

# **Advertising with Celebrities: What's Really Being Sold?**

## **Group 4: The Crazy Frazees**

**Group Leader: Brian Gadomski**

**Editors: Jamie Hartley and Paula Gill**

**Writers: Greg Frazee  
Brian Gadomski  
Parisa Ghahremani  
Matthew Hall  
Danielle Gilchrist  
Paula Gill  
Jamie Hartley  
Mary Beth Hammerstrom**

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## **Intro: What are Celebrities Selling to their Fans**

Did you know you are exposed to 3,500 ads per day? Other than the obvious, ads are now being seen on bathroom ceilings, floor tiles, and even in the sand on the beach. It seems that no matter where advertisements are being placed, they are being overlooked and people are becoming desensitized to them. This is challenging companies to boost their creativity and be a bit more sly when promoting a product. Before they took this challenge to new places, companies have been notorious for celebrity endorsements. For example, Nike + Jordan = money coming out the ying yang! This formula is powerful and proves to be successful.

What is advertising? According to the International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences (2001), advertisement is a message paid for, but not delivered by the sender that (a) incorporates technologies or forms other than speech (b) appears in a public forum and (c) attempts to persuade receivers to behave in a way that brings direct economic benefit to the sender. Our focus is celebrity athlete endorsements, which include the legendary Michael Jordan, golf star Tiger Woods, and the young, talented LeBron James. Jordan and Woods have been used in advertisements to promote products related to their sport, as well as products not associated to their sport. Our project researches how celebrity athletes affect sales and the audience by studying past advertisements and the sports athletes themselves. We even took a look into the future of athlete endorsements by researching upcoming basketball celebrity LeBron James.

- Jamie Hartley

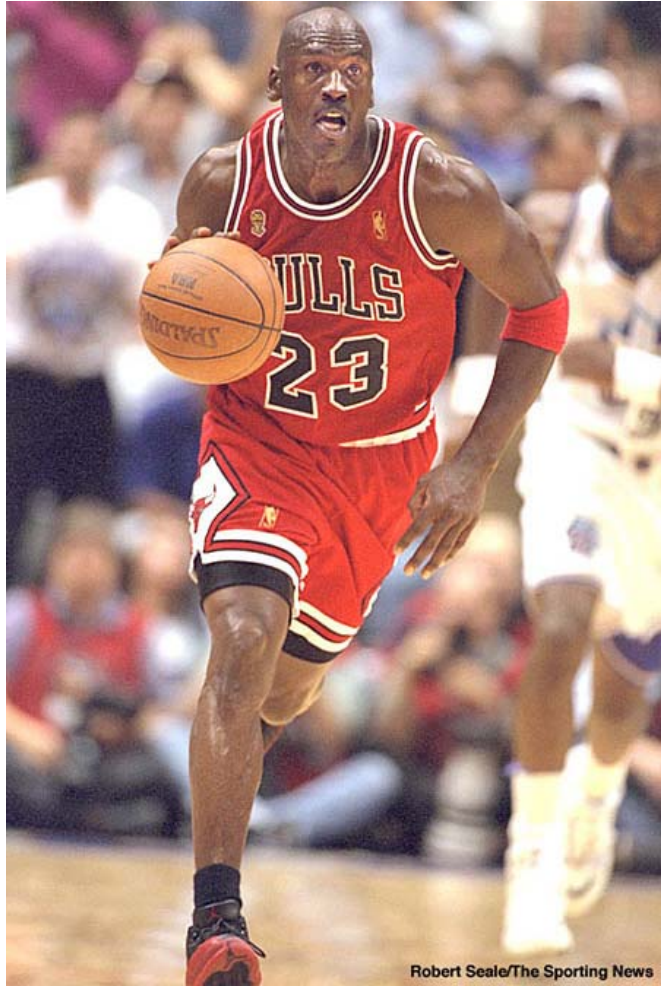
## **Article 1: Wanna Be Like Mike**

Michael Jordan was born on February 17, 1964. He went to high school in Wilmington, North Carolina where he was cut from his high school basketball team. His hard work and determination lead him to continue to pursue the sport. He went on to play college basketball at North Carolina. He later went on to be the third player picked in the first round of the NBA draft by Chicago. Today he has become the best, and the most popular player in basketball history.

