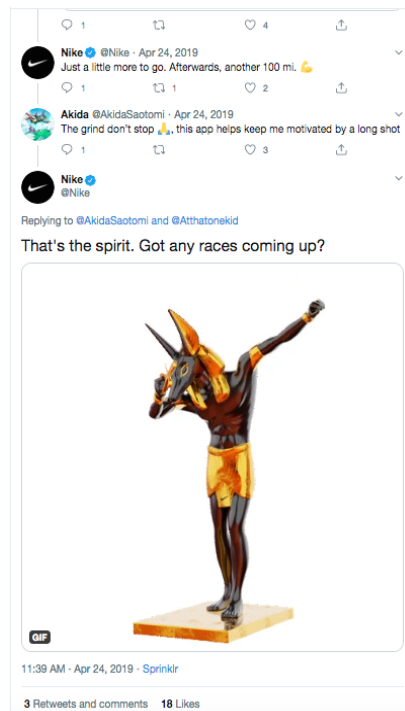


Figure 18: Reply to a customer tweet - informal

### 3.2.1.2. Analysis of the online survey data

This part will be divided into three. First, general information about the survey participants will be given. Second, it will focus on how respondents perceive the Nike brand, i.e. Nike's brand image. Finally, it will look at how participants view the social networks of the Nike brand.

#### 3.2.1.2.1. General information about participants

The target audience of the online survey is teenagers and young adults. This represents an age range from 12 to 30 years old.

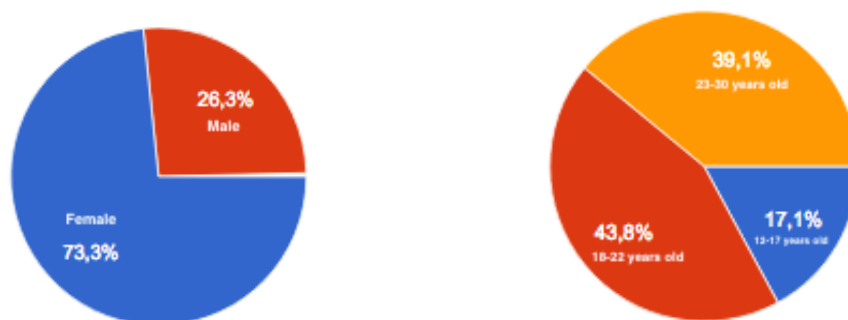


Figure 19: Gender and age of the respondents

The two graphs above in Figure 19 give indications about the gender and age of the respondents. As can be seen, 73.3% of the respondents are women, forming a majority, while 26.3% are men. With regard to age, 43.8% of the respondents are between 18 and 22 years old, followed by 39.1% of the respondents who are between 23 and 30 years old, and finally slightly fewer respondents (17.1%) are between 12 and 17 years old. The majority of the respondents are thus between 18 and 22 years of age.

Then, to the question *"Have you purchased a Nike product at least once?"*, 92% of the respondents answer *"Yes"* and 8% answer *"No"*. Most of the answers to the question *"If yes, which one(s)? Please specify"* are *"shoes"*, *"sportswear"* or *"tracksuits"*.

Further on, participants were asked to answer the question *"Are you studying/did you study sport?"* and to specify if the answer was yes. 16.7% answer yes to this question and most of them report having done a degree or some training in *"physiotherapy"* or *"physical education"*.

Finally, one of the last questions in the section on personal data deals with the approximate frequency with which respondents do sport. 34.7% of the respondents exercise 2 to 3 times a week, 21.2% 4 to 5 times a week, 16.7% once a week, 13.7% daily, 11.6% almost never or never, 3.5% once every two weeks and 3.4% once a month. The last question concerns the type(s) of sport(s) that the respondents practice: 51.4% do fitness, 46.5% run, 14.7% dance, 12% play football, 8.7% play tennis, 6.8 do gymnastics, 6% play basketball, 3.7% do combat sports, 1.4% do horseback riding, 1.1% cycle and swim. It was also found that 7.2% of the respondents do not participate in sports.

#### 3.2.1.2.2. Nike's brand image

In this section, answers to questions that revolve around the image that the Nike brand has among consumers aged 12 to 30 will be explored.

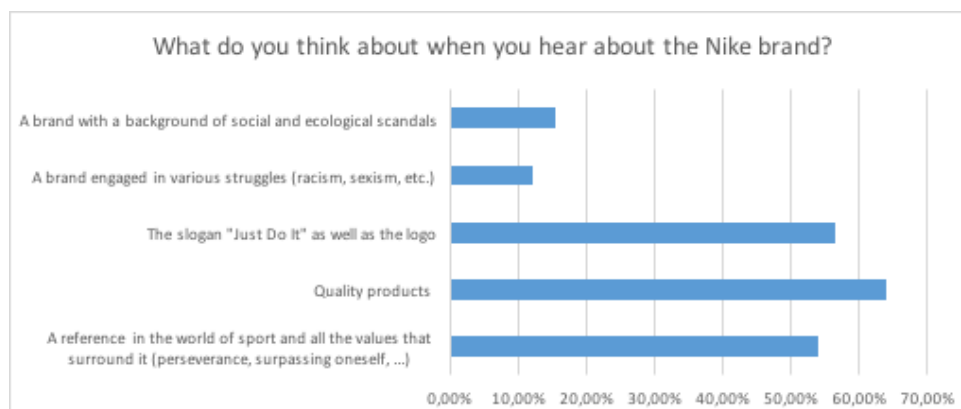


Figure 20: Question 7 of the online survey - "What do you think about when you hear about the Nike brand?"

The answers to this first multiple-choice question provide an indication of what the participants may have in mind when they think of the Nike brand. As Figure 20 shows, what stands out the most is a brand with quality products (64%), followed by the slogan "*Just Do It*" and the logo (56.4%), and in third place "*a reference in the world of sport and all the values that surround it (perseverance, surpassing oneself, ...)*" (53.9%). With slightly fewer responses, "*a brand with a background of social and ecological scandals*" (15.3%) comes next, followed by "*a brand engaged in various struggles (racism, sexism, etc.)*" (12%). The respondents were given the opportunity to select several responses and to suggest proposals. A large majority of the "other" responses were related to "*a reference in the world of sport*".

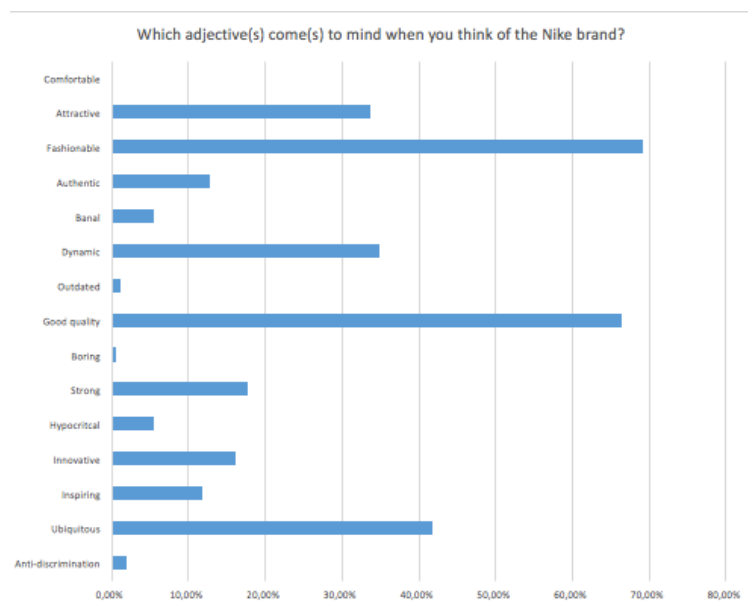


Figure 21: Question 8 of the online survey - "Which adjective(s) come(s) to mind when you think of the Nike brand?"

The second multiple-choice question was designed to explore the adjectives the participants associate Nike brand with (see Figure 21). As Figure 21 reveals, the most selected adjective by respondents is "*Fashionable*" (69.1%) followed by "*Good quality*" (66.4%) and "*Ubiquitous*" (41.8%). Next come "*Dynamic*" (34.9%) and "*Attractive*" (33.7%). The following adjectives received less than 20% of the responses: "*Strong*" (17.7%), "*Innovative*" (16.1%), "*Authentic*" (12.8%) and "*Inspiring*" (11.8%). It is noteworthy that negative adjectives such as "*Banal*"

(5.5%), "*Hypocritical*" (5.4%), "*Outdated*" (1.2%) or "*Boring*" (0.6%) are all below the 6% mark. Interestingly, Nike is nearly never seen as "*Comfortable*" (0,2%).

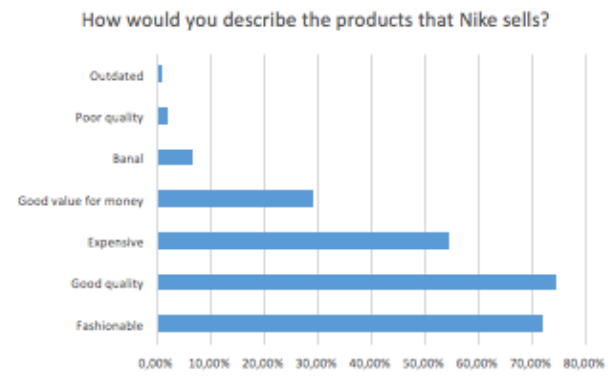


Figure 22: Question 9 of the online survey - "How would you describe the products that Nike sells?"

The third multiple-choice question is related to Nike brand products. As Figure 22 shows, the two adjectives that are the most frequently mentioned are "*Good quality*" (74.5%) and "*Fashionable*" (72.1%). The next two are opposite to each other: 54.5% of the respondents think that the Nike products are "*expensive*", while 29% said they are "*good value for money*". Finally, 6.6% of the respondents answer that the products are "*banal*", 2% "*poor quality*" and 1% "*outdated*".

Then, in order to find out if the participants had ever heard negative reviews about the Nike brand, they were asked to answer the question "*Have you ever heard or read negative comments about the Nike brand?*" and to specify on what basis. In order to answer on what basis, respondents were provided with suggestions, but could still make additional comments.

According to the respondents' answers, 47.1% have never heard negative comments about the Nike brand, while 52.9% have already heard some. The two biggest reasons for negative comments are "*The working conditions of manufacturers*" (62%) and "*The price of products*" (61.1%). Next, "*CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)*" is the third reason (25.9%) followed by "*Product quality*" (17.7%). Less than 10% select more specific items such as "*A doping scandal erupting in 2019*" (7.7%) and "*The former CEO of Nike (i.e. Mark Parker from 2006 to 2020)*" (4.9%). The other answers are less than 1% and refer mainly to "*the quality of the products*" (0.2%).

The next question is related to the marketing of the Nike brand. Participants were asked if the Nike brand image has ever had an impact on any of their decisions to purchase one of the Nike products. 51.6% answer "No", 41.5% answer "Yes" and 7% answer that they have never purchased one of their products. They were then asked to specify, if they have ever been influenced by the Nike brand image, what type of product they have purchased. Most of the answers are "shoes" or "sportswear".

