**Is the Nike advert a ‘good’ advert?**

There are two key ways to evaluate the effectiveness of this advert: is it ‘good’ from a visual perspective and is it ‘good’ from a moral standpoint?

From a media language point of view, it could be argued that this text is effective because the different media language codes used are cohesive and help to represent both the brand (Nike) and the subject (Colin Kaepernick) in a consistent way. Nike are striving for a forward-thinking, liberal, politically in-touch brand image that plays well with its younger, diverse audience and Colin Kaepernick is well known in America for his stance against racism. The use of codes of colour to signal a serious tone, coupled with the codes of expression, are cohesive and in line with the serious messaging and context behind this advert. The advert is monochrome, with the use of black symbolising darkness and seriousness and the white symbolising a light against that darkness. The two colours are also reflective of the black/white divide that Kaepernick is keen to draw attention to and the colours are easy to decode, leading to a simple, uncluttered and unfussy message. The linguistic codes use highly emotive language such as ‘believe’ and ‘sacrificing’ to show the lengths to which a person should go to stand up for what they think is right. The imperative language gives a clear call-to-action for the audience and the words steer clear of overt advertising for a product, instead reflecting a higher, more moral purpose behind the advert.

The BCU of Kaepernick’s face is in tune with the messaging as it creates a highly personal and emotional connection with the audience. His direct stare as a focal point chimes with the imperative language and the seriousness of the codes of emotion reflect the solemn nature of the issue. As an audience, we are positioned uncomfortably close to his face, almost in confrontation or challenge, but it draws us into his world and forces us to engage. It is, from a purely aesthetic perspective, a successful and effective text.

However, whether or not the text is ‘good’ in a moral sense is a little harder to evaluate. Nike has previous form in using controversial topics to create huge profits and this is indeed what happened after this advertising campaign dropped, although there was an initial backlash, including a tweet from Donald Trump who was at the time the President of the USA. There is also the timing: Nike could have capitalised on Kaepernick’s protest in 2016; instead they hung back until 2018 to release this advert. It could be argued that they were waiting to see how the tide of public opinion would turn on this issue before they took the financial risk of backing Kaepernick’s controversial campaign. Some have indeed argued that Kaepernick is himself being exploited to create profits for Nike. It is true that the advert created a ’buzz’ and helped to raise awareness of the issues involved. But it is noticeable that the advert does not explicitly endorse Black Lives Matter, or even refer to it. Furthermore, the audio-visual advert that accompanied this print advert does not focus on black sports people but instead covers a range of minority groups, which does dilute the original message that Kaepernick was sending.

In conclusion, although it’s easy to argue that this advert is aesthetically good, it’s not so clear that this advert is morally ‘bad’ and simply the result of a cynical marketing campaign on behalf of Nike. On balance, the profits raised as a result of it might suggest that money was the main motivator, particularly when one considers how generalised and vague the messaging became across the whole campaign.