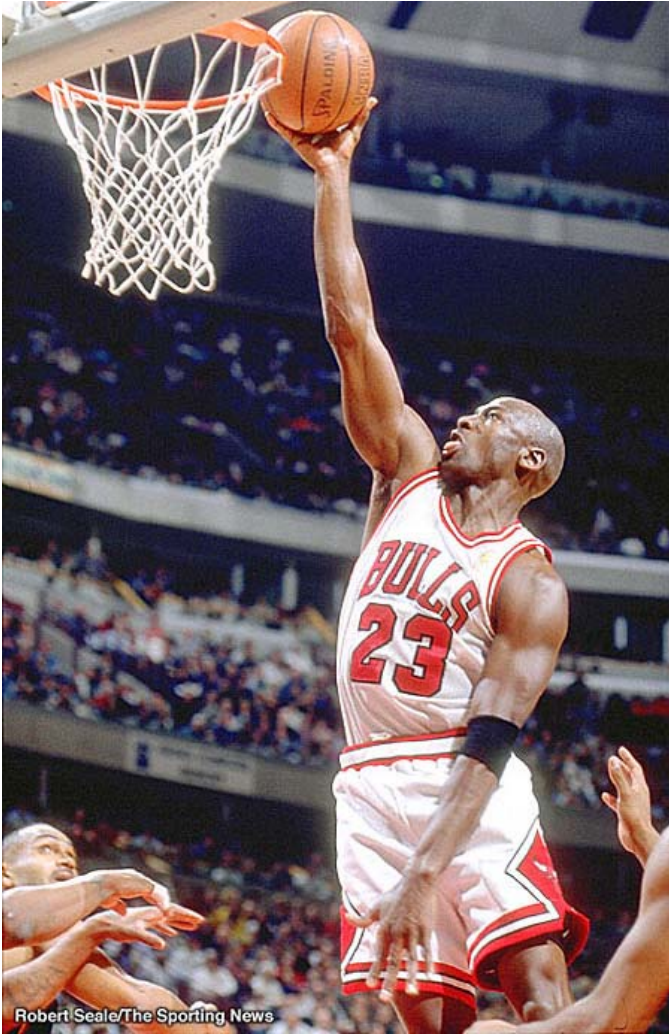
Michael Jordan has achieved more than any other basketball player in history. He has won six NBA championships, five MVP awards, and has been chosen 13 times for All-Star games. Jordan accomplishments and popularity have paved the way for celebrity and sports endorsements, which is now a multi-billion dollar industry.

Michael Jordan has been involved with advertisements for many companies, including Gatorade, Chevrolet, Hanes, and Nike. He also has his own clothing line, and cologne line. His most successful product is his Air Jordan shoes, which were originally released as a Nike product, but have since become his own product. In their first year alone the Air Jordan's grossed over \$110 million.

Michael Jordan has many fans outside of the basketball world. This is because of his many outside the sport endeavors. He has gained fans by promoting a variety of products. He also has made fans through his work with charities, his restaurants, and a role in the blockbuster hit Space Jam. Michael Jordan has made a profound impact on advertising and has built a strong and successful image for himself, as well as the products that he endorses. No matter what the product, everyone wants to be like Mike.