Finally, at the end of this section on the Nike brand image, the respondents were required to express their agreement with the statements included in the figures below (1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree”).

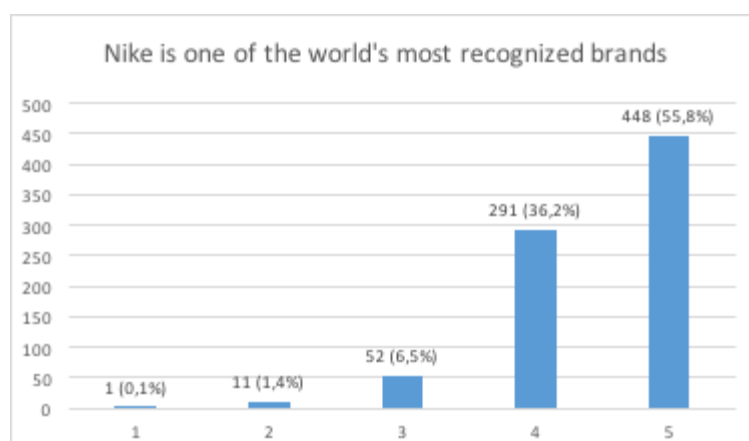


Figure 23: Statement 12 of the online survey - “Nike is one of the world’s most recognized brands”

The Figure 23 points out that the majority of the respondents strongly agree or agree (55.8% and 36.2% respectively) with the first statement "*Nike is one of the world's most recognized brands*". A small proportion of the participants tend to “*have no opinion*” (6.5%) and less than 2% “*disagree*” (1.4%) and “*strongly disagree*” (0.1%).

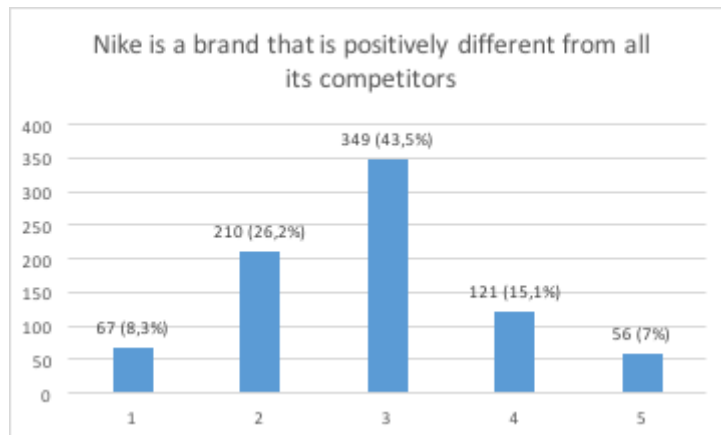


Figure 24: Statement 13 of the online survey - “Nike is a brand that is positively different from all its competitors”

For the second statement, participants were asked if they feel that the Nike brand is positively different from others. As Figure 24 reveals, less than half of the respondents “*have no opinion*” (43.5%). Around 35% seem to either “*disagree*” (26.2%) or “*strongly disagree*” (8.3%). Finally, 15.1% reply that they “*agree*” and 7% “*strongly agree*”.

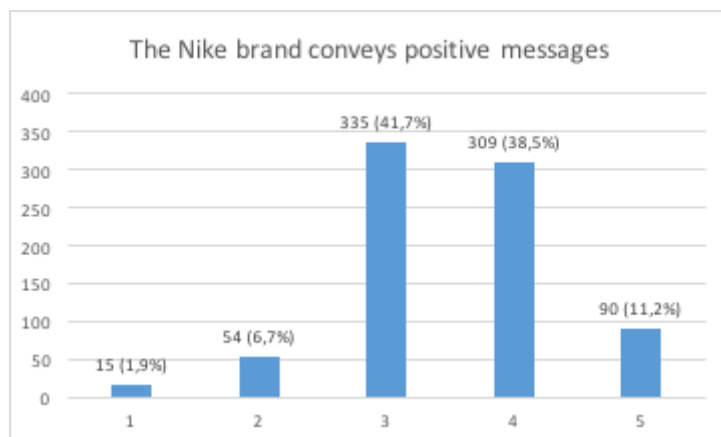


Figure 25: Statement 14 of the online survey - “The Nike brand conveys positive messages”

The third statement received more positive responses (see Figure 25). While 41.7% of the participants report that they do not have an opinion, 38.5% agree that the Nike brand conveys positive messages and 11.2% strongly agree with the statement. Only 6.7% disagree and 1.9% strongly disagree.

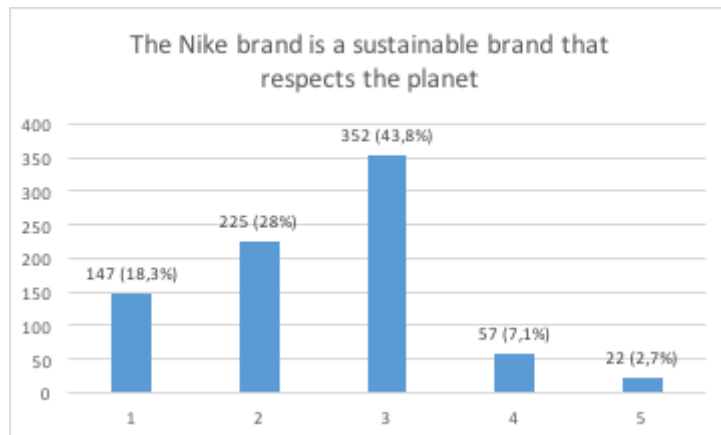


Figure 26: Statement 15 of the online survey - “The Nike brand is a sustainable brand that respects the planet”

The fourth statement (cf. Figure 26) deals with a sensitive issue for the Nike brand: its environmental impact. 43.8% respond that they have no opinion, while 28% disagree and 18.3% strongly disagree with the statement that Nike respects the planet. Finally, 7.1% agree and 2.7% strongly agree.

The last two statements are more related to the Nike brand products.

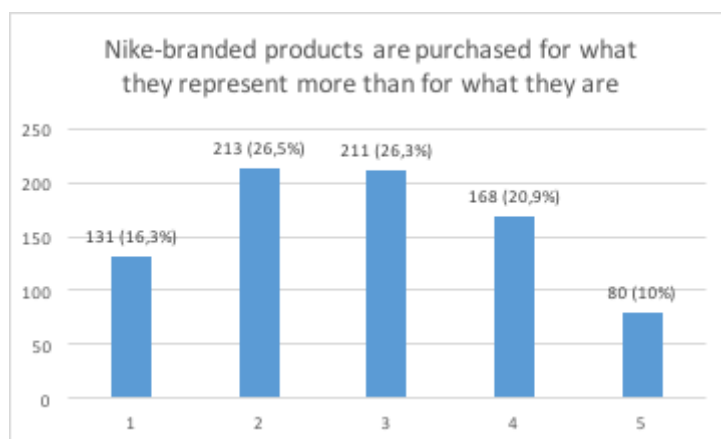


Figure 27: Statement 16 of the online survey - “Nike-branded products are purchased for what they represent more than for what they are”

Opinions are mixed about the statement “*Nike-branded products are bought for the values they represent more than for what they are*” (cf. Figure 27): 26.3% respond that they have no

opinion, 26.5% disagree and 16.3% strongly disagree, while 20.9% respond that they agree and 10% strongly agree.

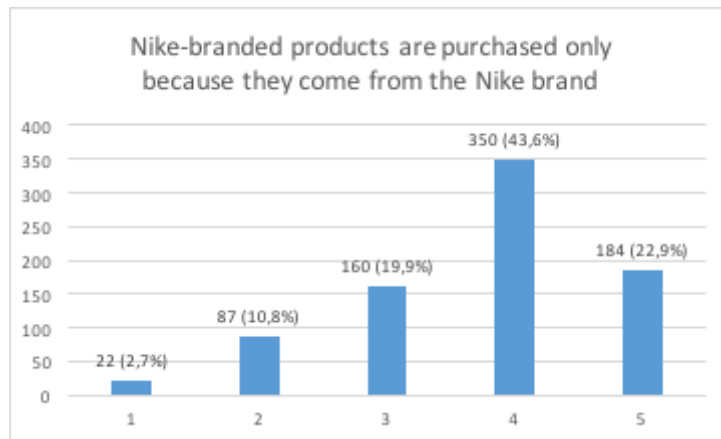


Figure 28: Statement 17 of the online survey - “Nike-branded products are purchased only because they come from the Nike brand”

Finally, as Figure 28 shows, most of the participants agree with the statement “*Nike-branded products are purchased only because they come from the Nike brand*” (43.8% “agree” and 22.9% “strongly agree”). It should be noted that 19.9% have no opinion, while 10.8% disagree and 2.7% strongly disagree.

One respondent also left this comment in the survey:

*“Je choisis Nike plutôt qu’une marque moins connue” [I am choosing Nike over a lesser-known brand.]*

### 3.2.1.2.3. Nike’s social networks

This last section is dedicated to how respondents to the online survey perceive Nike's social networks.

First of all, the participants were asked whether or not they follow the news of the Nike brand: 72.9% answer that they do not follow the news and 27.1% answer that they do. Several answers

were possible for the following questions. Of those who responded that they follow it, 88.9% do so on social networks, 42.7% on the website, 13.7% via the newsletter and 12.4% on the media in general. Of those who follow Nike on its social networks, 78.5% do so on Instagram, 44.4% on Facebook (note that the survey was conducted on this social network), 24.4% on Nike+<sup>49</sup>, 6.9% on Twitter and 5.1% on Pinterest. Among those who follow Nike on its social networks, 79% do so on the *Nike* account, 32.3% on the *Nike Women* account, 30.9% on the *Nike Running* account, 18.6% on the *Nike Football* account, 8.6% on the *Nike Basketball* account and 1.7% on the *Nike Golf* account.

For the next set of questions, the participants who do not have a minimum knowledge of Nike's social networks were asked to check the "I don't know" box.

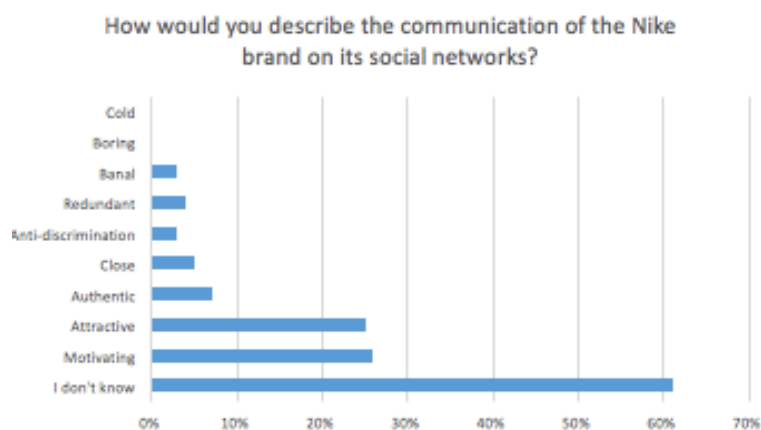


Figure 29: Question 22 of the online survey - “How would you describe the communication of the Nike brand on its social networks?”

