

# Attracting Lifestyles

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Companies who invest in marketing activities in order to create a competitive advantage are said to have a value-expressive product or brand. To be persuasive and gain a positive brand attitude advertisements of these brands must appeal to consumers Ideal Self-Identity. This is referred to as an advertisement being self-congruent. However, studies have merely focused on communicating the theorized stereotype and not the individual's motivations for self-expression: assimilation or differentiation. For this reason the study of this thesis focus on 134 individuals divided into two segments, Differentiators and Assimilators, based on their motivation for self-expression in the social context of sport. They were exposed to two Nike commercials, one communicating a sense of community and the other individualism, in order to study their liking of the ads. Further analyses were made on the brand attitude and purchase intention of the advertised brand, Nike, in comparison with its most prominent competitor, adidas. Even though the segments liked the ads they did not show significant preference for one over the other. However, they did have a more positive brand attitude and higher purchase intention for Nike than adidas. These findings suggest that Nike has succeeded in creating positive brand awareness, which causes positive associations with the individual when exposed to the brand.

**Key words:**

value-expressive advertising, self-congruity, assimilation, differentiation

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Authors:  
Karolina Hedén Lind, 21796  
Lisa Gardefors, 21819

Examiner:  
Micael Dahmén

Advisor:  
Erik Modig

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“The brand is not simply reflecting your lifestyle, it is becoming your style of life”*

-Josip R. Petrusa

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

**Marlboro Friday.** In her book No Logo Naomi Klein argued that the event that took place April 3, 1993, commonly known as Marlboro Friday laid ground for what is today referred to as lifestyle brands. Marlboro was notorious for being a brand that heavily invested in marketing, with the Marlboro Man as the company’s spokesperson, and was thereby able to charge a premium price. This fatal Friday Marlboro was forced to drop their prices by 20% in order to compete on the market with low cost brands. The word on the street was that this was the death of brands and it caused companies to stop investing in marketing and instead focused on cutting costs. However, companies such as Nike, Apple, and Starbucks, did not agree but continued to nurture their brands. Because of the trend of price competition these companies were able to establish a dominant position with their brand as the competitive advantage. The main function of the brand was not only to inform the customer of a product but also to communicate the culture, values, and philosophy, of the company. Thereby a logo went from merely representing the function of a product to appealing emotionally to potential customers by the appeal of a lifestyle (Klein, Naomi 2009).

**Brand Personality.** The personality of a brand is used in marketing activities in order to differentiate the company from its competitors. It can be communicated in several ways where imagery, packaging, and sponsorship, are only a few (Phau, Ian 2001). Key is to establish positive associations that will be activated when the customer is exposed to the brand and thus yield a positive brand attitude. If this is done successfully it will trigger a need for the customer to associate itself with the brand. The Volkswagen Beetle started of as a “people’s car” but ended up representing people who were not materialistic, liked to make a statement of independence, and wanted to show that they went against convention. Managing brand equity is an ongoing project and must be monitored to react to moves of competitors and external factors that could potentially influence customer perception of the brand (Meenaghan, Tony 1992).

**Nike and adidas.** Nike and adidas are competitors in the sports lifestyle market of apparel and accessories and they both qualified in the top 100 of the World’s most Powerful Brand’s

list by Forbes (Forbes 2012). Although Nike ranks higher, adidas argues to be the first company to leverage their sports assets in the lifestyle arena (adidas group 2011). Both have succeeded in creating a high awareness for their signature logos. However, some might argue Nike's swoosh takes the prize considering the company does not feel the need to communicate the company name at all times as the logo is such a strong trademark (Goldman, Robert 1998).

**Communicating through Advertisement.** When the business model of a company focuses on attracting customers with the brand, rather than the functions of the product, it is known to be value-expressive. A natural effect is that advertisement communicating the brand needs to be value-expressive as well. In order for an advertisement of this nature to be persuasive and create a positive attitude it needs to focus appeal through an individual through self-congruency. That is it needs to appeal to four factors of Self-Identification a customer strives towards. An effective approach is to picture a stereotype, an individual with the ideal characteristics of the social context (Johar, J. S. 1991).

**Self-Image.** A value-expressive brand can benefit its consumers' need of self-expression and identity validation (Chernev, Alexander 2011). Thus brands can be used in the construal of the self (Phau, Ian 2001). An example is individuals expressing the belonging to, or distance from, a social group through a brand. Furthermore, consumers use brands to express sides of them to others that are not obvious without explicitly communicating them (Chernev, Alexander 2011) and to portray an image of how an individual want to be perceived without necessarily possessing those qualities (Birkner, Christine 2011). Because of the part brands play in the process of self-expression they are valued based on their match with the beliefs and principles of an individual (Birkner, Christine 2011). Therefore, an understanding of the individuals' motives for purchase is crucial to effectively advertise a brand (Orth, Ulrich R. 2004).

## 1.2 PROBLEM AREA

*"I don't know the rules of grammar. If you're trying to persuade people to do something, or buy something, it seems to me you should use their language."*

-David Ogilvy

Lifestyle brands, brands communicating the personalities of their customer's with the intention to become an attractive choice of purchase, are not an unexplored subject. Brand

building in order to create a philosophy of the brand is a long-term process (Klein, Naomi 2009) but is a necessity in order to breathe life into a product and create the optimal image for the brand (Meenaghan, Tony 1992). This has laid ground for extensive research in image creation and appropriate advertising. Johar and Sirgy (1991) argue that the advertisements of value-expressive products, or brands, need to appeal to the levels of self-congruency of a potential customer. This should be done through pictures communicating the stereotype an individual is striving towards in order to reach the aspired Ideal Self-Congruity and Ideal Social Self-Congruity (Johar, J. S. 1991).

Psychological theories, such as the Social Identity Theory, explain the need of an individual of self-expression in the construal of the self (Hogg, Michael A. 2006). Depending on the social context a consumer will strive towards a state of assimilation or differentiation with the group and will express the self accordingly by striving towards becoming similar to the desired stereotype. The purpose of pursuing a stereotype, thereby attaining assimilation or differentiation, is self-fulfillment through the validation of others or the feeling of being unique (Hogg, Michael A. 2006).

The findings of Johar and Sirgy (1991) match social psychological theories as they both argue an individual will be attracted towards a stereotype that represents the ideal state of being. This reinforces the argument that a stereotype should be communicated for effective advertisement. The findings have been tested with positively correlating results. Shavitt (1992) takes it as far as writing a response to Johar and Sirgy (1991) referring to previous work that proves an attraction between symbolic appeal of value-expressive products/brands and functional appeal to utilitarian products/brands. Auty and Elliot (1998) examined the implication of fashion brands by testing branded jeans vs. an identical pair that had been stripped of all signs of the brand among a mix of people to see if the self-congruency factors affected likeability. Liu (2012) finds a positive relationship between a self-congruency match of an individual with a tourist destination and destination loyalty. Jamal and Goode (2001) focus their study on the jewelry market where they find a positive relationship between self-congruence and the brand preference and satisfaction of a customer. The studies mentioned above are only a small share of the research that has been conducted on the subject of advertising self-congruency. Johar and Sirgy (1991) suggest further research in different social settings to prove the findings, since self-congruence needs varies between social contexts. Shavitt (1992) suggests further research on how advertisements should look to effectively communicate self-congruence.

Previous studies have in common a focus on communicating through stereotyping which will yield acceptance of others or the self. There are some weaknesses in this narrow focus. First, a state of assimilation or differentiation might be the major drive of motivation to an individual. By merely communicating a stereotype the company is focusing on the means to an end and not the end itself. Thereof, studies have focused on the communication of stereotypes but not on the desired motivation of being: assimilation or differentiation. Secondly, the way *Ideal Social Self Image* is described makes it out as a desire of mere acceptance and not standing out when, in fact, validation and belonging might be the motivation. Similarly, not enough emphasize is put on the motivation to stand out and be unique. Gaining an understanding of these missing factors could be of significant importance. It might be the key when communicating similar stereotypes but with different motivational drives.