Robert Seale/The Sporting News



Quotes:

"I don't want anybody to think I can't score, I can score if I want to."  
- Michael Jordan, Michael Jordan Official Website

## Article 2

### **Tiger Redefines the Game of Golf**

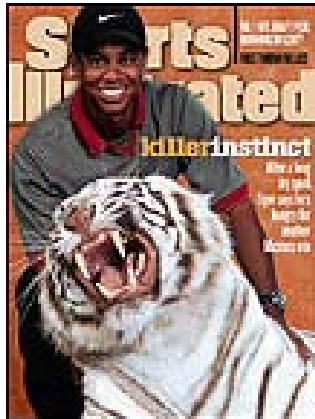
Eldrick (Tiger) Woods has redefined the game of golf. The twenty-seven year old started playing golf when he was only three and by age fifteen he was already recognized throughout the nation. His success and support from fans has helped create a fresh new image for the game of golf. He has redefined the sport, as well as introducing the game to a new audience. His success at a young age and multicultural background has made him a marketable athlete. He is also known worldwide; his Mother, Kultida Woods, is from Thailand and Tiger is almost more famous there than he is in America.

Tiger Woods is a multiracial golf professional and role model who reaches out to all ethnic backgrounds. Tiger is ranked number one in the world and has been for the past several years. He has won every major championship on the PGA Tour due to his persistence to be the best. Woods also won four consecutive majors, which has never been done. Tiger's record has made him one of the top advertised athletes in the world. His dashing smile, great personality, and ferociousness to be the best have made him one of the top advertised athletes in the world, only behind Michael Jordan. Tiger is a prime investment for advertisers due to the nature of the game. It is predicted that Tiger has twenty to forty years remaining in his career.

Besides his skills on the golf course, Tiger is a positive athletic figure for audiences. He gives back to the community through golf camps and charity donations. Having outstanding morals and values adds to his character and his game. This is why he is such a successful marketing tool for companies. Tiger's popularity consists of golf fans and even people who dislike the game. This is because he inspires people to pursue what

they love. Tiger Woods continues to sell products and a positive message. Tiger is at the top of his game in every aspect of life.

-Matt Hall & Danielle Gilchrist





"Golf, as we know it, is over. It came to an end on a chamber-of-commerce Sunday evening in Las Vegas when Tiger Woods went for the upgrade: He's not just a promising young Tour pro anymore, he's an era."

-Gary Van Sickle, *Sports Illustrated*, commenting on Tiger's talent



“Standing in the parched fairway on the par-5 18<sup>th</sup> hole at Los Serranos Country Club in Chino, Calif., last month, Tiger Woods needed a birdie. So, of course, he wanted an eagle. That’s Tiger.”

- Tim Crothers, *Sports Illustrated*, March 25, 1991

### **Article 3- Future Promotions: Lebron James**

Lebron James is currently the top high school basketball player in the country. He has basketball skills that far exceed others his age. This eighteen year old Cleveland athlete has become the most recognizable and most talked about amateur basketball player in the world. James has been named the “High School Player of the Year” and is expected to be the #1 draft pick in the 2003 NBA draft.

Advertisers from around the country are already lining up to have this high school phenomenon endorse their product. So far, Nike appears to be the top company that has the highest hope of signing James to a multi-million dollar contract. Advertising companies see him as a “can’t lose client” because of the large following that he already has. According to Fox Sports Net sports analysis, the average age group of his fans generally spans from young kids to college-aged males who watch every game of his on cable television. Once James gets into the NBA, his fan base will sky-rocket even more with all of the hype that is put on him.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer says that, “The problem with having such a young athlete endorse a product is that it may give kids the wrong idea about how success works.” At the present time, James and many other high school players plan on going into the NBA draft this year and skipping out on college athletics. By skipping college, it allows these athletes to sign contracts without the burden of the strict rules that are set by the NCAA. The rules of the NCAA strictly prohibit any athlete from accepting money based on their athletic fame. With more and more NBA teams drafting high school players, it results in the quality of athletes in the NBA decreasing because of their lack of

experience. And so with these advertising companies signing athletes fresh out of high school, it may entice kids to think that money is more important than education.