This first multiple-choice question asked the participants to describe the communication of the Nike brand on its social networks. As Figure 29 highlights, while 61% of the participants have no idea about how Nike communicates on its social networks, 26% find Nike’s communication “*motivating*”, 25% find it “*attractive*”, 6.8% “*authentic*”, 4.1% “*close*” and 2.6% “*anti-discrimination*” while 4% found it “*redundant*”, 3% “*banal*” and 0.5% “*boring*” and “*cold*”.

<sup>49</sup> Nike+ is a running application developed by Nike

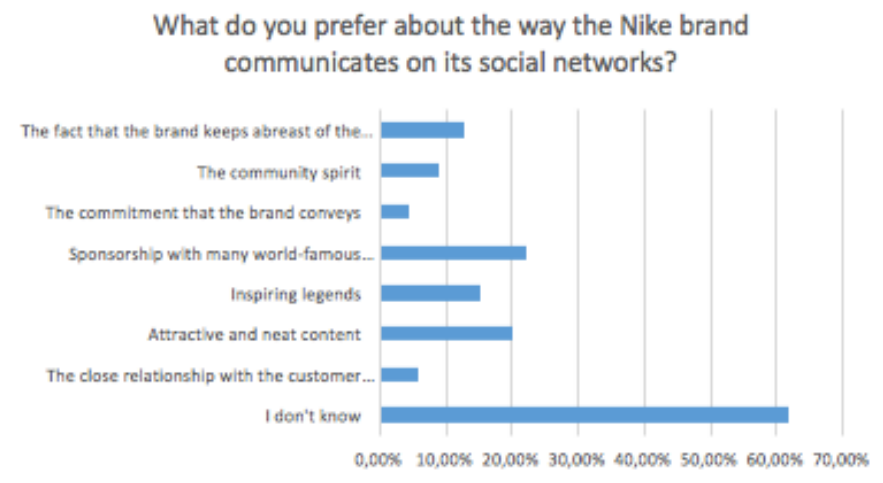


Figure 30: Question 23 of the online survey - “What do you prefer about the way the Nike brand communicates on its social networks?”

The second question refers to what participants prefer about the way Nike communicates on its social networks (cf. Figure 30). 61.8% answer that they do not know. 22.2% answer that what they prefer is “*sponsorship with many world famous sportsmen and women*”, followed closely by 19.9% of the participants who like the “*attractive and neat content*”. “*Inspiring legends*” (15.3%) and “*The fact that the brand keeps abreast of the latest news on its product*” (12.8%) come next. 8.8% highlight “*The community spirit*” as their preference on Nike's social networks, while 5.7% underline “*The close relationship with the customer (conversation, quick after-sales service, etc.)*” and 4.5% “*The commitment that the brand conveys*”.

The next question in this section focuses on the relationship between the Nike brand on its social networks and its subscribers. The participants were asked to evaluate whether or not the brand has a good relationship with its subscribers on its social networks. 85.6% respond that they do not know, 14.3% answer “Yes” and only 1.9% answer “No”. The respondents were then asked to justify their answer. A total of 67 responses were received. Hereunder I have gathered some comments that deal with the same topic:

Nike keeps up to date with the latest news:

- ❖ “*On reçoit toutes les nouveautés*” [We receive all the news]
- ❖ “*A chaque nouveauté, elle met les gens au courant*” [As soon as something new comes out, it tells people about it.]

- ❖ *“Mise à jour fréquente des infos” [Frequent news updates]*
- ❖ *“Je reçois des mail avec les nouveautés” [I receive emails with the latest news.]*
- ❖ *“Demande des avis et tient au courant des news” [Asks for opinions and keeps up to date with the news]*
- ❖ *“Ils préviennent des nouveautés” [They inform about the latest news.]*
- ❖ *“Il y a de l'interaction et on nous tient au courant” [There is interaction and we are kept up to date]*

Nike answers on its social networks:

- ❖ *“Souvent, quand la communauté n'est pas contente d'un produit ou autre et qu'ils le font savoir, Nike sait réagir et répondre aux attentes des acheteurs” [Often, when the community is unhappy with a product and they let it know, Nike responds and meets the expectations of buyers.]*
- ❖ *“Ils ne laissent pas sans nouvelle” [They do not leave you with no news]*
- ❖ *“Réponse à quelques questions dès que possible” [Answer to questions as soon as possible]*
- ❖ *“Ils sont très réactifs sur les médias sociaux” [They are very reactive on social media]*
- ❖ *“J'ai déjà eu des questions à poser et une personne était dispo à répondre à mes questions assez rapidement” [I have already had questions asked and one person was ready to answer my questions fairly quickly]*

Nike conveys attractive messages to its subscribers:

- ❖ *“Ils sont engagés dans leur communication” [They are engaged in their communication]*
- ❖ *“Ils nous montrent grâce aux réseaux sociaux que c'est disponible à toute personne” [They show us through social networks that it is available to everyone.]*
- ❖ *“Ils prennent le temps de communiquer et ils ont des messages ciblés mais qui incluent un maximum de monde et essaient de faire en sorte que tout le monde se sente concernés par des messages positifs” [They take the time to communicate and they have messages that are targeted but include as many people as possible and try to get everyone involved with positive messages]*

- ❖ *“Forte présence sur les réseaux avec une communication attrayante, que ce soit au niveau de son image sur les sportifs de haut niveau mais également ses propagandes antiracistes, etc.” [Strong presence on social networks with an attractive communication, both in terms of its image on top athletes but also its anti-racist propaganda etc.]*
- ❖ *“Je ne saurais pas dire s’ils sont proches de leur abonnés ou pas, mais leurs posts sur les réseaux sont soignés et amènent à être regardés” [I can not tell if they are close to their subscribers or not, but their posts on social networks are neat and encourage us to watch.]*
- ❖ *“Sur Nike Women par exemple, lorsqu’il y a une photo généralement un message ou bien une citation est mise en avant.” [On Nike Women for example, when there is a picture, usually a message or a quote is highlighted.]*
- ❖ *“Ils essayent tout le temps d’être positifs dans leur description du produit” [Always trying to be positive in their product description.]*
- ❖ *“Motive les gens” [Motivates people]*

Nike is present on social networks:

- ❖ *“Fort présente et en lien avec les jeunes” [Strong presence and connection with young people]*
- ❖ *“Ils sont assez présents sur les réseaux avec plusieurs comptes sur divers réseaux, postent assez régulièrement pour avoir une relation avec leurs clients” [They are quite present on social networks with several accounts on various networks, post regularly enough to have a relationship with their customers.]*
- ❖ *“Souvent présents” [Often present]*
- ❖ *“Omniprésence” [Ubiquitous]*
- ❖ *“Publie régulièrement des posts” [Regularly publishes posts]*
- ❖ *“Ultra actif sur les réseaux sociaux, ce qui permet une relation optimale” [Ultra active on social networks, which leads to an optimal relationship]*

Nike has a negative way of communicating

- ❖ *“Peu de communication” [Little communication]*

- ❖ *“Elle ne met en avant que des sportifs de haut niveau” [It only puts forward high-level athletes]*
- ❖ *“Ils nous conseillent pas trop” [They do not give us much advice]*
- ❖ *“Pas forcément à l’écoute” [Not necessarily attentive]*
- ❖ *“Peu de vrai contact ou de concours” [Few real contacts or contests]*
- ❖ *“Les annonces véhiculées par Nike sur les réseaux sociaux ne sont souvent que des placements de produits” [Nike's social network ads are often nothing more than product placements.]*

Despite some negative comments, which remain a minority, some survey participants consider the relationship between the Nike brand and its followers on social networks to be positive. What is emphasized by respondents is the way Nike communicates positively towards its subscribers, but also Nike’s presence and availability on its social networks.

The next question concerns marketing and whether Nike's social networks have already had an impact on consumers' buying decisions. 56.4% answer that they do not follow Nike on social networks, 18.9% answer that they follow Nike on social networks and that it has already influenced them, 17.2% answer that they follow Nike on social networks but that it has never influenced them and finally, 7.5% answer that they have never bought Nike products. Among the participants who bought a product while being influenced by Nike's social networks, in 45.7% of the cases, the product was worn by a well-known athlete and in 54.3% of the cases, it was not.

The last question was about whether the consumer had ever asked a question(s) on Nike social networking platforms. Only 8 people answer “Yes”: for the release date of a product or for the reception of a package. 6 of them report that they had received a fairly quick answer.

Finally, a few statements about the brand's social networks were proposed at the end of the questionnaire and the participants, as in the section on “brand image”, had to choose between 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). However, as mentioned in "3.3 Challenges", it seems that some people answered randomly because it was apparently not clear enough that 3 referred to "No opinion". This should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

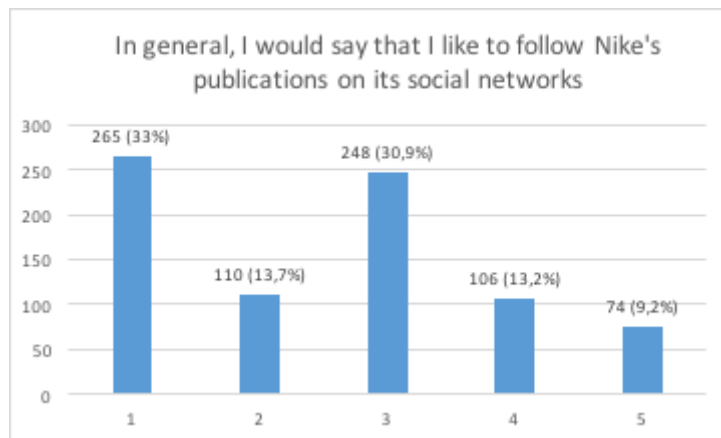


Figure 31: Statement 27 of the online survey - “In general, I would say that I like to follow Nike’s publications on its social networks”

As Figure 31 reveals, 30.9% reply that they have no opinion (and selected 3) on the statement about “*I like to follow Nike's publications on its social networks*”. Just under 50% express disagreement (33% do not agree at all and 13.7% do not agree), while only, around 20% express agreement (13.2% answer that they agree and 9.2% strongly agree).

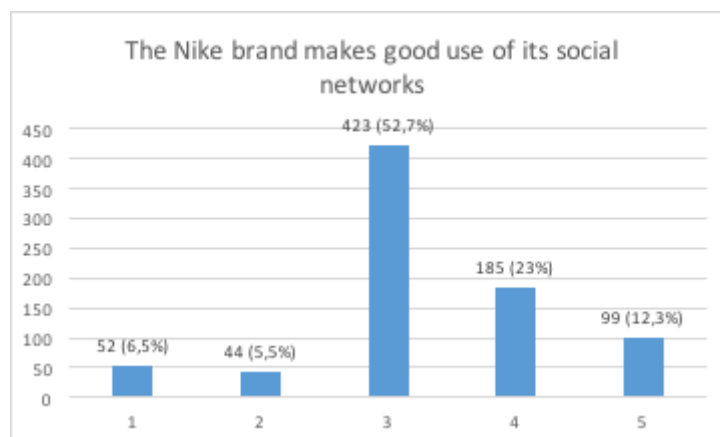


Figure 32: Statement 28 of the online survey - “The Nike brand makes good use of its social networks”

Figure 32 points out that just over 50% of the participants do not express an opinion of Nike’s appropriate use of social networks. While over 30% respond that they agree (23% agree and 12.3% strongly agree), 12% disagree (6.5% strongly disagree and 5.5% disagree) with this statement.