Thereby a knowledge gap has been located regarding the communication of self-congruence. The lack of understanding communication of not only a stereotype but the motivational force that lies behind it, an ideal state of assimilation or differentiation. Since stereotypes could be similar for differing motivational drives of self-expression, adding this element could increase the effectiveness of an advertisement.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of this thesis is to combine theories of advertising efficiency and self-identification to get a better understanding of how they relate to each other. This will be done by testing the likeability of advertisements communicating a sense of assimilation, or differentiation, rather than merely picturing the stereotype that could work towards the aspired social state. This will tackle the problem of segments with similar stereotypes but differing drives of motivation. Further analysis will investigate the ads impact on the brand attitude and purchase intention.

### **1.4 DELIMITATION**

Since the motivation for self-expression, assimilation or differentiation, differs between social contexts this study was limited to focus on the market of sports products. Based on a number of criteria: targeting lifestyles, value-expressive communication efforts, a mature stage in the life cycle, brand awareness, and market leadership, Nike was chosen as the subject of focus in this study. adidas was chosen as the brand of comparison because of its status as Nike's most prominent competitor. Both brands position themselves on a global



market, which was necessary since the respondents were of different nationalities. Further, it was important that they had a dominant position in all geographical regions, as brand knowledge is key for this study. Unless respondents had knowledge of the brands they would not be able to respond to the survey.

Because the focus of the study was lifestyle segments no energy was put into targeting people of specific demographic characteristics, neither was questions asked regarding the demographics of the respondents. Instead efforts were made to spread the survey in a variety of social contexts; schools, workplaces, social media, etc. Since self-expressive needs differ depending on the situation the variety of context ought to target a representative sample of respondents.

The advertisements that were chosen were actual Nike advertisements. In order to get to the bottom of the attractiveness of communicating a sense of assimilation or differentiation the stereotypes pictures had many of the same characteristics. This ought to ensure that this study separate itself from earlier research on stereotypes. No ads by adidas were in the study to ensure that the results were purely a consequence of Nike ad exposure.

The questions regarding ad likability were limited to only focus on Nike. The intention was to attain clear results on the effect of the manipulation of the ads. However, brand attitude and purchase intention was investigated for both Nike and adidas.

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS

To make easier the reading of this thesis, the following are definitions of phrases that will be used throughout.

**Lifestyle Brands.** Brands that target segments based on their lifestyle and position themselves accordingly.

**Differentiators.** A lifestyle segment of individuals who value individualism and wish to stand out in a crowd, thereby not belong to a community in a given social context.

**Assimilators.** A lifestyle segment of individuals who value collectivism, seek appreciation from others, and wish to belong to a group in a given social context.

**Brand Equity.** The value that is assigned a product by a customer and thereby the reason a company can charge a premium price.

**Brand Knowledge.** The familiarity of the brand in the market, consists of two factors: brand attitude and brand awareness.

**Brand Attitude.** The feeling, positive or negative, a customer associates with a brand.

**Brand Awareness.** Describes how consumers make associations to a brand. Divided into brand recall and brand recognition.

**Brand Recall.** A consumer's ability to make an association with a brand when a need arises

**Brand Recognition.** A consumer's ability to make association with information from company communication when exposed to a brand

**Stereotyping.** When an individual idolize certain characteristics, the stereotype, and tries to become as similar to this ideal as possible. Resulting in self-evaluation based on the attributes of the stereotype instead of individual qualities.

**Self-Congruity.** The match of four factors of self-image of an individual with a brand advertisement that will affect likeability and persuasion of the ad

**Functional-congruency.** The match of performance-related attributes of a product with what the customer is expecting communicated through an advertisement

## 1.6 EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION

The intention of this thesis is to combine social psychological theories on lifestyles with marketing theories on how to communicate through advertisements. Focus will be put on examining self-expression through differentiation or assimilation as this is lacking in previous studies. Instead the focus has been put on testing the effectiveness of communicating stereotypes. This is indeed an efficient way of advertising but problems occur when stereotypes are similar between segments of differing needs of self-identification.

With this thesis we hope to add to the existing research of symbolic advertising by testing the attractiveness of communicating a state of being rather than the way to get there. In other words we will test the effectiveness of communicating a state of assimilation or differentiation rather than solely focusing on the attributes of the stereotype of the two situations. Brand attitude and purchase will also be studied following exposure of the ads with the intention to see if the ads left a positive impression on the individual. The purpose is to provide an understanding of how communicating a feeling of a state being can be a major

drive in a purchase intention, thus providing a way to advertise more efficiently. Hopefully, the findings of this study will inspire future research on the subject.

## 2. THEORY

*“A product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a customer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product can quickly outdated; a successful brand is timeless”*

-Stephen King, WWP Group

### 2.1 BRANDS

A brand is the name or logo of a company. However, more importantly is the potential it has to create a competitive advantage in the marketplace. A strong brand works as an entry barrier against new competitors who wish to establish their business in the industry. Further, the brand works as a point of reference for customers who intend to make a purchase (Aaker, David A. 1991).

Keeping a long-term perspective in mind when creating business strategies is crucial in order to gain a lasting profitability (Aaker, David A. 1991). Prahalad and Hamel (1990) agree and argue that short-term competitiveness has to do with price/performance while long-term competitiveness arrives from the ability to build the core competencies that creates unanticipated products at a lower and speedier way than the competitor. Therefore companies must optimize their skills, which are whatever competencies a company do better than competitors, and assets, material possessions of the company such as a production plant (Aaker, David A. 1991). These skills are communicated to the public through the brand (Meenaghan, Tony 1992).

From communicated information consumers will form an attitude towards the brand. The brand attitude is a crucial factor when a consumer intends to follow through a purchase as it could save them the trouble of conducting research beforehand. Thus, it is of outmost importance that the company's target segment experiences positive association towards the brand (Percy, Larry 2003).

### 2.2 BRAND EQUITY

Brand equity represents the value of a product assigned by the customer. More than representing the costs of production it combines the value of a number of factors that make up the product. Thus, brand equity consists of tangible and intangible building blocks that create the uniqueness of a brand that allows a company to charge a premium (Aaker, David A. 1991). Keller explains: “a brand is said to have positive (negative) customer-based brand

equity if consumers react more (less) favorably to the product, price, promotion, or distribution of the brand than they do to the same marketing mix element when it is attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product or service” (Keller, Kevin Lane 1993). Therefore, arguments could be made that brand equity is a result of the brand attitude of customers (Percy, Larry 2003).

Positioning describes the activities companies engage in to create a specific image or perception by consumers in a selected target market (Cant, Michael 2006). It is of highest priority to succeed with the positioning in the pursuit of high brand equity. However, no matter how impeccably the positioning is it will be worthless unless effectively communicated to create awareness (Percy, Larry 2003).

## **2.3 BRAND KNOWLEDGE**

Semantic network models describe the memory as consisting of a number of nodes that are connected in a network. When an idea is planted in the network it will activate the representing node, the prime, which will send out signals and activate other nodes associated with the idea, targets. This idea explains an individual’s evaluation process in a decision (Ratcliff, Roger 1988) and is therefore important to manage customer-based brand equity (Keller, Kevin Lane 1993). The intention is to create brand knowledge with a positive association between the prime, a consumer’s need, and the target, the brand or product (Percy, Larry 2003).

Brand knowledge is generally divided into two components, brand attitude and brand awareness. Brand awareness is in turn divided into two categories; brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition describes a customer’s ability to associate a brand with previously communicated information. Brand recall is a customer’s ability to make a connection to a brand when a need occurs (Keller, Kevin Lane 1993). An example of brand recognition is remembering previous information you have been taught about Electrolux when exposed to the brand whilst shopping for household appliances. Brand recall is what happens when you are hungry and start thinking about McDonalds. Brand attitude is the general feeling, positive or negative, the audience has towards a brand.