- Brian Gadomski & Parisa Ghahremani



## **How do Advertising Endorsements Effect the Audience?**

Through our extensive research, our group has found how these advertisements work and how they are effecting the audience. We discovered an endorsement strategy, which creates an emotional connection between the athlete and consumer. Consumers consciously and unconsciously associate a product to an athlete's image. For example, Michael Jordan is fast, strong, wealthy, and famous. The consumer then buys Nike shoes (sponsored by Jordan), who is purchasing more than just a pair of shoes, but an image. According to McCarville & Copeland (1994), this brings the consumer closer to their idol because the product allows the consumer to identify themselves with the athlete. This example is a sport specific product, because the athlete (Jordan) is endorsing a product related to his sport. According to Lardinoit (1994), since the athlete is successful in his sport, he is creating an illusion of superior credibility to the product. Once a company has gained positive consumer feedback, other companies will notice the success from the athlete endorsement. They will usually try to use the athlete for non-sport specific products, which are products not associated with the athlete's profession. For example, Jordan promotes Hanes underwear for men. His success in basketball and image associated with Nike made him a positive icon. Hanes used Jordan to increase their company image by having him represent Hanes in commercials. Consumers who are attracted to Jordan and buy his shoes are more likely to buy other products promoted by him. Companies continue to sell more than just a product, they are selling an image.

- Jamie Hartley

## **What Fans are Buying: The Positive and Negative Effects of Advertising**

Advertising and the media in general are blamed for many of the problems effecting today's youth. Yet, the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences (2001), notes that the effects of advertising are not clear or easily detected. The message that is being conveyed depends on who is interpreting it. Advertisements can mean different things to different people. However, when constructing a successful sales pitch, the target audience is closely examined to determine how to present the product. Often, ads play on fears and insecurities of people and present solutions through the purchase of the advertised product. Many youth fall prey to this because they are at the stage in their lives where they are discovering who they are and developing a sense of self. This is a very vulnerable time and fitting in can be the most important thing, no matter what the consequences. Competition among teens can lead to jealousy and jealousy can lead to violent acts. Teens have been killed by other teens just for the name brand of their shoes.

With all the negative media attention surrounding such issues, it's difficult to see a positive side to advertising. Many youth look toward celebrities for role models. This is a very important issue to consider because impressionable youth may model their behavior after someone they idolize. Putting positive role models, such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods, in the public light is not only beneficial to the many companies they are advertising for, but also to these impressionable youth. "Wanna be like Mike" may have been a sales pitch to sell Nike shoes, but more is being bought than just shoes.

An image comes "free" along with every product that Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods endorse. This image is what makes Jordan and Woods so appealing and

marketable to the public. While Jordan and Woods are marketed as the best in their game this also carries with it their ambition, determination, and hard work. They reach out to underprivileged children at camps and to the whole world and instill these values. These factors are what lead them to become the best at their game. Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods have become loved because they stand for something that Americas and people around the world believe in; Hard work and determination leads to success, with or without the shoes.

Jordan and Woods are outstanding athletes who have the support of their fans. These athletes have taken their responsibility of being role models seriously; however, many celebrities do not. This raises concerns as to whether advertisements are sending the right message to young consumers. While researching Lebron James, our group found that he is very popular with companies, such as Nike. Many sports companies want to sign him for advertising endorsements. They believe he is a great player who caters to the youth because he began his fan club in high school. Companies are no longer focusing on the athlete's values being sent to the youth. Today, image is everything and that image is "hip," "young," and "rebellious." Lebron James is viewed as a dollar sign that fits the image that markets best to the youth. Young fans and potential consumers are buying into the marketed image. Depending on the athlete promoting the product, that image may be negative. Today, morals and values are not selling and companies are finding ways to shock the audience to grab their attention. While companies are searching for athletes like Lebron James, audiences are receiving a negative message. Athlete endorsements can be beneficial to the public when companies were selling positive images of athletes. The selection of athletes has shifted and near future embraces the

focus of a cutting-edge, rebellious image, no matter what the long term costs are for the target audience.

- Paula Gill

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