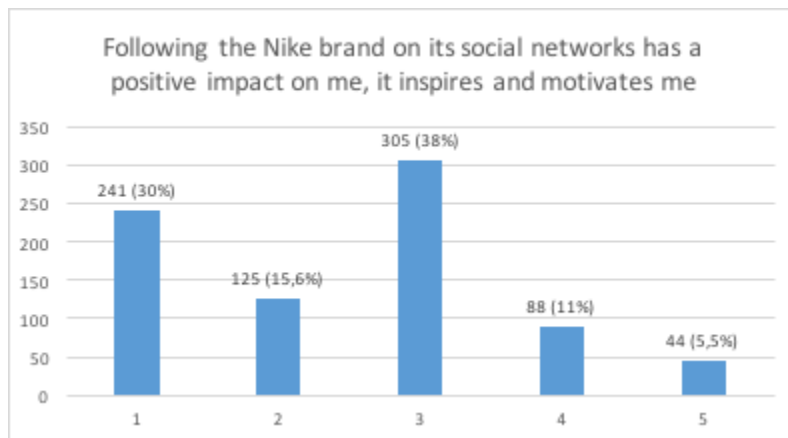


Figure 33: Statement 29 of the online survey - “Following the Nike brand on its social networks has a positive impact on me, it inspires and motivates me”

38% replied that they have no opinion about the statement “*Following the Nike brand on its social networks has a positive impact on me, it inspires and motivates me*” (cf. Figure 33). Over 45% of the respondents strongly disagree (30%) or disagree (15,6%) with the fact that Nike’s social networks have a positive impact on them. On the other hand, 11% report that they agree that it has a positive impact on them and a further 5.5% strongly agree with this statement.

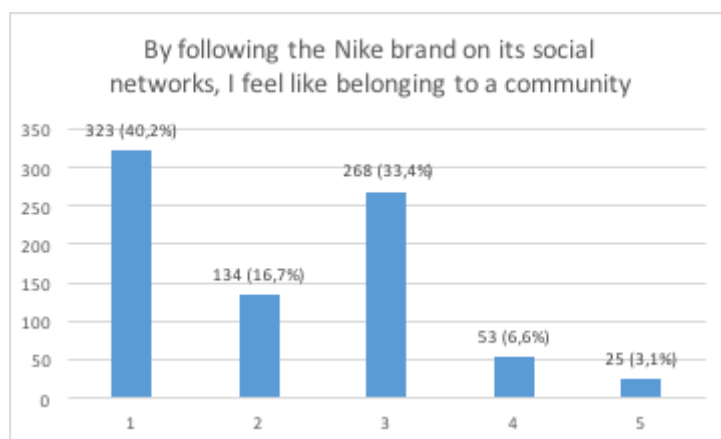


Figure 34: Statement 30 of the online survey - “By following the Nike brand on its social networks, I feel like belonging to a community”

Statement 30 targets the participants’ sense of belonging to a community (cf. Figure 34). 33.4% respond that they have no opinion. Over 50% express disagreement (40.2% strongly disagree

and 16.7% disagree) with feeling part of a community by following Nike on its social networks, while around 10% express agreement (6.6% respond that they agree and 3.1% strongly agree).

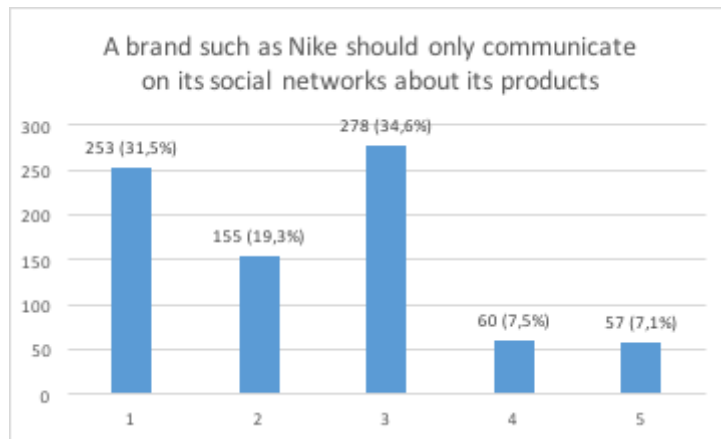


Figure 35: Statement 31 of the online survey - “A brand such as Nike should only communicate on its social networks about its products”

As can be seen in Figure 35, 34.6% reply that they have no opinion about this statement. On the one hand, over 50% disagree with the fact that a brand such as Nike should only communicate on its social networks about its products (31.5% strongly disagree and 19.3% disagree). On the other hand, around 7% agree with the statement (7.5% agree and 7.1% strongly agree).

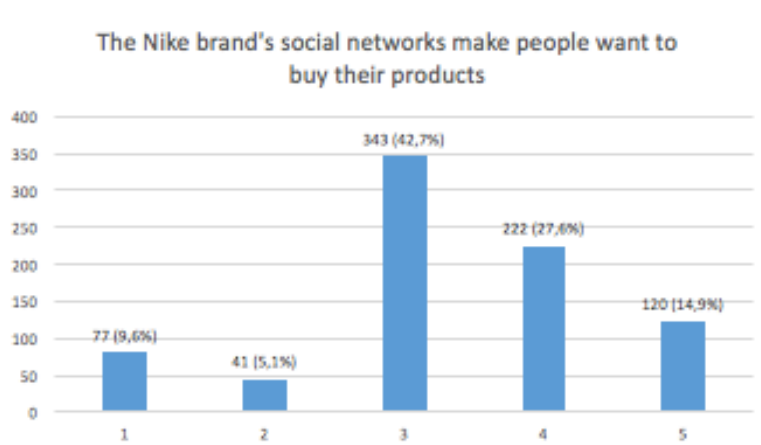


Figure 36: Statement 32 of the online survey - “The Nike brand’s social networks make people want to buy their products”

The last statement is about how the Nike brand's social networks can make people want to buy their products (cf. Figure 36): 42.7% have no opinion, 42,5% (strongly) agree with this statement and 14.9% strongly agree and just under 15% (strongly) disagree.

From these statements, it can be concluded that a large majority of participants do not have an opinion about Nike's communication. Only 27.1% of the respondents claim to follow the news of the Nike brand, the rest cannot give a relevant opinion and refrained from answering during the online questionnaire.

At the end of the online questionnaire, the participants were able to leave any comments about the Nike brand, its image and/or its communication on its social networks. A total of 20 comments were left. As cited in section 3.3. *Challenges*, some of the comments are related to the ambiguity of the latter statements about Nike's social networks. In addition to this, other comments emerge and can be sorted according to different topics:

Nike's products:

- ❖ *“Les prix sont je trouve beaucoup trop chers” [I find the prices way too expensive.]*
- ❖ *“Je me sens bien dans leurs chaussures” [I feel good in their shoes]*
- ❖ *“Ce sont pour moi des produits ultra confort, je fais du basket depuis 20 ans et j'ai toujours joué en nike sauf une saison et c'est là que je me suis blessé à la cheville. La qualité est vraiment top et leur design aussi. J'aime nike car ils proposent du "Jordan"” [They are for me ultra comfort products, I have been playing basketball for 20 years and I have always played in Nike except one season and that is when I hurt my ankle. The quality is really great and their design too. I like Nike because they have "Jordan".]*
- ❖ *“La provenance de leurs produits est douteuse et me pousse à moins consommer. Leurs chaussures ont toujours duré assez longtemps mais je pense que payer 100 euros pour une paire de chaussure qui a dû coûter 10 euros à produire, cela est un peu dérangent.” [The origin of their products is doubtful and pushes me to consume less. Their shoes have always lasted long enough but*

*I think that paying 100 euros for a pair of shoes that must have cost 10 euros to produce is a bit annoying.]*

- ❖ *“Pas impact par leur pub, leur nouveauté, etc. mais plutôt par la qualité de leur produit, le confort, le design, mais prix parfois assez élevé (mais aussi parfois très bon rapport qualité/prix). Plus connu par leur présence dans le monde du sport que par leur publicité sur les réseaux sociaux.” [Not impacted by their advertising, innovation, etc., but rather by the quality of their product, comfort, design, but price is sometimes quite high (but also sometimes very good value for money). More known for their presence in the world of sport than for their advertising on social networks.]*
- ❖ *“Je dirais qu’il ne faut pas se faire influencer par un logo, un produit de marque doit correspondre avec sa personnalité, ça doit rester correct et pas en faire un achat compulsif pour faire comme autrui” [I would say that one should not be influenced by a logo, a branded product must correspond with your personality, it must remain appropriate and not make a compulsive purchase to be like others.]*

Nike’s commitment:

- ❖ *“La marque est porteuse d’une certaine aura dans le sport mais son image est parfois ternie” [The brand carries a certain aura in sport but its image is sometimes tarnished.]*
- ❖ *“L’engagement incluant Kaepernick (le premier joueur à avoir posé un genou à terre dans un hymne national américain. Il faisait ça pour dénoncer les violences policières accrues envers les afro-américains. Trump a banni ces actes de protestation passive et encouragé les dirigeants des équipes à licencier les joueurs pratiquant ces gestes...) dans la campagne #MoreThanAnAthlete était bien intense et pleine de sens (+/- contre Trump). Il est même devenu une égérie de la marque. Personnellement, la prise de position que cela représente et le soutien à la liberté d’expression des athlètes m’a marqué.” [The commitment includes Kaepernick (the first player to kneel down during a US national anthem. He was doing this to denounce increased police violence against African-Americans. Trump banned these acts of passive protest and*

*encouraged team officials to fire players who practiced these acts) in the #MoreThanAnAthlete campaign was very intense and meaningful (+/- against Trump). He even became a muse for the brand. Personally, the stance that this represents and the support for the athletes' freedom of speech made a deep impression on me.]*

Nike's communication:

- ❖ *“J’apprécie beaucoup que Nike introduise tout type de personne dans son marketing, notamment des femmes voilées sur certains spots publicitaires, des mannequins avec un physique normal et réel dans leurs magasins. Cela me fait plus apprécier la marque.” [I really appreciate that Nike brings all kinds of people into its marketing, including veiled women in some commercials, models with a normal, real-looking physique in their stores. It makes me appreciate the brand more.]*
- ❖ *“Questionnaire très pertinent. La marque Nike est en effet très présente sur les réseaux via ses différents comptes relatifs à différents types de sport, et je trouve cela très intéressant de se pencher sur la perception de ceux-ci par les consommateurs.” [Very relevant questionnaire. The Nike brand is indeed very present on social networks through its different accounts for different types of sports, and I find it very interesting to look at how consumers perceive them.]*
- ❖ *“Je trouve dommage que les réseaux sociaux Nike ne mettent pas plus en avant les grandes tailles/tailles curvy.” [I think it is a shame that Nike social networks do not put more emphasis on large/curvy sizes.]*

In a nutshell, the quality of Nike-branded products is highlighted, although too expensive for some. Some participants also underline the fact that Nike conveys great values. Finally, some see Nike's communication as inclusive, while others would like to see more "curvy" body types.