For a long time brand recall and brand recognition were treated separately. However, Rossiter, Percy, and Donovan (1991) argue in *A Better Advertising Planning Grid* that they are, in fact, dependent. “it is no use advertising to develop a favorable consumer attitude toward a product or brand unless the advertising first makes the consumer reliably aware of

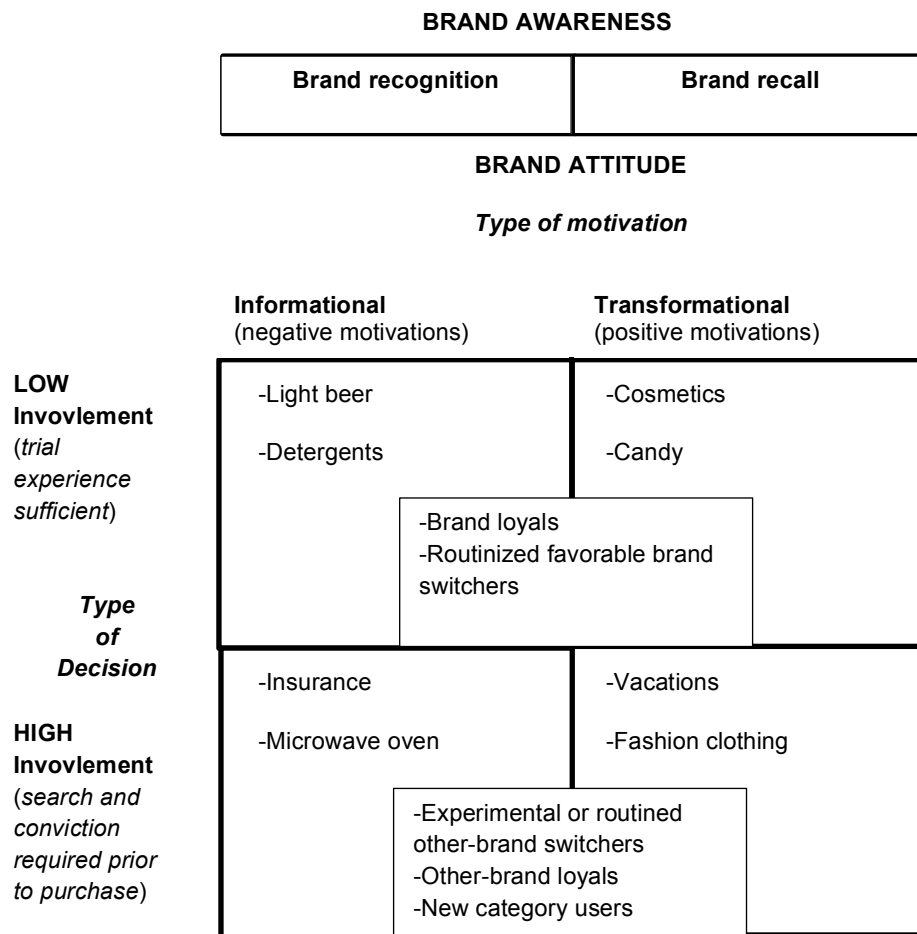
the brand either before or when in the choice situation.” They argue that the objective of any marketing effort is to maximize consumer’s brand attitude given brand awareness.

## **2.4 ADVERTISING**

### **2.4.1 FUNCTIONAL AND VALUE-EXPRESSIVE APPEAL**

In 1985 D Berger introduced an advertising planning tool, the FCB Grid, which could identify the nature of a product and recommend a suitable marketing strategy (Vaughn, Richard 1986). However, Rossiter, Percy, and Donovan (1991) saw some flaws in the model and introduced an updated version in A Better Advertising Planning Grid.

One of the advantages of the Rossiter-Percy Grid is the ability to not only identify effective marketing for a product but for a brand. By separating the product/brand based on customer involvement and its informational or transformational nature the grid could recommend a suitable advertisement strategy. The model makes the distinction of involvement as a function on the perceived risk of purchase experienced by the customer. The informational side describes the need for negative reinforcement whilst the transformational side describes how much effort needs to be put into positive reinforcement (Rossiter, John R 1991). A distinction of the models is the latter’s consideration of brand awareness. The strategies to create brand recognition or recall are different and not suited for all consumers and the model identifies which one to use (Rossiter, John R 1991).

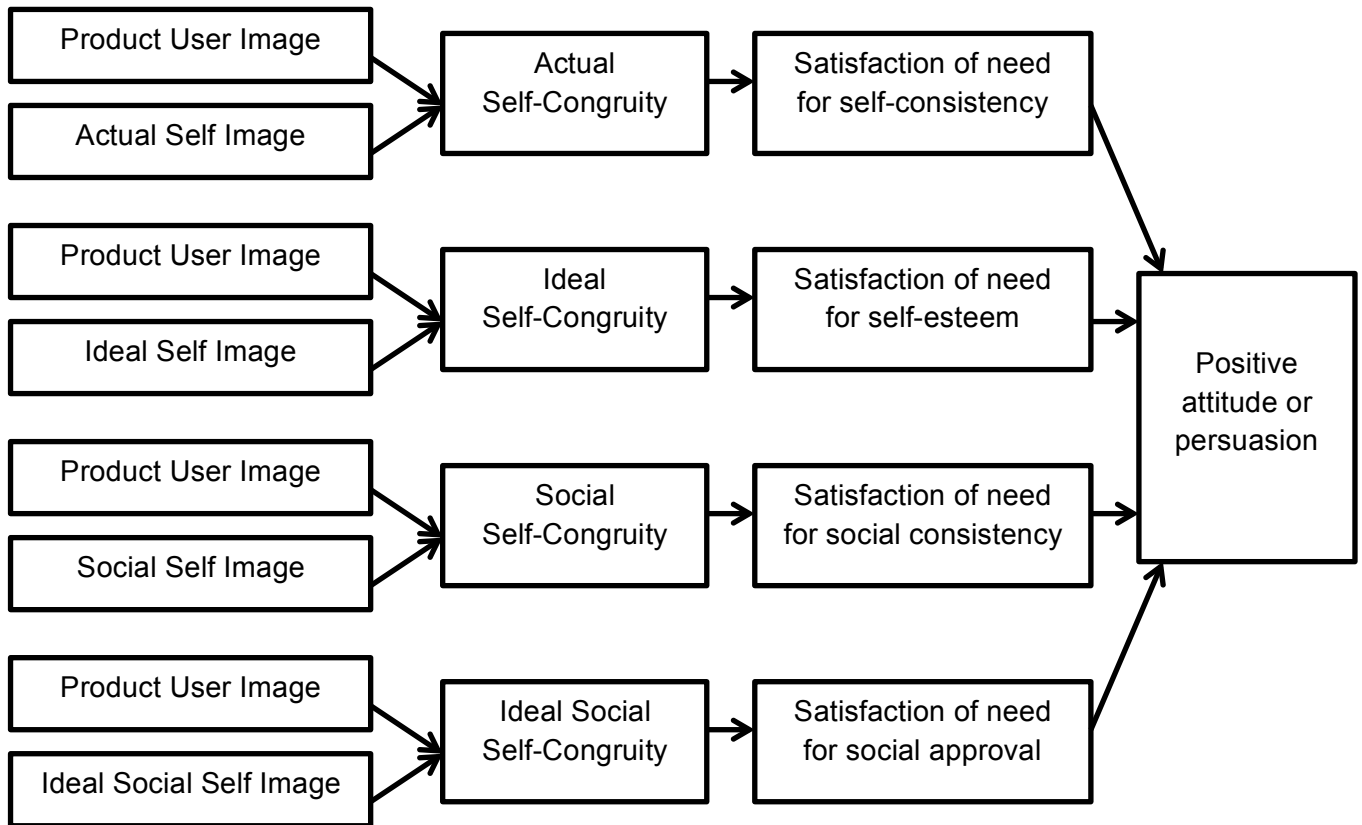
**Figure 1. Rossiter-Percy Grid**

Low involvement users do not need to be presented with a massive load of information in an advertisement. If the motive is informational the best-suited commercial simply states a few, easily learnt benefits. If the motivation is transformational the ad must connect to the target customers' emotions (Rossiter, John R 1991). High involvement users need to be persuaded that the offering is beneficial. Ads aimed towards informational motivated purchases must convey the benefits of the brand clearly. If the motivation is transformational emotional authenticity is crucial and the ad should communicate a sense of lifestyle (Rossiter, John R 1991).

