

# Marketing Analysis of Advertising and Promotion Strategies in the Sports Industry - Taking Nike as an Example

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## Abstract:

This research examines Nike's strategic initiatives and their impact on its brand positioning, particularly in the Chinese market. Author first explored Nike's sponsorship of the Chinese High School Basketball League (HBL), its eco-friendly product innovations like Alphafly Next Nature, and the brand's iconic "Just Do It" slogan. In addition, this research evaluated Nike's effective product positioning, especially among teens, as well as its marketing strategies, including celebrity endorsements and culturally relevant products such as Full Score sports T-shirts. This research used a case study to illustrate how these strategies solidified Nike's reputation as a leading sports brand. Key findings showed that Nike's exclusive sponsorship of HBL significantly increased brand awareness and engagement among young athletes. Developing products using recycled materials is in line with global environmental goals and appeals to ecologically conscious consumers. Nike's focus on personalized consumer experiences through initiatives such as Nike By You, and continuous innovation in buffering technology, further solidified its dominant position in the market. This research therefore concludes that Nike's multifaceted strategy, combining sponsorship, sustainability, branding and marketing, has effectively strengthened its market position and consumer loyalty. Recommendations for future strategies include strengthening public welfare activities, promoting grassroots sports participation, implementing recycling programs to further align with the SDGS and broaden consumer participation.

**Keywords:** Nike, Sponsorship, Sustainability, Branding, Marketing.

## 1. Introduction

In today's competitive global market, brand positioning and strategic marketing are important factors in determining a company's success or failure. As a leader in the sportswear industry, Nike has consistently proven its ability to stay ahead of the curve through innovative strategies that resonate with consumers around the world. The following article discusses Nike's multifaceted strategic initiatives, with a particular focus on the Chinese market, where the company has made significant progress by aligning its brand with local culture, consumer preferences, and global sustainability trends.

The existing literature shows that a lot of research has been done on Nike's global marketing strategy, sustainability initiatives, and brand management practices. Academics have extensively studied Nike's use of celebrity endorsements, innovative product design, and ability to create compelling brand narratives. For example, Huang and Xie explore Nike's sports marketing model, emphasizing the brand's partnership with athletes and its impact on consumer behavior [1]. However, while these studies provide valuable insights into Nike's global operations, there are clear gaps in research that specifically address Nike's strategic approach to the Chinese market, particularly its involvement in grassroots sports events like HBL. In addition, despite the growing importance of environmental awareness among Chinese consumers, the impact of Nike's sustainability initiatives on its brand recognition in China has still not been fully explored.

This research uses the case study method to analyze Nike's strategic initiatives in the Chinese market. By focusing on Nike's sponsorship of HBL, it explores how this partnership increases Nike's brand awareness and engagement among young athletes in China. This research also evaluated Nike's sustainability efforts, specifically the development of Alphafly Next Nature, and how these initiatives resonate with eco-conscious consumers. In addition, Nike's marketing strategies, including the use of culture-relevant products and celebrity endorsements, are also explored to understand how these strategies have contributed to Nike's dominant position in the Chinese sportswear market. The content of the paper is organized into several key parts. In the first part, Nike's sponsorship of HBL is analyzed in detail, and its impact on brand positioning and consumer engagement is discussed. The second part focuses on Nike's sustainability initiatives, in particular the development of products made from recycled materials and their appeal to environmentally conscious consumers. Part three examines Nike's iconic "Just Do It" slogan and its role in shaping brand identity and consumer perception. The fourth part discusses Nike's

product positioning strategy, with special emphasis on its appeal to Chinese teenagers. The fifth part analyzes Nike's marketing strategy, including celebrity endorsement and culture-related products. Finally, this research makes a series of recommendations for future strategies, including promoting grassroots sports participation, developing products for special populations, and implementing recycling programs to further align with the global Sustainable Development Goals.

This research is filling the gaps in the existing literature by comprehensively analyzing Nike's strategic initiatives in the Chinese market. By examining Nike's sponsorship of HBL, sustainability efforts, and marketing strategies, it shows how Nike has successfully strengthened its market position and consumer loyalty in China. The findings highlight the importance of aligning global brand strategies with local market dynamics and consumer preferences, providing insights for companies looking to survive in a complex international marketplace.

## 2. Positive Brand Image Building

### 2.1 Sponsor the China High School League

Nike high school basketball league (HBL), exclusively sponsored by Nike, is the most formal high school basketball league with the widest coverage and audience created by NIKE in China. Every sports-loving student has heard the slogan "Once in a Lifetime HBL", which reflects the fervor and passion of the tournament and attracts a large number of Chinese fans and spectators. Nike Sports China Ltd. has been the exclusive sponsor of the event since its inception. As a result, the Nike logo can be seen everywhere in the competition area of HBL, and with the heat of the tournament, Nike has gained a huge amount of traffic from the tournament, which has made young people who love basketball pay more attention to Nike.