### 3.2.2. Discussion

This section seeks to answer the research questions underlying this master's thesis based on the literature reviewed in the theoretical part and the data collected in the analysis of the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (*Nike* and *Nike Football*) as well as in the online survey conducted among young people (12 to 30-year-old).

#### 3.2.2.1. Nike's social networks

The three research questions that revolve around the Nike brand's social networks are:

- ❖ Which social network (among Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) is the most used by the Nike brand? For which reasons?
- ❖ What are the strategies of the Nike brand on its social networks (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook)?
- ❖ How do adolescents and young adults perceive Nike's communication on social networks?

##### 3.2.2.1.1. "*Which social network (among Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) is the most used by the Nike brand? For which reasons?*"

Firstly, the social network favoured by the Nike brand seems to be Twitter with 123 publications for the two accounts *Nike* and *Nike Football* out of 134 publications in total for the month of April 2019. The choice of this social network can be explained by the fact that, according to Murthy (2018: 3), Twitter is one of the most used social networks in the world with 313 million users in 2018, 21% of whom are active in the United States. Moreover, Twitter is a type of "*microblogging*" social network, which is, synonymous with fast and natural posts (Murthy 2018: 10). Nike undoubtedly favours this social network in order to be able to communicate quickly with its subscribers. As seen in the theoretical part, these fast and natural exchanges arguably give subscribers the impression that the brand is one of their friends.

Next, the second most used social network by both Nike accounts is Instagram, but to a much lesser extent. Freberg (2019: 12) points out that this social network is becoming increasingly successful, especially among young people, one of the main targets of the Nike brand. On the Instagram social network, it is less about conversational exchanges with subscribers than on the Twitter social network, but about publications that are released fairly regularly (4 publications on *Nike* account and 7 on *Nike Football* account in one month) and that can serve as inspiration for subscribers. An explanation that could also be put forward is the fact that Instagram gives a more personal and spontaneous image of the brand (Bergström and Bäckman 2013: 12), which makes it closer to the customer.

Finally, no publications were found for the month of April 2019 on the two Facebook accounts of the Nike brand. In the months following April 2019, I kept on looking for publications on the social network Facebook: *Nike* did not post any, while *Nike Football* posted four. Possible reasons for this absence on Facebook may include the fact that the social network was very successful in the early 2010's and it could be argued that this success has faded over the years to make way for more innovative social networks, such as Instagram.

#### 3.2.2.1.2. “What are the strategies of the Nike brand on its social networks (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook)?”

The analysis of three different Nike social networks has made it possible to identify a number of strategies used by the brand aimed at building trust and engagement with consumers.

The first strategy implemented by the Nike brand on its social networks is to segment accounts according to sports. In this way, the brand has one general corporate account, *Nike*, and dozens of sport-related accounts on each social network, for instance *Nike Football*, *Nike Basketball*, *Nike Golf* or *Nike Running*. This strategy is probably chosen because a sportsman playing tennis may not be interested in golf and vice versa. As stressed in the theoretical part, the creation of “virtual communities” is essential in maintaining a good relationship between the brand and consumers (Balagué and Fayon 2010: 69). Each account provides content related to the sport itself (sport victories, sport-related products, well-known athletes in the sport in question, etc.) that should satisfy those who have proactively subscribed to the fan page. It could be argued

that the consumer may be satisfied because he or she will feel part of a virtual community which is restricted to the sport that he or she enjoys or practices, and will even be able to share his or her opinions with other members of the community who share the same interests. As underlined by Bronner and de Hoog (2010, quoted in Nick Hajli 2014: 391) in the theoretical part, this could lead to electronic word-of-mouth communication.

One of Nike's biggest strategies is to offer content that is consumer-centric. Nike seems to seek to engage, motivate and empower consumers. In an interview with the Mashable site, Jesse Stollak, Nike's Global Digital Brand and Innovation Director, states

*“Ultimately, we are about connecting with the consumer where they are. We started with notion that this was about publishing to them with the right message and at the right time. We've quickly evolved to a focus on conversations and engaging them to participate as opposed to using new media in traditional ways.”*<sup>50</sup>

The social networks' analysis reveals that Nike does not pass on messages just on the basis of texts, but enriches its publications with photos, videos, GIF, tags or hashtags. On the Instagram social network, the content is more visual (photos or videos) in keeping with the character of the network, but it sometimes includes a motivational text that aims to touch and inspire each person. For instance, Figure 37 below leads the reader to remain persevering and believe in himself or herself in order to achieve his or her goals (cf. *"Believe in yourself and trust that your mind and heart can break barriers"*). In addition, the brand puts in hashtag its slogan *"Just Do It"* which also drives to action and motivation.

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<sup>50</sup>Swallow, E. (2011). How Nike Outruns the Social Media Competition, available from internet: <https://mashable.com/2011/09/22/nike-social-media/?europa=true> (consulted on June 10, 2020)



Figure 37: Nike's publication on Instagram - *"Believe in yourself and trust that your mind and heart can break barriers"*

The brand does not just publish about its products, which according to the online survey is not something that appeals to young people, but Nike tries to convey a targeted message. Nike publishes posts about athletes or sporting achievements that can be inspiring to its subscribers. In some cases, *"storytelling"* can be highlighted when the brand tells the story of an athlete, his or her beginnings, moments of weakness but also his or her achievements. In Figure 38, the Nike brand shows the story of Alex Roca, an athlete with a palsy brain. The athlete had moments of doubt and weakness because of his disability, and some doctors even told him that he was crazy to persevere. Yet Alex Roca has always believed in himself and his dreams, and today, as the caption of this publication states, Alex Roca is training to finish the "600 km Titan Desert Race", a feat that has never been accomplished before by a person with this type of disability.

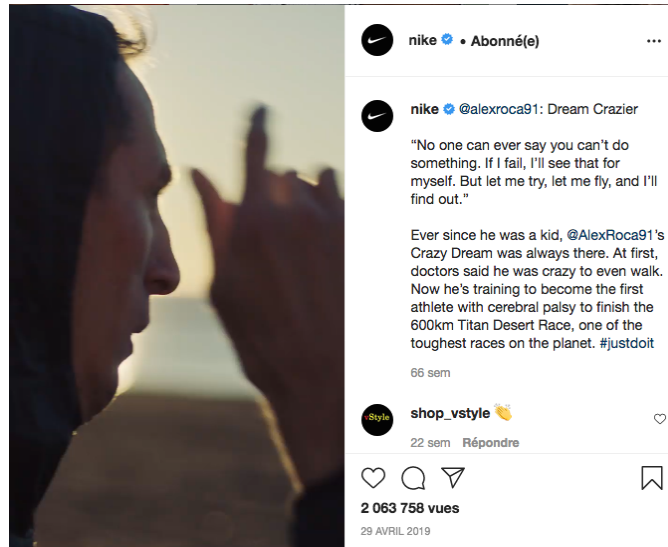


Figure 38: Nike's publication on Instagram - Alex Roca

As its core mission says, Nike seeks to "*bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world*".<sup>51</sup> Nike claims that it is not just a brand that sells sports-related products, but a brand that wants to bring something extra to the consumer, that seeks to engage every athlete, motivate and inspire them to take action (also referring here to Nike's slogan "*Just Do It*"), and this is reflected to a large extent in its publications.<sup>52</sup> In Figures 39, *Nike Football* tells the story of Tobin Heath, an American football player who believed in her dreams and have now achieved them. The story of this athlete perfectly reflects one of Nike's values, which is perseverance, and the fact that every human can achieve his or her dreams if he or she gives himself or herself the means and also strongly believes in them.

<sup>51</sup> Nike, *About Nike*, available from internet: <https://about.nike.com/> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 39: Nike Football’s publication on Instagram - “*Nike Football Presents: Crazy Dreams Are Inspired by Crazy Dreamers*”

In terms of content, on the social network Twitter, which has a more conversation-ready character than Instagram, it can be noticed that Nike is in a more conversational and personalized approach with its subscribers. In fact, Nike appears to take the time to respond to most of the subscribers' posts in which the brand has been mentioned, which I called "Reply to a customer tweet" in my Excel folder. These responses may be about acknowledgment, availability, support, after-sales service, discount, marketing question, application demand, recommendation or even sponsorship request.



Figure 40: “Reply to a customer tweet” - Sponsorship request

Figure 40 is an example of Nike responding on Twitter to one of its followers who requested a partnership. The response, although negative for the customer, remains polite and appreciative for all the support the brand receives.



Figure 41: "Reply to a customer tweet" - Defective product (After-sales service)

This figure 41 is an example where Nike responds to a customer complaint about a defective product. First, the brand apologizes to the customer and then tries to resolve the issue.

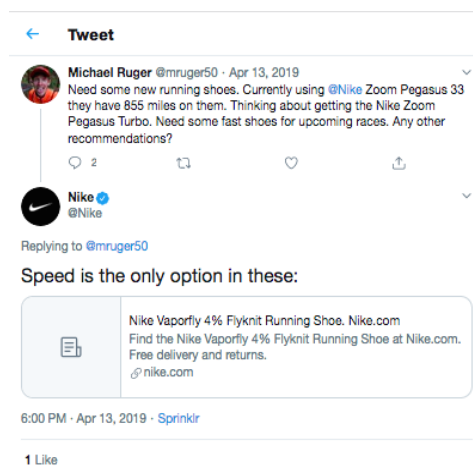


Figure 42: Reply to a customer tweet - Recommendation

In this Figure 26, Nike helps a customer choose a new pair of running shoes.

As pointed out by Balagué and Fayon (2010: 70), it is important for a brand like Nike to manage negative comments so that the image of the brand does not deteriorate on social networks. The author uses the term "*push strategy*" to talk about the idea of listening to customers and potential customers and conversing with them. Nike shows itself to be particularly willing to manage the relationships with the consumer and make feel him or her close to the brand. For instance, in Figure 43 below, Nike comments on a photo of a newborn baby wearing Nike clothing. Table 4 also shows that responses to clients are very frequent: on *Nike* and *Nike Football*'s Twitter, 115 out of 123 publications are linked to "Reply to a customer tweet". It could be argued that this is one of the brand's main strategies on the social network Twitter.



Figure 43: "Reply to a customer tweet" - Newborn picture

However, although this remains a minority, some customers are not satisfied with the response given by the brand on its social networks. This is the case in Figure 44 where the customer asks where to buy a specific product and does not get the response he was hoping for, and then tells Nike "*We're going to need the real thing*".



Figure 44: Customer dissatisfied with Nike's response on Twitter

Also, during my analysis of Nike's Twitter use, it became quite clear that the tweets were often written informally, which can help bring the brand closer to the consumer. Figure 45 as well as Figure 46 below perfectly illustrate the informal nature of the brand's communication on its social networks. In Figure 45, the brand responds with abbreviations such as "*Gotta*" or "*Get'em*", which is typically used in informal conversations, and appeals to the little boy by his nickname "*CJ*". In Figure 46, the brand shows its support for a follower who gets back to sport. The informal way in which Nike communicates through its abbreviations, the use of the pronoun "*We*" and its emoticon gives the impression that Nike is the follower's friend and that the brand supports him through all challenges.