Johar and Sirgy (1991) present a theory that builds on the Rossiter-Percy Grid and refers to informational, transformational, products/brands as utilitarian, value-expressive. They argue utilitarian advertisements should be functional-congruent whilst value-expressive advertisements should be self-congruent in order to be persuasive and create positive brand

attitude. That is, they need to match the consumers' thoughts on a functional or value-expressive level.

**Figure 2.** Different Forms or Types of Self-Congruity and Attitude Change Persuasion



An advertisement is functional-congruent if it matches the customer's belief of product performance. Correspondingly, a self-congruent advertisement matches a customer's self-concept. The self-concept consists of four different types of self-images: actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image. Actual self-image is how an individual perceives him/herself, the ideal self-image is how it wants to perceive itself, social self-image refers to the belief of how one is viewed by others, and the ideal self-image represents how an individual ideally would like to be viewed by others (Johar, J. S. 1991). The relationship of the self-concept factors is visualized in the model below.

Functional messages are often communicated through text or slogans whilst value-expressive are communicated through pictures by showing the typical person who would use the product, the stereotype. The self-congruity way of processing an ad is to focus on the source-related cues, i.e. one looks deeper behind the actual message of the ad. Thereby, attitudes and



knowledge of the brand affect the processing route. The functional-congruity process refers to individuals that appeals to the actual message and argument stated in the ad (Johar, J. S. 1991).

In the mature stage of the product life cycle brands and products in a market tend to become indistinguishable according to the benefits they offer. Thus in this stage a strong brand image becomes a crucial distinguisher for the company (Johar, J. S. 1991). Johar and Sirgy (1991) argue that the value-expressive appeal gets more effective the greater the level of brand or product maturity is.

## **2.5 TARGETING LIFESTYLES**

In the article Product Positioning by Behavioral-Lifestyles Gatty and Lewis explained a new way of targeting customers instead of focusing on demographics, which had been the tradition thus far. Focus was put on purchase patterns and product-use, something they referred to as “behavioral life-styles” (Alpert, Lewis 1969). Lifestyles can be explained as: “a distinctive or characteristic mode of living, in its aggregate and broadest sense, of a whole society or segment thereof... The aggregate of consumer purchase, and the manner in which they are consumed reflect a society’s [or] consumer’s lifestyle” (Krishnan, Jayasree 2011). Birkner (2011) explains the concept of lifestyle brands as: “attaching a philosophy that consumers identify with or aspire to”.

Lifestyle advertisements need to be self-congruent. Marketing managers of lifestyle brands must focus on what people like to do, their interests, and their opinions towards a certain matter. The basic idea is that the more marketers know about the customers and the better they understand them, the easier it will be to seize their attention and to serve their needs (Krishnan, Jayasree 2011). The customers of lifestyle brands often stay loyal to the brand creating a long-term profitability to the company. They tend to keep up with innovation purchasing new products while repurchasing older products which offerings have been tested and approved by the customer (Rossiter, John R 1991).

## **2.6 SPOKESPERSONS**

The use of celebrity spokespersons allows companies to promote their brands in the hope of accomplishing a unique, distinct, and relevant position. Due to their fame celebrities receive a high degree of attention and recall that places them in a position of being able to create a

large impact for a company. With their help companies can improve brand attitude and consumer purchase intention (Dr. Jain, Vipul 2011).

When choosing an endorser the company needs to consider the synergies that are created between the celebrity and the brand. Today's celebrities could be considered well-managed brands themselves, however, there are always potential liabilities with any celebrity. It is important to choose a celebrity whose brand matches that of the company and is congruent with customer ideals (Dr. Jain, Vipul 2011). McCracken's (1989) Meaning Transfer Process theory supports these claims. He suggests that cultural meanings affect the meaning of consumer goods and lastly the life of the consumer. These meanings are most effectively transferred through advertising and a spokesperson that represents these meanings is therefore a suitable tool for communication (McCracken, Grant 1989).

Simmers, Damron-Martinez, and Haytko (2009) have created a model for evaluating how well a specific celebrity can endorse a brand: the Endorser Sexpertise Continuum model. On the left side of the continuum are celebrities effective in communicating messages because of their expertise and trustworthiness. They are most suited for advertising high-involvement products/brands in their area of expertise. The right side represents celebrities who effectively communicate messages because of their familiarity and liking from consumers. These celebrities are suited for advertisement of low-involvement products/brands in a range of markets regardless of expertise (Simmers, Cristina S. 2009).

## **2.7 NIKE VS. adidas**

Nike and adidas are each other's greatest competitors in the sports lifestyle market of apparel and accessories. They both earned a spot on Forbes list of the World's Most Powerful Brands, adidas ended up as no 53 on the list and Nike was awarded the honorable spot as the 26<sup>th</sup> most powerful brand (Forbes 2012). Both brands qualify to the category as value-expressive: "What I mean is that marketing knits the whole organization together. The design elements and functional characteristics of the product itself are just part of the overall marketing process", says Nike's CEO Phil Knight (Willigan, Geraldine E. 1992) and adidas argues they were: "the first brand to credibly leverage its sports assets in the lifestyle arena" (adidas group 2011).

Being a lifestyle brand has allowed Nike to expand the company's product portfolio and enter new markets such as audio and smartphone applications (Birkner, Christine 2011). The same

goes for adidas that offers a product range including sports apparel and premium fashion (adidas group 2011).

In order to create the right image and brand personality adidas and Nike both have engaged in a variety of marketing strategies, including celebrity endorsement. Perhaps one of the most well known celebrity endorsement deals is Michael Jordan working as a spokesperson for Nike. He was honored with the Air Jordan line of sport shoes (Roll, Martin) and the logo of Michael Jordan dunking a basketball has become strongly associated with the Nike brand (Astramskas, David 2011). adidas did in fact pass up on working with Michael Jordan before he signed a contract with Nike (Astramskas, David 2011) but they have made up for by working with David Beckham amongst others (Adidas Endorsers).

## **2.8 LIFESTYLE MOTIVATION**

In every social context individuals have the choice of joining, or separating themselves from the in-group. Thereby becoming part of a lifestyle is an active choice he, or she, makes (Hogg, Michael A. 2006).

### **2.8.1 THE SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY**

Tajfel developed the Social Identity Theory inspired by the rise of the Nazis during World War 2 to theorize the phenomenon of group identification. The theory states that people have different social and personal identities for each social context they act in and they all vary in subjective importance (Hogg, Michael A. 2006).

Assimilation refers to the concept of being part of a group, thereby inclusion and belonging. Differentiation is quite the opposite referring to the need for distinctiveness from others (Pickett, Cynthia L. 2001). Hogg (2006) defines a group as: “if three or more people construe and evaluate themselves in terms of shared attributes that distinguish them collectively from other people.” Emphasis is put on them having to consider themselves as homogenous, people might be alike without feeling a belonging to a group if they do not recognize the similarity (Hogg, Michael A. 2006).

Categorizing someone as member of a group change the way the other members evaluate that person. It can be described as a process of depersonalization. The person goes from being considered an idiosyncratic individual to the typical group member. Now the individual is assessed on the terms of the group and the typical characteristics it holds. Favorable in-group perceptions arises when the attributes of the individual are considered positive while negative

attributes, often out-group attributes, leads to a unfavorable in-group perception (Hogg, Michael A. 2006).

The concept of depersonalization can be referred to as stereotyping. It happens when an individual, or a group, bases evaluation of an individual's characteristics on the stereotype. Since this includes a way of thinking and behaving, and is normative for the group, it creates loyalty and trust within the community. When the group prototype is the basis of evaluation the members pay attention to information about it and monitor how well they, and others, match the description. This comes as a result of feelings from the group towards a member changing according to how well they fit. Too big of a difference from the prototype might lead to resentment from the group while similarity could lead to group approval. Another interpretation is that prototypical group members will be popular whilst members who are not prototypical will be less popular and could even become unpopular. Therefore, it is important to be as stereotypical as possible for group cohesiveness, a feeling of being one with fellow members (Hogg, Michael A. 2006).