### 2.2 Manufacturing Products from Recycled Materials

Following the launch of Nike's first eco-friendly basketball shoe, Nike's running shoe product designers were inspired by the Move to zero carbon emission and zero discard to create a new product which is good for the environment - Alphafly Next Nature. The Alphafly Next Nature is an environmentally friendly product that utilizes 50 percent recycled materials by weight.

Nike's Space Hottie vamp uses at least 85% recycled polyester material, a lightweight, stretchy fabric made from recycled plastic bottles and other waste that fits on consumers' feet like a sock. Nike has also converted more

than 1 billion plastic bottles into renewable materials for footwear and apparel. This strategy saves materials and costs, and reduces the environmental impact of plastic bottles. Recycled material products reflect the Nike formula's great contribution to the world's environmental protection, and its innovation and contribution have attracted the attention of many customers.

### 2.3 Spiritual Concept--Just Do It Tagline

"Just do it" is one of the most classic advertising slogans of Nike, which can be interpreted as do what people want to do and persevere, highlighting the self-awareness of young people and emphasizing the importance of daring to try. Nike uses this as its advertising slogan to encourage all people to exercise and strengthen their bodies. People can subconsciously bind Nike with the concepts of sports, health and perseverance in consumers' minds, leaving them with a positive and healthy image of the brand.

### 2.4 Correct Product Positioning

Nike is positioned as the world's leading manufacturer of athletic footwear and equipment, dedicated to enhancing athlete performance and promoting the development of sports culture. Its product target customer groups mainly concentrate on the younger age group of 15 to 35 years old from all over the world, including teenagers, young adults, sports enthusiasts, and consumers who pursue fashion and quality. According to the survey, owning a pair of Nike shoes is the dream of the vast majority of teenagers, and this situation occurs in the United States, China and many other countries, and some youths even take Nike shoes as their status symbol, this climbing mentality is especially prominent in primary and secondary [1]. It is because Nike's product are positioned correctly, which enabled it to sell in huge numbers among the student population.

## 3. Marketing Strategy Analysis

### 3.1 Celebrity Endorsement

Athletes are treated as partners by Nike, who assigns a person to serve the contracted athletes and assist them in any way possible [1]. Nike has the insight to sign athletes in their early stages of success. As a result, Nike has signed the leading athletes in every sport. In the NBA, Nike has signed countless athletes such as James, Durant, and Jordan to lifetime contracts. In addition, Nike has created a sub-brand Jordan for Michael Jordan, launching a series of basketball products, utilizing Jordan's popularity to gain a large market share. In China, Nike has signed a

number of Chinese basketball stars, such as Yi Jianlian and Guo Allen. As a sportswear company with a strong focus on basketball products, Nike has capitalized on the high viewership of basketball games in China and has used basketball as an entry point to penetrate the Chinese market [2]. Nike also cooperates with some colleges and universities to provide them with free sports equipment, and there is no doubt that Nike will gain huge traffic again when its athletes achieve great honor. The celebrity endorsement strategy is certainly a great sale strategy for consumers who love sports stars.

### 3.2 Chinese Element Products in China Market

On the eve of the 2023 college entrance exam, Nike released a star product in the Chinese market - the full score sports T shirt, on the back of this product, the background is the answer card used in the Chinese exam, with the words "All Right!" written on it, and the classic Nike slogan "Just do it" underneath. This unique way of spiritual support is loved by a large number of people who are taking the exam. As the most important exam for Chinese students, Nike can release a new product that accurately captures the relevant elements of the exam, which makes him popular with the majority of candidates. There is no doubt that this is a great strategy to capture the student consumer base.

### 3.3 Nike By You

If customers want to match the color of each part of the shoe themselves, then 'Nike by you' can satisfy their needs. Not only can they choose the color of each part of the shoes - laces, tongue, sole, lining - in great detail, but they can also add their own elements to the shoes such as adding their own name to the heel. 'Nike by you' fully satisfies the consumers' pursuit of variety and identity. The special personalized experience helps Nike gain a mass of customers who pursue individuality.

### 3.4 Comfortable Cushioning Material

From Air sole, Air Max, Zoom, to React, Zoom X, Nike constantly develop and update cushioning materials, and cushioning effect has been significantly improved on Nike products. The comfort of the shoes can be strengthened, comfortable and exclusive cushioning experience attracted a large number of consumers favor. A pair of comfortable sneakers is crucial for sports, which not only carries the mission of protecting human feet, but also helps people to improve the efficiency of sports [3]. In order to pursue the ultimate comfortable foot feeling, or in order to reduce the knee injury when doing sports, many people choose Nike products. The comfortable cushioning material helps Nike

win a large number of consumers.

## 4. Suggestions

### 4.1 Active Participation in Public Service Activities

Nike can do more in the field of environmental protection. When it comes to Alipay, every Chinese should think of “Ant Forest”, which a public welfare project is aimed at driving the public to reduce carbon emissions, and everyone’s low-carbon behavior can be counted as “green energy” in the Ant Forest. If the green energy accumulated to a certain extent, users can use their cell phone to apply for ecological restoration of planting a real tree in the desert area of northwest China. Ant Forest uses visualized results to show users the amount of emission reduction, which not only motivates the society to achieve energy saving and emission reduction, but also makes users actually experience the benefits of carbon reduction [4]. It is because every ordinary person can make their own contribution from the small behaviors, and they can clearly see that these behaviors results into the desert trees, so it has a strong attraction. Nike can also learn this way of doing business, if consumers buy its environmental protection products, they can provide consumers with points that can be used to plant trees in the desert or provide food for stray animals to protect the environment and let users get a real sense of participation of environmental protection.