Figure 45: “Reply to a customer tweet” - Informal



Figure 46: “Reply to a customer tweet” - Support

Some tweets, written by the consumer in Italian, Spanish or French, are answered in the user's language in order to presumably make him or her feel closer to the brand, as the brand makes the effort to write in his or her language. In the tweet in Figure 47 below, Nike responds to a customer in his native language, i.e. Spanish. In addition, the brand responds informally by

addressing the customer on a first name basis (see "Ayudarte") and again links back to Nike's official website.



Figure 47: “Reply to a customer tweet” - Spanish language

Thirdly, one of Nike's strategies on its social networks is to give a voice to world-famous athletes. This is a way for them to humanize communication: consumers visualize their favourite sportsman or woman as Nike's voice. As seen in the theoretical part, it may also give more credibility to the brand and may increase consumers' trust in the brand. As Katz (1957, quoted in Uzunoglu and Misci Kip 2014: 593; cf. the theoretical part) states, opinion leaders refer to certain values. For instance, as can be seen from Figure 48, Tiger Woods was chosen by Nike to represent its values. This American athlete is one of the greatest golfers in History, persevering in the sport he plays because, like any professional sport, golf requires colossal hours of work and many concessions. Also, Figure 37 about Eliud Kipchoge shows the perseverance of a man who never gave up on his dreams and who won, among others, the London Marathon in April 2019. As both athletes are Nike brand ambassadors, consumers may associate the values these athletes represent with the brand.

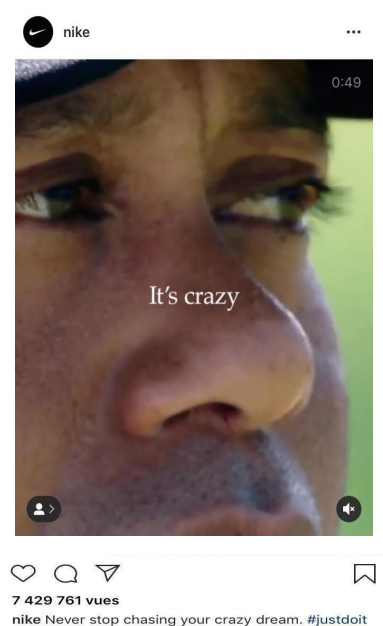


Figure 48: Nike's publication on Instagram - Tiger Woods

#### 3.2.2.1.3. "How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive Nike's communication on social networks?"

First of all, it should be noted that the majority of young people (12 - 30 years old) who responded to the online survey do not follow the Nike brand's social networks. Only 27.1% of them do so. Among them, 88.9% follow Nike on social networks: 78.5% on Instagram, 44.4% on Facebook and 6.9% on Twitter. The finding that 78.5% of young people who follow Nike on social networks do so on Instagram is probably due to the fact that Instagram is, in our era, seen as a "trendy" social network for young people. The finding that 44.4% do so on Facebook can be related with the fact that the online survey was exclusively published on the Facebook social network. The finding that only 6.9% of respondents follow Nike on Twitter can probably be explained by the fact that Twitter is less popular in Belgium than in the United States. It is also demonstrated that 79% of the respondents who follow Nike's social networks do so on the *Nike* account and 18.6% on the *Nike Football* account.

Next to the 61% who have no idea how Nike communicates on its social networks, the adjectives that emerge the most to describe Nike's communication are quite positive: "*motivating*", "*attractive*", "*authentic*" and "*close*". Less than 5% describe it negatively as

"redundant", "banal", "boring" or "cold". 22.2% of the participants in the online survey reply that what they prefer about Nike's communication on its social networks is "*sponsorship with world-famous athletes*", which has earlier been identified as one of the main strategies of the Nike brand on its social networks. These figures could thus be proof that the strategy is effective. Then 19.9% of the participants highlight the "*attractive and neat content*" and 15.3% the "*inspiring legends*"; these elements can again be regarded as part of the Nike brand's strategy. Finally, less than 10% highlight the "*community spirit*", the "*close relationship with the customer*" and the "*commitment that the brand conveys*", which can also be seen as brand strategy. It is noteworthy that these latter strategies are, according to the online survey, not the ones that the respondents are the most sensitive to.

The findings from the online survey also show that 14.3% of the respondents believe that Nike has a positive relationship with its subscribers on social networks. The main justifications for this affirmation is that the brand keeps abreast of news, takes the time to respond to its subscribers, includes subscribers in positive sports messages, and communicates in a neat and attractive way.

When asked about the link between Nike's social networks and its influence on the purchasing decision, 18.9% report that they follow Nike on social networks and that it has already influenced them to buy one of Nike's products. As underlined in the theoretical part, one of the objectives of marketing communication is to make products or services known and make people want to buy them, among others through social networks (Banerjee, 2016: 4). It can thus be estimated that Nike's marketing strategies on social networks are rather successful because nearly one in five respondents have already been pushed to consumption after seeing a publication on Nike's social networks. It should also be noted that in 45.7% of the cases, the product that was purchased by the consumer was worn by a well-known athlete, so the strategy linked to sports ambassadors appears to still pay off.

In the theoretical part of this master's thesis, we discussed different strategies on social networks that have been highlighted by some experts. In the practical part and more precisely in the "social networks analysis" section, we concluded that several strategies, discussed in the theoretical part, such as the close relationship with the customer or the ambassador strategy,

were actually implemented by the Nike brand on its social networks. The findings from the survey suggest here that Nike's communication strategies are on the whole positively evaluated by the young people (12 to 30 years old) who follow Nike on its social networks.

### 3.2.2.2. Nike's brand image

In the second part of this discussion section, the way teenagers and young adults perceive the Nike brand will be discussed.

#### 3.2.2.2.1. "How do teenagers and young adults (12 to 30 years old) perceive the Nike brand?"

Firstly, a general overview of the Nike brand image will be provided. The first question related to Nike's brand image in the online survey aims at understanding what mostly come to mind when teenagers and young adults think of the Nike brand. It has been shown that what young people mainly associate the Nike brand with is the quality of its products (64%). This aspect is also highlighted in one of the comments left at the end of the online survey: "*Not impacted by their advertising, innovation, etc, but rather by the quality of their product, comfort, design*"<sup>53</sup>. Also, in the third question of the online survey, more than 70% stress the good quality and the fashionable side of Nike products; however, 54.5% also stress that Nike products are expensive. The next aspects that the teenagers and young adults appear to associate Nike with is the identity of the Nike brand, namely its "*Just Do It*" slogan, its logo called "*Swoosh*" (56.4%), and its values linked to the world of sport (53.9%). The issues for which the Nike brand (such as racism, sexism, etc.) fights on a daily basis are also chosen by 12% of the respondents. Nevertheless, 15.3% of the participants remember the social and ecological scandals that the brand has experienced in the past.

Secondly, a more precise framing of the brand image can be given. When asked which adjective(s) is/are related to the Nike brand, the vast majority of the participants are positive

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<sup>53</sup> My translation of [*Pas impact par leur pub, leur nouveauté, etc. mais plutôt par la qualité de leur produit, le confort, le design*] from the online survey

and selected adjectives such as "*fashionable*" (69.1%), which is important to young people, "*good quality*" (66.4%), "*ubiquitous*" (41.8%), "*attractive*" (33.7%) or "*dynamic*" (34.9%). Negative adjectives such as "*banal*", "*outdated*" or "*boring*" do not exceed the 6% mark. It can thus be concluded that the Nike brand has an image connected with adjectives that are much more positive than negative. However, when the respondents are asked if they have ever heard negative comments about the Nike brand, 52.9% answer "Yes", based, in 62% of the cases, on the manufacturers' working conditions or in 61.1% of the cases on the price of the products, followed further down the line by CSR (25.9%) and lack of product quality in 17.7% of the cases. This suggests that the brand has some weaknesses in terms of its social and ecological responsibility. This remark can also be verified in the series of statements at the end of the section on brand image. Although 43.8% responded that they have no opinion, 28% respond that they do not agree, and 18.3% do not agree at all with the statement that Nike respects the planet. This negative aspect is also highlighted in the first question by 15.3% of the participants who refer to the social and ecological scandals that the brand has experienced when they think of the Nike brand.

Third, when asked about the link between Nike's brand image and the decision to purchase a Nike product, 41.5% of the participants reported that the image reflected by the Nike brand had already had an impact on one of their purchasing decisions. In the section that includes statements about brand image, 43,8% of the participants agree with the fact that Nike products are bought only because they come from the Nike brand. This could be translated by saying that consumers will go for the Nike brand's products because they come from the Nike brand more than from any other known or unknown brand. This point was emphasized by L. Keller (1993: 8) in the theoretical part, when he stated that if the brand has a considerable level of brand awareness and a positive brand image, then the consumer is more likely to choose that brand over another, which also leads to brand loyalty. It could also be argued that, even if prices sometimes seem excessive, as some respondents point out, some people are willing to put the price down to buy a Nike-branded product, a brand which they appear to be loyal to.

In conclusion, some of the findings suggest that Nike is a brand that has experienced social and ecological scandals that will remain etched in the memories of some consumers and which is arguably a point on which the brand still needs to work today. However, Nike mainly remains

a brand with a strong and positive image that has been built up over the years. According to the statements related to Nike's brand image in the online survey, 55.8% of the respondents agree with the fact that Nike is one of the world's most recognized brands and 38.5% also agree with the fact that the brand conveys positive messages. Nike is also a brand that is known for the quality of its products, although too expensive for some participants of the survey.

### 3.2.2.3. Conclusion of the discussion

This discussion addressed two topics that have been central throughout this master's thesis: brand image and social networks. As mentioned in the theoretical part, these two topics are in fact interrelated: brand image can be built, reinforced or enhanced through social networks. Social networks have become indispensable tools for companies to convey strong messages to potential consumers on these online platforms. In this master's thesis, the case of the Nike brand, its image among teenagers and young adults and its communication on social networks were examined.

Firstly, the analysis of Nike's social networks reveals that the brand is active on some social networks, though not equally on all of them, and that the brand seeks to offer content with an added value to its subscribers. Nike appears to be particularly active on the social networks Twitter and Instagram, which are popular among young people, but less on the social network Facebook. In terms of content, Nike has different strategies to establish or strengthen an existing link with its consumers or potential consumers: the brand segments its social networks by sports account, offers rather inspiring content for its subscribers, seems to be quite close to its subscribers by responding to them on the social network Twitter, even adapts to its subscribers to some extent by using their language, and, finally, engages world-famous sportsmen and women to wear the brand's products.