### **2.8.2 THE OPTIMAL DISTINCTIVENESS THEORY**

In 1991 the article *The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time* by Marilynn B. Brewer was published. The text presents a theory, the Optimal Distinctiveness theory, which takes root in the Social Identity Theory (Brewer, Marilynn B. 1991). It describes the shaping of social identities as derived from countervailing needs of standing out and being unique versus the need for similarity to others and validation (Brewer, Marilyn B. 2003).

One way to think of the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory is to picture a scale on which the factors are the two extremes, two opposites. These conflicting needs of assimilation and differentiation work against each other until equilibrium is found on the scale (Moss, Dr Simon 2009). Therefore, social identities derive where the equilibrium is found. The most extreme cases would entail total inclusiveness in every collective on the one hand and complete immersion on the other (Brewer, Marilynn B. 2001). However, most often individuals are not located on the very ends. They will make changes to their identities in order to move on the scale if their current position differs from the ideal, the bigger the gap the more radical the changes (Moss, Dr Simon 2009).

The theory explains the group as a collective unit that transcends individual level identities. Thus the social identity can also be referred to as a collective social identity as the preference

of groups, which individuals wish to be part of, are considered. Collective social identities find equilibrium when an individual feels included and validated by the group while differentiated from those who are not part of the collective (Brewer, Marilynn B. 2001).

## **2.9 HYPOTHESES**

Given the information above you can divide customers into two segments of differing motivations for self-expression: Assimilators and Differentiators. An assimilator uses a brand to feel belonging to, and gain validation from, a group whilst a differentiator wishes to stand out and gains self-fulfillment by feeling unique.

Since value-expressive advertisements persuade individuals and gain positive brand attitude through self-congruence it becomes obvious that differentiators should be attracted by advertisements communicating a sense of individualism whilst assimilators would prefer a feeling of community.

Since the focus of previous studies has been on the communication of the stereotype that fits an individual's Ideal Self-Identification but not on communicating the motivation for these stereotypes, assimilation or differentiation, a gap in the research of value-expressive advertising was found. For this reason the following hypotheses have been derived:

H1. The likeability of value-expressive advertisements picturing celebrities will be higher for Differentiators (target segment) than Assimilators.

H2. The likeability of value-expressive advertisements picturing groups will be higher for Assimilators (target segment) than Differentiators.

H3. The brand attitude of the target segment will be more positive towards the advertised brand than the competitor, which has not been advertised

H4. The purchase intention of the target segment will be higher for the advertised brand than the competitor, which has not been advertised

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Malhotra and Naresh's (2007) description this thesis follows a deductive research approach. This approach identifies a research area from existing theory and uses the theory as guidance throughout the study process. Hypotheses are derived from theory and tested to see if they are true or not. Depending on the outcome the hypotheses are accepted or rejected (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007). Based on the findings of Johar and Sirgy (1991) and Shavitt (1992) a problem area and issue was identified and became the focus of this study. The hypotheses were derived in order to test the theory in a new context.

The study will be conducted through an experiment that will be analyzed through quantitative, primary, data collected through an online survey. Existing theories and research laid base for the design of the survey used to collect the data.

This paper starts of with a conclusive design followed by a causal research design, thus the causality between independent and dependent variables will be the focus of study (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007).

#### **3.2 CHOICE OF METHOD**

A value-expressive product or brand needs a value-expressive advertisement, which in turn should be self-congruent with the audience. This is done by picturing and communicating a stereotype that the customer would find ideal (Johar, J. S. 1991). The research of this thesis was designed to determine how the lifestyle choice of an individual influence whether or not an advertisement is appealing to that person. Further research as suggested by Johar and Sirgy (1991) would then cover ad liking, brand attitude, and purchase intention.

Depending on the social context an individual will feel a need to express assimilation or differentiation (Hogg, Michael A. 2006). Thus, features that appeal to an Assimilator or a Differentiator in one context may not be appealing for that individual in another context. For this thesis two brands in one single market were identified. One would work as the study object and advertisements of this brand would be used in the experiment. The other would function as a subject of comparison and no ads from this brand would be featured in the experiment. The reason for only using advertisements from one brand was the desire to analyze only the effects of that communication. The brands were chosen based on the following number of criteria:

1. The brands must consider themselves lifestyle brands and base their business model on marketing activities
2. Based on the first criteria, the brands must be value-expressive and must communicate accordingly
3. The brands must be in a mature stage of their life cycle
4. The advertised brand should be the market leader and the compared brand should be its most significant competitor
5. Based on the fourth criteria the brands need to have high brand awareness
6. The stereotypes used in each advertisement should have similar characteristics
7. The advertisements should clearly appeal to the consumers' need of assimilation or differentiation
8. The brands must be international since the experiment is conducted on a global market

Nike and adidas fit the picture of the criteria above and were therefore chosen as the brands to be used in this study. Since Nike was ranked higher amongst the most powerful brands in the world (Forbes 2012) it was chosen as the study object whilst adidas was chosen as the subject of comparison. It was of highest importance to choose value-expressive brands with high involvement as the study regards self-expression through brands. They needed to be mature and market leaders to ensure brand knowledge amongst respondents. Lastly, because the survey was spread to different nations it was important the brands worked in a global market and had high brand awareness in every geographical region.

The advertisements used in the study needed to picture similar stereotypes but communicate different motivations for self-expression in order to truly test the respondents' desire for assimilation or differentiation. Therefore, two ads were chosen picturing famous athletes. They clearly communicated a sense of superiority, individualism, and distinction, qualities a Differentiator should value. Two other ads were chosen to target the Assimilator segment. They pictured homogenous groups working out together and thereby a sense of community. The chosen ads suited the motive as they pictured similar stereotypes but different motivational drives for self-expression.

### 3.3 DIVIDING INTO SEGMENTS

In order to divide the respondents into two lifestyle segments, Assimilators and Differentiators, they were asked the question: *Is it important to you that the people you work out with think you are doing a good job?* The question will hereon be referred to as the segment focal question. The respondents had the choice of responding yes or no to the segment focal question. By doing so the respondents had to take a moment to think about the answer to realize if they valued assimilation or differentiation.

The survey question was designed to cover several areas of interest in order to accurately divide the segments. By assuming the respondent worked out in groups, Differentiators who do not train with others were automatically sorted into the no respondent category and assimilators who do work out in group were likely to answer yes. Furthermore, by clearly asking the respondents if they cared about others opinion about whether or not they were doing a *good* job both segments could be addressed. Assimilators, with a need of validation from others, will automatically answer yes, whilst Differentiators, who do not care about others opinion, will answer no. If Differentiators were to care about others opinion it would not be on how *good* they are but rather on how much they differ from what the group considers positive. This comes as a result of the Differentiator segment wanting to separate themselves from the group.

### 3.4 EXPERIMENT

In order to conduct the experiment a survey was created in the online survey tool Qualtrics. A survey could only contain either celebrity or group pictures and all surveys contained a pair of either kind of advertisement. Therefor the surveys were assigned the names: Group ads and Celebrity ads.

All ads came from real Nike campaigns. The Celebrity ads pictured the Nike spokespersons Cristiano Ronaldo and Maria Sharapova performing their sports with Nike clothes and equipment. These ads were supposed to attract the Differentiator segment that strived towards a feeling of individualism.



The second pair of advertisements pictured a group of women ready to work out and a group of men and women mixed up during a running workout, both displayed motivational phrases on the pictures. This ad where directed towards the Assimilator segment.

