The world of advertising exists primarily to sell; yet, as a function of that objective, advertising usually seeks to influence worldview. Through their advertising, companies seek to promote a worldview, an ethos, and a lifestyle that can only be realized using their products; or, at least, so they argue. In the last decade, Nike, Inc. has been enormously successful in promoting a worldview through its advertising, as their sales and name-brand recognition attest. Recently, Wieden + Kennedy, Nike's advertising partner, produced three commercials, the first debuting September 15, 2000 on NBC. They promote the athletic lifestyle by posing the question, "why sport?" These commercials use elements of pop-culture as well as popular athletes to convey truths about the value of physical activity and communicate Nike's worldview.

The "why sport?" campaign consists of three commercials, inspired by cinematic moments and pop-culture, that answer the title question through humorous plots. The first commercial in the series, entitled "Horror," draws upon the popular horror movie genre to answer the question. The commercial features US athlete Suzy Hamilton preparing to take a bath, when, as she is brushing her hair in front of a bathroom mirror, she notices a chainsaw wielding psychopath behind her. The psychopath attacks and a chase ensues. The track star, wearing Nike apparel of course, quickly outruns the psychopath, who breathing heavily, cannot keep up. The woman thus escapes and the concluding screen shots answer the question, "why sport?," with the phrase "you'll live longer." The second commercial in the series, entitled "Elephant," is set amid the mystique and attraction of the circus. An elephant lies seemingly dead. Circus people look on in distress. On a nearby street, cyclists are riding by in a race. American Lance Armstrong, the 2000 Tour de France winner, stops, walks over to the elephant, performs CPR and thus, revives the elephant. In this case, the concluding screen shots answer the question, "why sport?," with the phrase "healthy lungs." In the third commercial of the series, entitled "Gladiator," a gladiator chases a skateboarder around the streets of a modern city. The commercial very likely draws upon the recent success of the Ridley Scott movie, "Gladiator." The skateboarder outmaneuvers the gladiator at every point, using his agility and flexibility. The concluding screen shots answer the question, "why sport?," with the phrase "you may run into a

gladiator." Each of these commercials features the trademark Nike swoosh and the catchphrase, "Just do it."

Nike's worldview, based on competitive reponses and present in these Wieden + Kennedy commercials, seeks to attract viewers to a lifestyle of sport. Nike's corporate mission statement is "to be the world's leading sports and fitness company" (http://nikebiz.com/invest/mission.shtml, n.d./2000, ¶1). This mission statement, however, falls short of the greater worldview that drives the company in marketing. In the online biography of Bill Bowerman (http://www.nikebiz.com/story/hist_bower.shtml), a co-founder of Nike, the company reveals its worldview:

> As a coach Bowerman taught his athletes *to seek the competitive advantage everywhere – in their bodies, their gear and their passion*. This guiding principle served his athletes and Nike well in the search and achievement of excellence. At Bowerman's retirement ceremony, Knight commended this passionate attitude: 'Above all, I think [Bill Bowerman] considered himself a professor of competitive responses. *Those are the lessons you learn for all of life*,' Knight said (n.d./2000, ¶4, *italics mine*).

The Nike worldview, then, is rooted in humanity's competitive nature. According to this worldview, life is a competition and the people that are best equipped to compete will succeed. This worldview is clearly present in the Wieden + Kennedy "why sport?" campaign. Despite the obvious hilarity of the plots, Nike speaks through the commercials to say that physically fit individuals have an edge in avoiding death. In fact, the adversaries in "Horror" and "Gladiator" could be seen as caricatures of Death. The protagonists successfully outrun Death due entirely to their competitive advantage. In "Elephant," the message is slightly different but no less poignant. In this case, death is overcome by a physically fit athlete who performs CPR on an elephant! The messages of these commercials are scientifically accurate truths about physical fitness; namely, physical fitness nurtures endurance, healthier lungs and longer life. By appealing to movies and

themes in the popular consciousness, this message assists Nike's aim of inculcating its worldview in the viewer in order to attract them to the lifestyle of sport and thereby, to their products.

Wieden + Kennedy relate the "why sport?" campaign to the overarching "Just do it" campaign that reveals another aspect of Nike's worldview. In a section of Nike's website entitled "Marketing Innovations" (http://nikebiz.com/story/mkg_innov.shtml), it states that the "Just do it" campaign,

> became both universal and intensely personal. It spoke of sports. It invited dreams. It was a call to action, a refusal to hear excuses, and a license to be eccentric, courageous and exceptional. It was Nike (n.d./2000, ¶4).

Some of these central characteristics of the "Just do it" campaign are present in the "why sport?" campaign. "why sport?" continues the theme of "Just do it" by having the protagonists of the commercials respond to a situation with action, impulsively and spontaneously, without excuse and in an exceptional manner. In "Horror," the protagonist quickly reacts to the presence of the chainsaw wielding psychopath. She seeks an escape and with exceptional speed outruns her unprepared pursuer. In "Elephant," the protagonist observes a crisis situation and reacts spontaneously for the 'better good.' He stops mid-race and, with exceptional lung capacity, revives an elephant for the unprepared circus staff. In "Gladiator," the protagonist faces a preposterous scenario—an ancient gladiator attacks him on the city streets. Yet, he responds with exceptional agility and flexibility and outruns, and outsmarts his pursuer. Clearly, another subtle message of these commercials then is that success goes to the prepared, to the exceptional and to those who "Just do it."

The Wieden + Kennedy "why sport?" campaign sells a worldview and therefore, Nike products. If individuals live by the Nike worldview, a lifestyle of sport and physical fitness, then Nike products will sell. It is the idea behind the action, the purpose behind the product, that Wieden + Kennedy subtlety disseminates through these commercials. It is a message targeted to young people, familiar with pop-culture, but less concerned with the value of physical fitness. Nike's answer to the question "why sport?" is more than simply about gaining the benefits that

exist with physical fitness. The answer is rooted in Nike's worldview; a lifestyle of sport gives you a competitive advantage in all of life. Nike's message in the commercials then is success in life comes from the quality of your competitive response to the situations of life. The commercials also assume that the quality of your competitive response is measured by the degree to which you use Nike products.

The "why sport?" campaign demonstrates that companies do not only advertise products but also worldviews. Through "Horror," "Elephant" and "Gladiator," Nike continues to promote a worldview based on competitive responses with the expectation that as people accept such a view they will be more inclined to purchase Nike products. As a function of the objective to sell products, selling worldview seeks to create customers out of those individuals that might not otherwise see an essential value in a product. Selling a worldview changes a product from a luxury to a need; a change that Nike hopes takes place every time their commercials are viewed.

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