After analysing how Nike was delivering its messages on its social networking platforms, we asked ourselves whether the brand's social network strategies are well received by teenagers and young adults and whether they have a good image of the Nike brand's communication on its social networks. Among the teenagers and young adults who participated in the online

survey, only 27.1% follow Nike on social networks. The perception of Nike's social network communication is fairly positive, with adjectives such as "*motivating*" or "*attractive*" coming up most frequently, and the strategies that are preferred by young people are sponsorship with athletes, attractive and inspiring content, and close relationships with customers. Furthermore, nearly one in five young people also claim to have already been influenced to buy a Nike product after seeing a publication of the brand on social networks.

Second, the discussion also focused on how teenagers and young adults (12-30 years old) perceive the Nike brand. In a nutshell, the Nike brand seems to have a recognized and positive image. Since its creation, the brand claims to have revolutionized sport and to have considered people and their comfort above all.<sup>54</sup> The quality of Nike's products is often emphasized through the online survey, as well as the fact that they are considered "*fashionable*" by 72,1% of the participants. Some consumers go so far as to claim that Nike-branded products are bought only because they come from Nike. Nike has built up this name over the years, including its logo and slogan, and is now recognized by a large majority of young people. In addition, when analysing Nike's missions on its official website, it can be argued that Nike seeks to convey fairly attractive messages, which centre around key values of the sporting world: perseverance, performance, and surpassing oneself.<sup>55</sup> The brand says that it wants every human being to surpass himself or herself and that every person with a body is an athlete in itself: sport does not exclude or discriminate against anyone.<sup>56</sup> This identity that Nike wants to establish (brand identity) is quite well received by its audience (brand image) because 53.9% of the participants in the online survey answered that they considered Nike as a reference in the world of sport and all the values that surround it (perseverance, surpassing oneself...). However, the brand has also experienced some social and ecological scandals that remain in the memory of some the participants.

Finally, as highlighted above, social networks can play a role in building a positive brand image if the platforms are well-managed with the most relevant strategies; however, they are not the only tools that could play a role in the construction of brand image. Indeed, "only" 27.1% of

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<sup>54</sup> Nike, *About Nike*, available from internet: <https://about.nike.com/> (consulted on July 3, 2020)

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

the young people surveyed follow Nike's official social networks, yet all young people have even minimal knowledge of the brand and can forge a positive or negative image of it. In other words, the majority of young people are aware of the Nike brand and can build an image of it but do not necessarily follow the brand on its social networks. One might wonder whether other tools than social networks also play a role in building the brand image. The Nike brand has existed since the 1960s, long before the emergence of the social networking phenomenon. It could thus be argued that, while the brand's social networks can be seen to reinforce this brand image, they did not actually build it. As pointed out in the theoretical part by Delgado-Ballester *et al.* (2010: 46), brands that are already positively recognized worldwide, like Nike, have to put less effort into their communication than less familiar brands that still have everything to prove. According to these authors (2010: 46), communications should not be highly consistent but more moderately consistent, which could explain the lack of publication on Facebook. Moreover, it has been highlighted in the theoretical part (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012: 773) that companies are no longer the only ones to manage the fate of their brand and what is said about them, but communication based on the "word of mouth" also plays an important role. Thus, if 27.1% of the participants who follow the brand on its social networks have a positive image of Nike's communication, they could then potentially become ambassadors for the brand and are likely to talk about it around them. That is how the remaining 72.9%, who do not follow Nike on social networks, may, among others, have a good image of the brand. In the end, one could say that since Nike is easily recognized (brand awareness) and has a good image (brand image), then it enjoys a good brand knowledge. Many consumers apparently buy Nike products because they are products from this specific brand, so one could also claim that the brand is also connected with strong brand loyalty.

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## CONCLUSION

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The objective of this paper was to analyse two different, yet rather related, concepts: the Nike brand image and social networks. The first objective was to determine which social network (among Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) is the most frequently used by the Nike brand and to highlight the different strategies of the brand on its social networks. Next, it was a question of exploring how young people aged 12 to 30 perceive this communication, and therefore whether the strategies were effective, and how these same young people perceive the brand more generally. In order to do so, a theoretical part dealing with corporate communication, the main concepts around "brand", and social networks and its strategies was developed to underpin a practical part consisting of an analysis of two Nike's accounts on the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook and an online survey gathering the young people's perception of the Nike brand.

Several conclusions could be drawn from this research. Nike opts for social networks that tend to be conversational and attract a young audience, such as Twitter and Instagram. On its social networks, the brand segments its various accounts according to sports, probably in order to create virtual communities adapted to the needs of each consumer. Nike offers quite inspiring content for (potential) consumers that seeks to motivate them and push them to act, as its famous "*Just Do It*" slogan underlines. Nike is close to its subscribers and responds to their message by adapting to them and emphasizing proximity by being fairly informal. Further, the brand uses world-renowned athletes as intermediaries to wear its products and convey its values. The survey, which was conducted online among 12-30 year olds, showed that 27.1% of participants follow the Nike brand on its social networks. The majority of the respondents positively highlight the various Nike digital strategies that have just been listed. This online survey also showed that the brand has a fairly attractive and dynamic image among the young population. One could conclude from this survey that the participants mainly emphasize the quality of the products and the "*fashionable*" side of the brand as well as the positive values

that Nike seeks to convey. However, despite these positive aspects, the lack of credibility at the CSR<sup>57</sup> level was also highlighted by participants. What should also be highlighted is the fact that all participants in the online survey are able to give a general opinion, either positive or negative, on the Nike brand and yet less than 30% of them follow the brand on its social networks. It could therefore be concluded from this survey that the brand's image has probably been strengthened on social networks, but that other factors, such as the word of mouth, played a role in building the brand image. More in-depth studies could emerge on this subject.

Some limitations to this case study should be pointed out. Within the framework of this dissertation, the analysis of the Nike brand's social networks is based solely on the social networks Twitter, Instagram and Facebook and on the *Nike* and *Nike Football* accounts. Nevertheless, according to the responses of the online survey participants, the two other social networks that are also successful among 12-30 year olds are Nike+<sup>58</sup> and Pinterest. The social network Youtube could also possibly be studied as it also has some success. Besides *Nike* and *Nike Football* accounts, the *Nike Women*, *Nike Running*, *Nike Basketball* and *Nike Golf* accounts are also widely followed by young people. It might be interesting to study these other social networks as well as these other accounts.

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<sup>57</sup> *Corporate Social Responsibility*

<sup>58</sup> Nike+ is a running application developed by Nike

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## APPENDIX

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### Appendix 1: Online survey