The independent variables, the ads, were randomly distributed to the respondents who were then asked to answer 16 questions. First, they were given statements regarding their feelings towards the advertisement they had been exposed to and they were asked to rank how well they agreed with the statement. A Likert scale was used with five response categories ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007). Thereafter, the respondents were asked questions regarding their brand attitudes and purchase intention for Nike and adidas. The questions for each brand were handled separately and not as a combined factor. If the respondents are knowledgeable or interested in the subject many response categories may be used (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007). The respondents in this study where assumed to have a relatively high knowledge about their opinions towards the brands. Thus, a response scale with seven categories was used. Lastly, the respondents answered the segment focal question. Malhotra and Naresh (2007) argue that how the data is supposed to be analyzed and used should influence the choice of number of categories. For the last question only the answer yes and no were available as the purpose was to divide the two segments upon this question and thus few response categories was desired.

In order to obtain as neutral data as possible, balanced scales were used through the survey, where favorable and unfavorable categories were equal. Apart from the segment focal question, odd numbers were used in the survey since some respondents were assumed to be neutral, and therefore a middle category could work as their response. For the segment focal question even number of categories were applied to force a response in order to reduce the risk of neutral answers (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007). Furthermore, the claim of forced response was assigned to all questions and statements to decrease the likelihood of missing values.

This thesis seeks to examine the respondents’ lifestyle, which is why the demographic aspects, such as age and occupation, of the individuals were not of interest. Thus questions about the respondents’ demographics were not included in the survey.

### **3.5 PRETESTING THE EXPERIMENT**

After careful studies of social psychological and marketing theories the hypotheses for the survey was derived. These lay the foundation for the design of the survey that would be used in order to collect the necessary data to conduct the analysis.

In order to outline the survey in an optimal way the questionnaire was pilot-tested on two individuals (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007) per advertisement through a qualitative interview. This was done to make sure respondents understood and accurately answered the survey questions. The interviews resulted in improved formulation of the questions and ensured that the advertisements fulfilled their purpose.

### **3.5 SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION**

The Qualtrics survey was open for data collection between March 27<sup>th</sup> and April 7<sup>th</sup>. The survey was distributed through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, but it was also distributed via mail to several companies, such as ST1 and Skatteverket, and also published on the fitness blog I Used To Be Fat (von Benson Hollesen, Alexandra 2013). There were 134 respondents who completed the survey, 64 respondents qualified in the Assimilator segment while 70 respondents were identified as Differentiators.

### **3.6 SAMPLE SELECTION**

For the sample to be as representative as possible the survey was distributed in a variety of social contexts with people of differing demographics; students, workers in the private sector, workers in the public sector, and pensioners. The survey was spread out to respondents in Sweden but also in Europe and the United States. The fact that the majority of the students that responded to the survey were concentrated to the more recognized institutions in Sweden, such as Stockholm School of Economics and the Royal Institute of Technology, increased the risk of a skewed sample. However, since the survey also was sent out to a range of respondents with different occupations, age, and geographical locations the risk of selection bias decreases (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007).

### **3.7 RELIABILITY**

The reliability of an experiment refers to the extent results are consistent when measurements are repeated. Having respondents participate in the same experiment at two different points in time can monitor the reliability. However, problems associated with these kinds of tests are that the first experiment may influence an individual to respond differently in a repeated

experiment. Furthermore, repeated measurements may be unnecessary if the respondents' initial reaction is what is sought for.

In order to reach a higher reliability one can ask the respondents the same question formulated in different ways (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007). This theory was applied for the questions regarding brand attitude. A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to control the questions' internal consistency reliability. If this is higher than a critical level one can merge the questions in the data analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha test generated results over 0,7, which in general indicates satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2010).

### **3.8 VALIDITY**

The validity of a scale explains the extent results are due to the measured questions or systematic and random errors. The validity can be divided into internal and external validity (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007).

#### **3.8.1 INTERNAL VALIDITY**

The internal validity looks to the extent the independent variable, the ads, is the cause for the outcomes of the dependent variables, the statements and questions. If the responses are influenced by extraneous variables it is hard to measure a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007).

To ensure a high internal validity in this study the surveys looked exactly the same for every respondent except for the manipulate variable, the advertisements. Moreover, the answers were collected during a week and a half, thus the effect of external circumstances that change over time was reduced.

#### **3.8.2 EXTERNAL VALIDITY**

The external validity determines if the causal effect can be generalized on a broader level. Factors that threaten the internal validity can also be threats for the external validity in the sense that if the experiment has a low internal validity the results will not be possible to generalize (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007).

The thesis seeks to study the lifestyle of the respondents. The survey was consciously distributed to a wide range of age groups, occupation groups, and geographical groups. There are probably additional individuals that belong to the Differentiator or the Assimilator

segment, and with this in mind it could be argued for that the sample is homogenous and that the results can be generalized for a larger population.

### **3.9 ANALYSIS METHODS AND TOOLS**

The statistical analytics tool SPSS was used to analyze the collected data. The number of respondents was larger than 30 thus normal distributions could be assumed (Malhotra, Naresh K. 2007). The group means were compared in independent t-tests since there were only two groups in this study. Furthermore paired t-tests were applied when the mean difference between questions was measured. A significance level of 10 percent was chosen in the data analysis, meaning that there is a 10 percent probability that the analyses drawn from the data are incorrect. However, several of the results revealed statistical significance at a lower level.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

After the data was collected the frequencies for the segment focal question *Is it important to you that the people you work out with think you are doing a good job* was tested. The Qualtrics survey was completed by 134 out of which 64 answered yes and 70 answered no.

**Table 1.** Segment frequency table

Segments	Number of Respondents
Assimilator	64
Differentiator	70
Total	134

Of the respondents 66 were exposed to the Celebrity ads and 68 were exposed to the Group ads. Based on their answer to the segment focal question the respondents were divided into two segments; Assimilators and Differentiators. The data showed that in the Assimilator segment 31 had completed the survey with the Celebrity ads and 33 with the Group ads. In the Differentiator segment the number of respondents were 35 and 35 respectively.

**Table 2.** Segments divided into ad-type

	Differentiator	Assimilator	Total
<b>Celebrity ad</b>	35	31	66
<b>Group ad</b>	35	33	68
<b>Total</b>	70	64	

As described in the method chapter, formulating several questions asking for the same answer can increase reliability. This was done for the questions regarding the Nike and adidas brand attitude. Therefore, they were merged together in the data analysis in order to get a collective mean. To control the questions' internal consistency a Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted.

The test generated a result of 0,939 for the Nike questions and 0,950 for the Adidas questions. According to Malhotra (2010) the alpha value should be larger than 0,7, which indicates that the brand attitude questions are reliable to merge.

**Table 3.** Internal reliability Nike

Cronbach's Alpha	0,939
Number of items	3

**Table 4.** Internal reliability Adidas

Cronbach's Alpha	0,950
Number of items	3

#### 4.1 THE CELEBRITY ADS

An independent t-test was conducted in order to compare the means of advertising likeability responses. One test was made for the Celebrity ads and one for the Group ads. This made a comparison possible for the likeability of the ads depending on what segment the respondent belonged to. Table 8 summarizes the results of the likeability questions for the Celebrity ads divided by segment.

**Table 8.** Effects of Celebrity ad: independent t-test

Variable	Segment	Mean	Std. Deviation	Significance
I like the ads.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,77 3,71	0,717 0,710	0,368
I find the ads motivational.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,29 3,60	1,039 0,847	0,097*
The ads make me want to work out.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,32 3,29	1,222 1,100	0,449
Judging from the ads I share values with Nike.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,06 3,20	0,929 0,833	0,269
The ads make me like Nike.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,13 3,40	0,991 0,775	0,113
The ads make me want to associate myself with Nike.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,19 3,20	1,195 0,994	0,491
The ads make me want to use Nike's products.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,29 3,49	1,131 0,919	0,221

\*P<0,1 \*\*p<0,05 \*\*\*p<0,001

The answers to these statements were ranged on a scale from one to five and looking at the segments' means of the statements both found the ad appealing. However, the Assimilators

had a higher likeability of the ad than the actual target segment, the Differentiators. If one study the fourth statement in the table *Judging from the ads I share values with Nike* the Differentiator segment are more likely to share Nike's values than the Assimilators. Important to keep in mind is that none of these differences are statistically significant which means that the results may be due to chance only. In statement three *The ads make me want to work out*, six *The ads make me want to associate myself with Nike*, and seven *The ads make me want to use Nike products* the segments' opinions does not differ significantly. Statement two *I find the ads motivational* show that there is a statistical difference between the segments when it comes to motivation. The Differentiators find the Celebrity ads more motivational than the Assimilators do. Also, the ads make the Differentiators like Nike more than the Assimilators do, with close to statistical significance.