### 4.2 Actively Promoting the Trend of Sports for All

In recent years, the sports department of each city is advocating national sports, Nike can seize the opportunity to provide some sports equipment for the public, or sponsor some sports activities (such as marathon and municipal basketball games), when more people enter the field of sports, they will first notice Nike’s products, and will be more inclined to Nike’s products when they buy sports equipment later. Such sponsorships increase the number of times Nike is in the public eye, which in turn increases brand awareness.

### 4.3 Focus on Special Populations

Part of the population has high insteps, flat feet and other symptoms, it is difficult for them to buy shoes. Nike can develop shoes that meet their foot characteristics, which can not only gain the loyalty of this part of the population to the brand, but also reflect the brand’s humanistic care. Nike’s focus on special groups can fulfill Nike’s corporate social responsibility and leave a good brand impression on

consumers.

### 4.4 Old Clothes Recycling

Recycle used clothes and give a certain discount. As global warming, resource constraints and other problems become more and more serious, so countries around the world are actively responding to them. Under this circumstance, recycling and reusing waste products has become a very important mean of conserving resources. Recycling and reuse of waste products can conserve existing resources and reduce waste [5]. Nike can implement that Buying new products can be discounted if customers give back their old clothes and shoes (products that consumers do not like or out-of-season), which can be refurbished and donated to the poor people. According to the number of pieces recycled from the user, Nike can provide a corresponding discount. Providing discounts can stimulate consumers’ desire to buy new products, and donating refurbished clothes can reduce the pollution of the environment by discarded clothes.

## 5. Conclusion

Nike’s strategic approach to the Chinese market has been very effective, making it a dominant force in the sportswear industry. Through its exclusive sponsorship of the Nike High School Basketball League (HBL), Nike has significantly increased its visibility and forged strong ties with young athletes in China. The sponsorship not only increased brand awareness, but also strengthened Nike’s presence among key demographics, fostering long-term brand loyalty among aspiring athletes.

In addition, Nike’s commitment to sustainability has played a vital role in attracting a growing number of environmentally conscious consumers. Made from 50% recycled materials, the Alphafly Next Nature running shoe is designed to embody Nike’s dedication to reducing its environmental impact. This aligns with global environmental goals and reinforces Nike’s reputation as a sustainability leader in the sportswear industry.

Nike’s signature “Just Do It” slogan continues to be a powerful tool in the brand’s strategy, promoting the values of perseverance and self-improvement that resonate deeply with consumers. This message, embedded in Nike’s ads, strengthened the brand’s association with health, fitness, and personal achievement, creating a positive and motivating image that appealed to a wide audience

Nike’s product positioning strategy, especially among teenagers, has cemented its reputation as a stylish and desirable brand. The emphasis on high-quality, trendy products has made Nike shoes a status symbol, especially among students in the United States and China. By align-

ing its products with the desires of younger consumers and contemporary trends, Nike has effectively captured a sizable share of the youth market.

Nike's reliance on celebrity endorsements, especially famous athletes like LeBron James, Kevin Durant, and Michael Jordan, has been a cornerstone of marketing strategies. These endorsements elevated Nike's brand image and helped establish its dominance in key sports, especially basketball. The creation of the Jordan sub-brand is a prime example of how Nike is leveraging its relationships with athletes to maintain its leading position in the market. In addition, Nike's understanding of the cultural relevance of the Chinese market is reflected in the release of culturally resonant products, such as the "Full Score" T-shirt that connects students during the national college entrance examination. This strategy of combining products with major cultural events has strengthened Nike's connection with local consumers and increased brand loyalty.

The customization options offered by Nike By You cater to consumers' desire for individuality and self-expression. This strategy differentiates Nike from its competitors and allows consumers to create products that reflect their personal style, increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Nike's continued innovation in cushioning technologies such as Air Max, ZoomX, and React demonstrates its commitment to improving product performance and comfort. These technological advancements have kept Nike at the forefront of sneaker innovation, appealing to athletes and casual consumers looking for high-quality activewear. In addition, Nike is involved in charitable initiatives, such as Alipay's Ant Forest project, to enhance the brand's image by fostering a sense of community and environmental

responsibility. This approach aligns with Nike's sustainability goals and provides consumers with a tangible way to contribute to environmental protection. Overall, Nike's strategic moves, from sponsorship and environmental innovation to iconic branding and effective marketing, have cemented its position as a leading sportswear brand. By continuing to leverage these strategies and adapt to the changing needs of consumers, Nike is well positioned to remain a market leader and continue its tradition of innovation and consumer engagement.

#### Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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