| French version                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | English version                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>La marque Nike</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Nike brand</b></p>                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>1. Introduction</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>1. Introduction</p>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>Bonjour,</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>Hello,</p>                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Dans le cadre de mon mémoire en Communication multilingue à l'UCLouvain, je cherche à déterminer la manière dont les adolescents et les jeunes adultes perçoivent la marque Nike ainsi que sa communication sur ses réseaux sociaux.</p> | <p>As part of my master's thesis in Multilingual Communication at UCLouvain, I seek to determine how teenagers and young adults perceive the Nike brand and its communication on its social networks.</p> |
| <p>Afin de me soutenir dans cette recherche, pourriez-vous remplir ce questionnaire qui ne vous prendra que quelques minutes? Vos réponses resteront anonymes et confidentielles.</p>                                                       | <p>In order to support me in this research, could you please fill out this questionnaire which will only take you a few minutes? Your answers will remain anonymous and confidential.</p>                 |
| <p>Je vous en remercie d'avance,</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Thank you in advance,</p>                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>Laura Lannoo</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Laura Lannoo</p>                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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| <p>2. Données personnelles du participant</p> <p>Êtes-vous...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Une femme</li> <li>- Un homme</li> <li>- Autre: Merci de préciser</li> </ul> <p>Dans quelle tranche d'âge vous situez-vous?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 12-17 ans</li> <li>- 18-22 ans</li> <li>- 23-30 ans</li> </ul> <p>Avez-vous acheté au moins une fois un produit Nike?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul> <p>Si oui, le(s)quel(s)? Merci de préciser</p> <p>Faites-vous/avez-vous fait des études dans le domaine du sport? (Par exemple une formation spécialisée en coaching, un bachelier/master en éducation physique, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul> <p>Si oui, quelles études? Merci de préciser</p> <p>A quelle fréquence approximative faites-vous du sport?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quotidiennement</li> </ul> | <p>2. Participant's personal data</p> <p>Are you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A female</li> <li>- A male</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> <p>What is your age range?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 12-17 years' old</li> <li>- 18-22 years' old</li> <li>- 23-30 years' old</li> </ul> <p>Have you purchased a Nike product at least once?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p>If yes, which one(s)? Please specify</p> <p>Are you studying/did you study sports? (For example, specialized training in coaching, a bachelor's/master's degree in physical education, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p>If yes, what studies? Please specify</p> <p>Approximately how often do you play sports?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daily</li> </ul> |
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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 à 5 fois par semaine</li> <li>- 2 à 3 fois par semaine</li> <li>- 1 fois par semaine</li> <li>- 1 fois toutes les deux semaines</li> <li>- 1 fois par mois</li> <li>- Presque jamais, voire jamais</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 to 5 times a week</li> <li>- 2 to 3 times a week</li> <li>- Once a week</li> <li>- Once every two weeks</li> <li>- Once a month</li> <li>- Almost never, if ever</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>Quel(s) type(s) de sport pratiquez-vous?</p> <p>Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Football</li> <li>- Running</li> <li>- Fitness</li> <li>- Basketball</li> <li>- Tennis</li> <li>- Gymnastique sportive</li> <li>- Golf</li> <li>- Danse</li> <li>- Sports de combat</li> <li>- Je ne fais pas de sport</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul> | <p>What type(s) of sport do you practice?</p> <p>Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Football</li> <li>- Running</li> <li>- Fitness</li> <li>- Basketball</li> <li>- Tennis</li> <li>- Sports gymnastics</li> <li>- Golf</li> <li>- Dance</li> <li>- Fighting sports</li> <li>- I don't do sports</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> |
| <p>3. L'image de la marque Nike</p> <p>A quoi pensez-vous lorsqu'on vous parle de la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Une référence dans le monde du sport et toutes les valeurs qui l'entourent (persévérance, dépassement de soi, etc)</li> <li>- Des produits de qualité</li> </ul>                                                       | <p>3. The Nike brand image</p> <p>What do you think about when you hear about the Nike brand? Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A reference in the world of sport and all the values that surround it (perseverance, surpassing oneself, etc)</li> <li>- Quality products</li> </ul>                                                        |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Le slogan “Just Do It” ainsi que le logo</li> <li>- Une marque engagée dans certains combats (racisme, sexisme, etc)</li> <li>- Une marque ayant connu des scandales sociaux et écologiques</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The slogan “<i>Just Do It</i>” as well as the logo</li> <li>- A brand engaged in various struggles (racism, sexism, etc)</li> <li>- A brand with a background of social and ecological scandals</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Quel(s) adjectif(s) vous vient/viennent à l’esprit lorsque vous pensez à la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A la mode</li> <li>- Attrayante</li> <li>- Authentique</li> <li>- Banale</li> <li>- Dynamique</li> <li>- Dépassée</li> <li>- De qualité</li> <li>- Ennuyante</li> <li>- Forte</li> <li>- Hypocrite</li> <li>- Innovante</li> <li>- Inspirante</li> <li>- Omniprésente</li> <li>- Unitaire</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul> | <p>Which adjective(s) come(s) to mind when you think of the Nike brand? Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fashionable</li> <li>- Attractive</li> <li>- Authentic</li> <li>- Banal</li> <li>- Dynamic</li> <li>- Outdated</li> <li>- Good quality</li> <li>- Boring</li> <li>- Strong</li> <li>- Hypocritical</li> <li>- Innovative</li> <li>- Inspiring</li> <li>- Ubiquitous</li> <li>- Anti-discrimination</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> |
| <p>Comment décririez-vous les produits proposés par la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A la mode</li> <li>- Ringard</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>How would you describe the products that Nike sells? Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fashionable</li> <li>- Outdated</li> <li>- Banal</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Banal</li> <li>- De bonne qualité</li> <li>- De mauvaise qualité</li> <li>- Cher</li> <li>- D'un bon rapport qualité/prix</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul>                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good quality</li> <li>- Poor quality</li> <li>- Expensive</li> <li>- Good value for money</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul>                                                                                                     |
| <p>Pensez-vous que l'image que reflète la marque Nike a déjà eu un impact dans l'une de vos décisions d'achat d'un de leurs produits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> <li>- Je n'ai jamais acheté un de leurs produits</li> </ul>                            | <p>Do you think the image the Nike brand has ever had an impact on any of your decisions to buy one of their products?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> <li>- I have never bought any of their products</li> </ul>                              |
| <p>Si oui, quel(s) produit(s)? Merci de préciser</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>If yes, which product(s)? Please specify</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>Avez-vous déjà entendu ou lu des commentaires négatifs sur la marque Nike?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          | <p>Have you ever heard or read negative comments about the Nike brand?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Si oui, sur quelle(s) base(s)? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- La qualité des produits</li> <li>- Le prix des produits</li> <li>- Le "CSR" (la responsabilité sociétale) de Nike</li> <li>- Les conditions de travail des fabricants</li> </ul> | <p>If yes, on what basis? Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The quality of products</li> <li>- The price of products</li> <li>- CSR (<i>Corporate Social Responsibility</i>)</li> <li>- The working conditions of manufacturers</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- L'ancien PDG de Nike (i.e. Mark Parker de 2006 à 2020)</li> <li>- Un scandale de dopage ayant éclaté en 2019</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The former CEO of Nike (i.e. Mark Parker from 2006 to 2020)</li> <li>- A doping scandal erupting in 2019</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>A quel point êtes-vous d'accord avec les affirmations suivantes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Nike est une des marques les plus reconnues mondialement"</li> <li>- "Nike est une marque positivement différente de tous ses concurrents"</li> <li>- "La marque Nike véhicule des messages positifs"</li> <li>- "La marque Nike est une marque durable qui respecte la planète"</li> <li>- "Les produits de la marque Nike sont achetés pour les valeurs qu'ils représentent plus que pour ce qu'ils ne sont"</li> <li>- "Les produits de la marque Nike sont achetés seulement car ils proviennent de la marque Nike"</li> </ul> | <p>To what extent do you agree with the following statements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Nike is one of the world's most recognized brands"</li> <li>- "Nike is a brand that is positively different from all its competitors"</li> <li>- "The Nike brand conveys positive messages"</li> <li>- "The Nike brand is a sustainable brand that respects the planet"</li> <li>- "Niked-branded products are purchased for what they represent more than what they are"</li> <li>- "Nike-branded products are purchased only because they come from the Nike brand"</li> </ul> |
| <p>4. Les réseaux sociaux de Nike</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>4. Nike's social networks</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Suivez-vous l'actualité de la marque Nike?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>Do you follow Nike brand's news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Si oui, via quel(s) canal(aux)? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>If yes, via which channel(s)? Several answers are possible</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Site web</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> <li>- Media</li> <li>- Réseaux sociaux</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul> <p>Si vous suivez la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux, pouvez-vous préciser sur quel(s) réseau(x) social(aux) le faites-vous?</p> <p>Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Twitter</li> <li>- Instagram</li> <li>- Facebook</li> <li>- Pinterest</li> <li>- Nike+</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul> <p>Sur quel(s) compte(s) suivez-vous l'actualité de la marque Nike? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nike</li> <li>- Nike Football</li> <li>- Nike Basketball</li> <li>- Nike Running</li> <li>- Nike Golf</li> <li>- Nike Women</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul> <p>Veuillez répondre aux questions suivantes seulement si vous avez une connaissance minimale des réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike. Si vous n'avez aucune idée des</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Website</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> <li>- Media</li> <li>- Social networks</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> <p>If you follow the Nike brand on its social networks, can you specify on which social network(s) you do so? Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Twitter</li> <li>- Instagram</li> <li>- Facebook</li> <li>- Pinterest</li> <li>- Nike+</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> <p>On which account(s) do you follow the Nike brand's news? Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nike</li> <li>- Nike Football</li> <li>- Nike Basketball</li> <li>- Nike Running</li> <li>- Nike Golf</li> <li>- Nike Women</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> <p>Please answer the following questions only if you have minimal knowledge of the Nike brand's social networks. If you have no idea</p> |
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| <p>réponses, merci de cocher la case "Je ne sais pas"</p> <p>Comment décririez-vous la communication de la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux?</p> <p>Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attrayante</li> <li>- Authentique</li> <li>- Banale</li> <li>- Ennuyante</li> <li>- Froide</li> <li>- Motivante</li> <li>- Proche</li> <li>- Redondante</li> <li>- Unitaire</li> <li>- Je ne sais pas</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul> <p>Qu'est-ce que vous préférez dans la façon dont la marque Nike communique sur ses réseaux sociaux? Plusieurs réponses sont possibles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- La relation proche avec le client (conversation, service après-vente rapide, etc)</li> <li>- Les contenus attractifs et soignés</li> <li>- Les légendes inspirantes</li> <li>- Le sponsoring avec de nombreux sportifs mondialement connus</li> <li>- L'engagement que la marque véhicule</li> <li>- L'esprit de communauté</li> </ul> | <p>of the answers, please check the "I don't know" box.</p> <p>How would you describe the communication of the Nike brand on its social networks?</p> <p>Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attractive</li> <li>- Authentic</li> <li>- Banal</li> <li>- Boring</li> <li>- Cold</li> <li>- Motivating</li> <li>- Close</li> <li>- Redundant</li> <li>- Anti-discrimination</li> <li>- I don't know</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul> <p>What do you prefer about the way the Nike brand communicates on its social networks?</p> <p>Several answers are possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The close relationship with the customer (conversation, quick after-sales service, etc)</li> <li>- Attractive and neat content</li> <li>- Inspiring legends</li> <li>- Sponsorship with many world-famous sportsmen and women</li> <li>- The commitment that the brand conveys</li> <li>- The community spirit</li> </ul> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Le fait que la marque tienne au courant des nouveautés sur ses produits</li> <li>- Je ne sais pas</li> <li>- Autre: merci de préciser</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The fact that the brand keeps abreast of the latest news on its products</li> <li>- I don't know</li> <li>- Other: please specify</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>Considérez-vous que la marque Nike entretient une bonne relation avec ses abonnés sur ses réseaux sociaux?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> <li>- Je ne sais pas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>Do you consider the Nike brand to have a good relationship with its subscribers on its social networks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> <li>- I don't know</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>Merci de préciser la/les raison(s) de votre réponse</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Please specify the reason(s) for your response</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>Pensez-vous que les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike ont déjà eu un impact dans l'une de vos décisions d'achat d'un de leurs produits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui, je suis les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike et cela m'a déjà influencé(e)</li> <li>- Non, je suis les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike mais cela ne m'a jamais influencé(e)</li> <li>- Non, je ne suis pas les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike</li> <li>- Je n'ai jamais acheté un de leurs produits</li> </ul> | <p>Do you think the Nike brand's social networks have ever had an impact on one of your decisions to buy one of their products?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, I follow the social networks of the Nike brand and it has already influenced me</li> <li>- No, I follow the social networks of the Nike brand but it has never influenced me</li> <li>- No, I do not follow the social networks of the Nike brand.</li> <li>- I have never bought any of their products</li> </ul> <p>If yes, which product(s)? Please specify.</p> |
| <p>Si oui, quel(s) produit(s)? Merci de préciser</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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| <p>Si oui, le produit était-il porté par un sportif connu?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul>                                                                                            | <p>If yes, was the product worn by a famous athlete?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>                                                                                   |
| <p>Avez-vous déjà posé une/des question(s) sur les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul>                                                                 | <p>Have you ever asked a question(s) on the Nike brand's social networks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>                                                              |
| <p>Si oui, quel(s) type(s) de question avez-vous posé(s)? Merci de préciser</p>                                                                                                                                                  | <p>If yes, what type(s) of question(s) did you ask? Please specify.</p>                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>Avez-vous reçu une réponse?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul>                                                                                                                        | <p>Did you receive an answer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| <p>Si oui, quel(s) type(s) de réponse? Merci de préciser</p>                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>If yes, what type(s) of response? Please specify</p>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>Si oui, étiez-vous satisfait de la réponse donnée par Nike?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oui</li> <li>- Non</li> </ul>                                                                                        | <p>If yes, were you satisfied with the answer you received from Nike?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>                                                                  |
| <p>A quel point êtes-vous d'accord avec les affirmations suivantes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "En général, je dirais que j'aime suivre les publications de la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux"</li> </ul> | <p>To what extent do you agree with the following statements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "In general, I would say that I like to follow Nike's publications on its social networks"</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “La marque Nike fait bon usage de ses réseaux sociaux”</li> <li>- “Suivre la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux a un impact sur moi, cela m’inspire et me motive”</li> <li>- “En suivant la marque Nike sur ses réseaux sociaux, j’ai l’impression de faire partie d’une communauté”</li> <li>- “Une marque telle que Nike ne devrait communiquer sur ses réseaux sociaux qu’à propos de ses produits”</li> <li>- Les réseaux sociaux de la marque Nike donnent envie d’acheter leurs produits”</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The Nike brand makes good use of its social networks”</li> <li>- “Following the Nike brand on its social networks has a positive impact on me, it inspires and motivates me”</li> <li>- “By following the Nike brand on its social networks, I feel like belonging to a community”</li> <li>- “A brand such as Nike should only communicate on its social networks about its products”</li> <li>- “The Nike brand’s social networks make people want to buy their products”</li> </ul> |
| <p>5. Commentaire final</p> <p>Si vous avez une remarque quelconque au sujet de la marque Nike, de son image et/ou de sa communication sur ses réseaux sociaux, n'hésitez pas à laisser un commentaire ci-dessous</p> <p>(Si vous avez des questions plus précises, je serais ravie d'y répondre à l'adresse e-mail suivante: lauralannoo@hotmail.fr)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>5. Final comment</p> <p>If you have any comments about the Nike brand, its image and/or communication on its social networks, please feel free to leave a comment below.</p> <p>(If you have more specific questions, I would be happy to answer them at the following e-mail address: lauralannoo@hotmail.fr).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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Cf. attached documents for the results of this online survey and social network analysis.

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