The next step in the analysis was to study the brand attitude and purchase intention of respondents after having been exposed to the advertisements. This was done through a comparison of Nike with its most prominent competitor adidas.

**Table 6.** Differentiators' brand attitude of Nike and adidas: paired t-test

Brand Attitude	Mean	Std. Deviation	Significance
Nike	5,45	1,16	0,016**
adidas	4,88	1,28	

\*P<0,1 \*\*p<0,05 \*\*\*p<0,001

The p-value 0,016<0,05 indicate that there is a statistical significant difference between the Nike and adidas brand attitudes. When the Differentiator segment is exposed to the Celebrity ad the segment have a higher likeability, 5.45, of the Nike brand than the adidas brand, 4.88. To measure purchase intention the question: *What is the likelihood that you will purchase Nike/Adidas products in the future*, was asked. It yielded the results presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Differentiators' purchase intention: paired t-test

Purchase Intention	Mean	Std. Deviation	Significance
Nike	5,71	1,49	0,003
adidas	4,83	1,72	

\*P<0,1 \*\*p<0,05 \*\*\*p<0,001

For Nike products the respondents' answers generated a mean of 5,71, which is relatively high on the seven step rating scale that was used. That is, the respondents are most likely willing to purchase Nike products in the future. The likelihood that the respondents will purchase adidas products is lower, with a mean of 4,83. Thus, after seeing the Celebrity ad, the Differentiator segment is more positive towards purchasing products of the Nike brand than from adidas. These figures are statistically significant with the p-value  $0,003 < 0,05$ .

## 4.2 THE GROUP ADS

Like for the Celebrity ads an independent t-test was conducted to compare the segments means for the likeability of the Group ads. The results are presented in Table 8 below.

**Table 8.** Effects of Assimilator ad: independent t-test

Variable	Segment	Mean	Std. Deviation	Significance
I like the ads.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,58 3,83	0,792 0,857	0,106
I find the ads motivational.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,39 3,69	0,966 0,796	0,090*
The ads make me want to work out.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,48 3,74	0,939 0,919	0,129
Judging from the ads I share values with Nike.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,42 3,60	1,001 0,914	0,227
The ads make me like Nike.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,30 3,57	1,015 0,979	0,136
The ads make me want to associate myself with Nike.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,24 3,49	1,032 0,981	0,162
The ads make me want to use Nike's products.	Assimilator Differentiator	3,45 3,63	0,938 1,003	0,231

\*P<0,1 \*\*p<0,05 \*\*\*p<0,001

Comparing the means an observation is made that Assimilators, who were the Group ads target segment, in fact had a lower liking of the ads than the Differentiators, with a mean of



3,58 and 3,83 respectively. Neither did the Group ads affect Assimilators to want to work out more than it did Differentiators. However, the results are close to but not actually significant, meaning there is a possibility they are not accurate but rather due to chance. Throughout the rest of the statements the Differentiators gave a higher response to the Group ads than the Assimilator segment. That is, the Differentiators are more likely to share values with Nike, associate with Nike, like Nike, and use Nike's products. However, important to keep in mind is that these figures are not proven to be statistically significant.

The ad likeability test was followed up with an analysis of the segments that had been exposed to the Group ads, brand attitude towards Nike. Like previously done, a comparison was made with adidas.

**Table 9.** Assimilators' brand attitude of Nike and Adidas: paired t-test

Brand Attitude	Mean	Std. Deviation	Significance
Nike	5,85	1,10	0,000***
adidas	4,74	1,51	

\*P<0,1 \*\*p<0,05 \*\*\*p<0,001

The Assimilators showed a high likeability for the Nike brand with a mean of 5,85 at a seven step rating scale. This was considerably higher than the adidas mean that turned out to be 4.74. Just like the Differentiator segment the Assimilators showed a more positive brand attitude towards Nike than adidas, with a statistical significance of  $0,000 < 0,001$ .

The brand attitude analysis was followed up with an analysis of the Assimilator segments' purchase intention of Nike compared to that of adidas. The findings are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Assimilators' purchase intention: paired t-test

Purchase Intention	Mean	Std. Deviation	Significance
Nike	6,18	1,24	0,001**
adidas	5,15	1,72	

\*P<0,1 \*\*p<0,05 \*\*\*p<0,001

Similarly to the previous study the Assimilators showed a higher purchase intention for Nike, with a mean of 6.18, than for adidas, that generated a mean score of 5.15.

The findings in the study are similar for the Differentiator and Assimilator segments. Both were positive towards the ads but did not show a significant preference for neither the Celebrity ads or the Group ads. The segments did however have a more positive brand attitude and purchase intention for the Nike brand than they did for adidas after having been exposed to their intended advertisement.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

This chapter concerns the findings of the analysis and a discussion is held on potential factors that might have influenced the outcome. Each area of analysis, ad likeability, brand attitude, and purchase intention, is touched upon from the point of view of both segments.

### 5.1 AD LIKEABILITY

Both segments were positive towards both the Celebrity and Group ads. However, a significant difference in preference of one ad over the other could not be proved for either segment, the means were fairly similar. The Differentiators did find the celebrity ad more motivational than did the Assimilators, which agrees with their theorized motivation of differentiation. However, they did show a higher motivation for the Group ad as well, indicating that the stereotypes in the ad might be more motivating than the sense of individualism or community. Overall, the results were higher for the Differentiators suggesting they are more interested in sports. For this reason they would be more involved and put a higher risk on a purchase of the products/brands they use whilst working out than the Assimilators.

**Celebrity ads.** Simmers, Damron-Martinez, and Haytko's (2009) theory about the Endorser Sexpertise Continuum model can explain why Cristiano Ronaldo did not affect the respondents as expected in this experiment. Following the theory, Ronaldo would fall into the right side of the model and thus focus would lie on his personality and physical features. Ronaldo is by many seen as a moody and arrogant person, which has made him unpopular (Maston, Tom 2012). A top match from a Google search of Ronaldo regards a rumored cheating scandal of the football player (Google 2013) and a couple of years back he was arrested for rape (Sullivan, Mike 2007). These factors could negatively impact Ronaldo's trademark, make him less marketable, thereby influencing the result in this study and could be the reason why Differentiators were not more attracted towards the ad (Simmers, Cristina S. 2009).

According to Simmers, Damron-Martinez, and Haytko (2009) Maria Sharapova falls in the category of likeable celebrity endorsers, which makes her a suitable spokesperson for low-involvement products (Simmers, Cristina S. 2009). Since Nike can be seen as a high-involvement brand, that consumer's use for self-expressive needs, Sharapova might not be a perfect match.

**Group ads.** A plausible explanation to why the Group ads did not have the impact that was expected is that it failed in activating the intended associations. One of the groups pictured consisted solely of women and the other was a mix of genders. However, the person in focus in the mixed group was a woman. Given a representative sample of respondents about half of should be male. Since Assimilators imitate a stereotype in order to become members of a group these ads were not optimal in order to attract Assimilators who strive towards a masculine community. Assimilators showed a higher liking for the Celebrity ads than the Group ads. This is possibly a consequence from the more manly design with a black background. Another possibility is that the spokespersons in the Celebrity ads represent the stereotype an individual believes the group would appreciate and award positive validation.

According to Johar and Sirgy (1991) the likelihood of persuasion and likeability is higher if there is congruence between the product image and the audience's ideal self-image from the point of view of the self and the group. According to the findings it is likely the Celebrity ads better represent the ideal self than the Group ads.

## 5.2 BRAND ATTITUDE

Even though the segments did like the ads they were exposed to, no considerable preference was shown for either of them. Neither was the mean of likeability particularly high, meaning they liked the ads but were not overjoyed with them. Still both segments showed a significant difference in brand attitude between Nike and adidas, where Nike scored higher.

The reasons for the difference in brand attitude can be explained by the marketing activities Nike engages in. The brand has successfully gained high brand knowledge and has established positive associations with the brand. This supports Forbes claim that Nike is a more powerful brand than adidas. When respondents were exposed to the Nike brand they were reminded of positive information they had previously been taught through communication from the company. Since adidas was not communicated through advertisement the brand did not have a chance to activate as many positive associations with the consumer's as Nike did.

In summation, the hypothesis *The brand attitude of the target segment will be more positive towards the advertised brand than the competitor, which has not been advertised* was true. However, perhaps not so much for the likeability of the ads as the advertisements activating positive associations with the Nike brand that had been created through previous communication from the company. The respondents were not presented with adidas ads. Had

they been, positive associations towards that brand might have been activated and the results would potentially turn out more similar.

### **5.3 PURCHASE INTENTION**

Similar to brand attitude both segments had a higher purchase intention of the Nike brand than adidas. Therefore the hypothesis *The purchase intention of the target segment will be higher for the advertised brand than the competitor, which has not been advertised* was accepted.

According to Percy (2003) the brand attitude is major influence on purchase intention. Taking up on the discussion of brand attitude, which was proven positive, it explains the strong purchase intention for the Nike brand over adidas. There is a domino effect where marketing activities create positive associations with the brand in the mind of a consumer. These associations lay ground for a positive brand attitude, which in turn causes a high purchase intention. One could argue the overall image of the Nike brand is more important than an individual commercial.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The thesis did not prove all hypotheses right. Even though the segments did like the ads no significant preference of type of advertisement could be proven for either segment. Possible explanations were brought up in the discussion to why the segments did not prefer the commercial that was intended to appeal to their ideal Social Self-Identity.

The Celebrity ads that targeted the Differentiator segment, with a need of feeling unique, might have experienced a miss-match with the celebrity spokespersons. External factors might have had a negative impact on the celebrity's trademark thereby decreasing its general likeability, making it less marketable. Another explanation is that the celebrities were simply not suited for advertising of the Nike brand.

The Group ads targeted the Assimilator segment by appealing to their need of validation from the group. The reason why these ads were not successful in the positioning might be because they did not appeal to all stereotypes. The models were dominantly female and might not have been attractive for an individual looking to join a masculine community.

Even though the ads failed in attracting their intended target segment the brand attitude and purchase intention of Nike was positive and significantly higher than that of adidas. The most realistic explanation for this is that Nike has managed in creating positive associations with the brand, which were activated when the consumer was exposed to the advertisements. adidas was not communicated, which could be an explanation to why the adidas brand attitude and purchase intention was lower.

### **6.2 CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY**

Even though the survey was consciously spread in various social contexts in order to make the sample as representative as possible there is no way to be sure this was done successfully. More respondents would have been a way to monitor this risk of respondent bias. The thesis sought to examine individuals' lifestyles and how they affect brand attitude, likeability, and purchase intention, thereof; the demographics were of no interest. However, the demographics could have been a good indicator of the representative nature of the sample.

Furthermore, one cannot be certain of the external validity of the analysis. It is unsure if the causality between the dependent and independent variables are applicable to a larger

population. Therefor one cannot with full confidence argue that the findings can be generalized for the subject. Moreover, a statistical significance level of 10 percent was used in the data analysis. However, if the significance level had been lower some of the results would not have been significant. Some might argue a significance level of five percent would have been better suited.

A pre-test of the study was conducted in order to assure the respondents would understand the questions asked. However, the test only included a small sample of respondents. For better accuracy more individuals should have been interviewed about the design of the survey.

Lastly, more effort could have gone into investigating the most suited advertisements for this study. As it turned out other factors than the motivation of assimilation or differentiation affected the respondent's answers. This could have been prohibited if the ads were chosen more carefully. Further investigations of an optimal focal segment questions could also have been useful in order to accurately divide into segments.

### **6.3 SUGGESTION OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

The study of this thesis focuses on sports brands. However, in each social context motivations for self-expression vary. Therefor it would be of interest to conduct the same experiment in other industries to see the consistency of the results. Keeping in mind the importance of choosing the right articles in order to make sure it is the motivation for self-expression that affects the liking and not the stereotype.

The discussion chapter indicated that the brand attitude and purchase intention of Nike might show a significantly higher grade because the adidas brand was not communicated in a commercial. Meaning only positive associations towards Nike were activated and not towards adidas. Therefore, a similar study including advertisements of both brands would make an interesting comparison. The results would indicate which brand had succeeded better in establishing positive brand knowledge. Further, it would prove if Forbes was right to name Nike the more powerful brand out of the two rivals.

Lastly, like other authors have suggested, further studies on the design of value-expressive advertisements are relevant. Following the findings of this study, a design to communicate assimilation or differentiation is of interest.

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## 8 ATTACHMENTS

### 8.1 THE CELEBRITY ADS

Take a moment to study the ads.



Please answer the following questions regarding the ads above.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I like the ads.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find the ads motivational.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me want to work out.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Judging from the ads I share values with Nike.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me like Nike.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me want to associate myself with Nike.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me want to use Nike's products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your overall opinion of Nike?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad:Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfavorable:Favorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not likeable:Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the likelihood that you will purchase Nike products in the future?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not likely:Very likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your overall opinion of Adidas?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad:Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfavorable:Favorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not likeable:Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the likelihood that you will purchase Adidas products in the future?

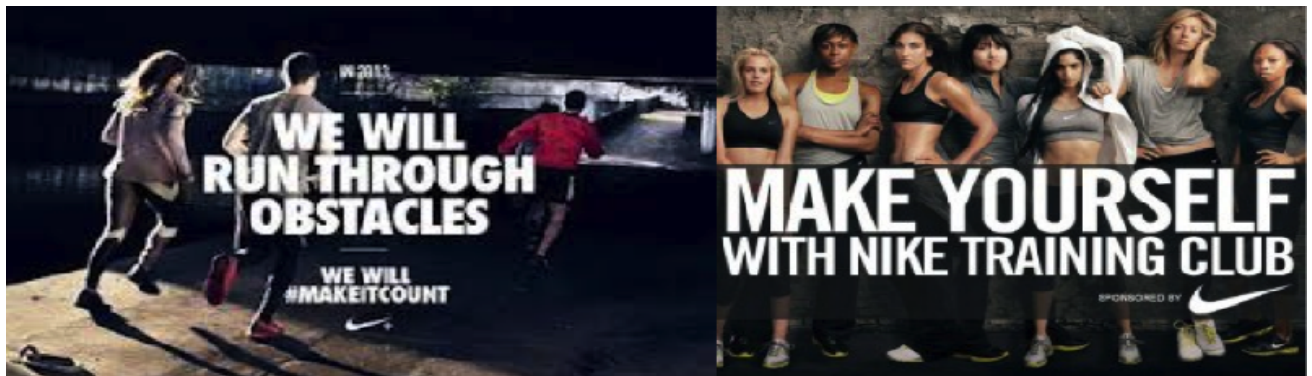
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not likely:Very likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer yes or no to the following questions.

	Yes	No
Is it important to you that the people you work out with think you are doing a good job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 8.2 THE GROUP ADS

Take a moment to study the ads.



Please answer the following questions regarding the ads above.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I like the ads.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find the ads motivational.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me want to work out.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Judging from the ads I share values with Nike.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me like Nike.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me want to associate myself with Nike.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ads make me want to use Nike's products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your overall opinion of Nike?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad:Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfavorable:Favorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not likeable:Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the likelihood that you will purchase Nike products in the future?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not likely:Very likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your overall opinion of Adidas?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad:Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfavorable:Favorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not likeable:Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the likelihood that you will purchase Adidas products in the future?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not likely:Very likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer yes or no to the following questions.

	Yes	No
Is it important to you that the people you work out with think you are doing a good job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>