

# Canterbury Institute of Management (CIM)

## ASSESSMENT COVER SHEET



1. Personal Details			
Student ID	Given Name(s)	Surname	Email Address
1. CIM12137	Ayesh	Jayasekara	cim12137@ciom.edu.au
2. CIM11522	Neschya	Taher	cim11522@ciom.edu.au
3. CIM11857	Kartheek	Yalamareddy	cim11857@ciom.edu.au
4. CIM11396	Subash	Lama Tamang	cim11396@ciom.edu.au
Campus	Darwin		
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Course Lecturer/Tutor Name: Charles Baah		Assessment Word Count (if applicable): 3619	
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# MGMT402 Strategic Management

## Group Business Case Analysis - *Report*

### Executive Summary

Understanding an organization from inside out involves decoding the core values that drives the direction of sail and then looking in to how the organization is structured and strategically place themselves among many competing brands. The topic organization in question for this critical research analysis is the popular leading shoe brand, *Nike Inc.*

This compilation of findings explore the company's corporate, business and functional strategies in great depths and justify their standing on attaining sustainable competitive advantage compared to the rivals. Nike has proven itself in attaining the sustainable competitive advantage, findings indicate.

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# Introduction

***NIKE, Inc.***<sup>1</sup> is a world leading brand with a solid market capitalization.

Headquartered in the United States, publicly listed and traded as **NKE** serving and catering primarily for athletes with their innovative footwear and apparel lineup.



The company was founded in the year 1964 and continuously operating for over 60 years as at now. Although Nike was initially founded to serve athletes, it has become a household brand and is popular for its innovative designs for anyone looking to buy a new pair of shoes.

**NIKE, Inc. is a team comprised of the Nike, Jordan and Converse brands driven by a shared purpose to leave an enduring impact.**

(NIKE Inc., [2024](#))

Nike fundamentally believes that if you have a body, you are an athlete. A clear justification for aligning their product line up to match various social groups and settings.

Diversity, equity, inclusion & responsible supply chains with greater emphasis on sustainable energy are the core driving factors of Nike.

# JUST DO IT.

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<sup>1</sup>All trademarks, logos and brand names are the property of their respective owners.

## Company History



Figure 1: Bill Bowerman engaged in innovative work (Department of Nike Archives, 2022)

The *Blue Ribbon Sports* was the original name the company had when founded by **Bill Bowerman & Phil Knight**. The first business model was being a redistributor for imported shoes which was then conducted on Phil's car.

Bill in the meantime experimented with his wife's waffle iron to create a innovative sole that would have better grip on the track surfaces to help athletes competing in events. The word out there is that he broke the waffle iron.

Better yet in the 1972, Bill introduced the first of his innovations with many to follow named ***Moon Shoe***. The footprints used to resemble the footprints on the moon, hence the name assigned.

Shortly followed by ending redistribution agreement, Blue Ribbon Sports then started to produce their own shoes with *Nike* branding on them.

## Company at Present

Fast-forward to 2024, Nike is considered to be highly valued brand among many other leading brands on shoe and apparel segment. Nike is known for its innovative designs and is endorsed by leading athletes including a handful of Olympians.

Along the years Nike has stepped out of niche market segment of athletes and position themselves as a leading brand for shoes, apparel of both casual & sports.

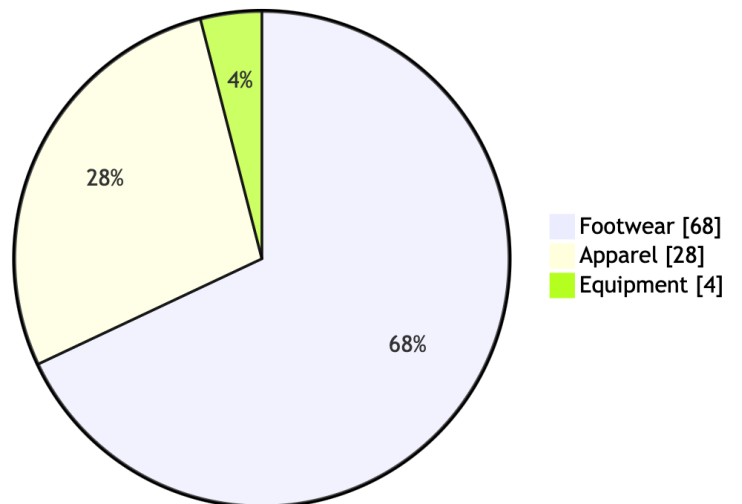


Figure 2: Source (Securities and Exchange Commission, 2024)

# Critical Analysis Overview

As common to any business, Nike has number of prominent competing brands including Addidas, Sketchers, New Balance etc. out of which Addidas can be identified as the most influential competitor with a substantial market capitalization and economies of scale capabilities.

Nike with its current line up of product catalog, consists of following three categories.

- Shoes
- Apparel
- Equipment

A shoe company with strong influence from athletic background and historical attachment has proven to be successful with exploring new market segments with specialized products in these additional categories. Arguably, equipment category is a novelty market for Nike.

The company continues to maintain the differentiation focus on shoes segment with products that are specialized for athletes and professional use cases. This argument can be further supported by endorsements received by Nike from top players **Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, LeBron James**.

Apparel segment serves as brand presence marker with a couple of patented designs for comfortable wearing during sweaty and hardcore training sessions.

On the novelty equipment section, the company focus on collaboration with tech giants such as Apple to produce smart wearable devices that are Nike branded.



Figure 3: Nike Strategy Overview

## Analysis Breakdown

In order to understand & evaluate any business on their performance, market placement & capitalization, it is vital to understand how a company set direction to their future. With operational complexities and other dynamic external factors affecting, this decision-making and operation is not as simple as it looks from outside.

In a real world example, whole thing can be aligned to a ship sailing in unknown waters. There is one captain, few engineers in charge of different systems, actual officers assigned to deck and engine & their operation manuals and standards.

Now in terms of a company, different layers of strategy can be classified in to 4 layers.

## Decoding Strategical Layers



Figure 4: Strategy Decomposition Overview

In this case study, the top 3 layers are evaluated aligned to *Nike*.

1. Corporate Strategy - which markets does Nike operate & how
2. Business Strategy - does Nike offer low cost products or focus athletes
3. Functional Strategy - how Nike design products & optimize operations

# Corporate Strategy

## Blue Ocean & Red Ocean Strategy

According to (50minutes, [2015](#)), red ocean refers to saturated markets with mature organizations and conversely blue ocean refers to untapped markets and segments that a new company can establish themselves. To put things in to perspective, Apple when introduced iPhone created a blue ocean for themselves being a explorer in an untapped market segment of young generation.

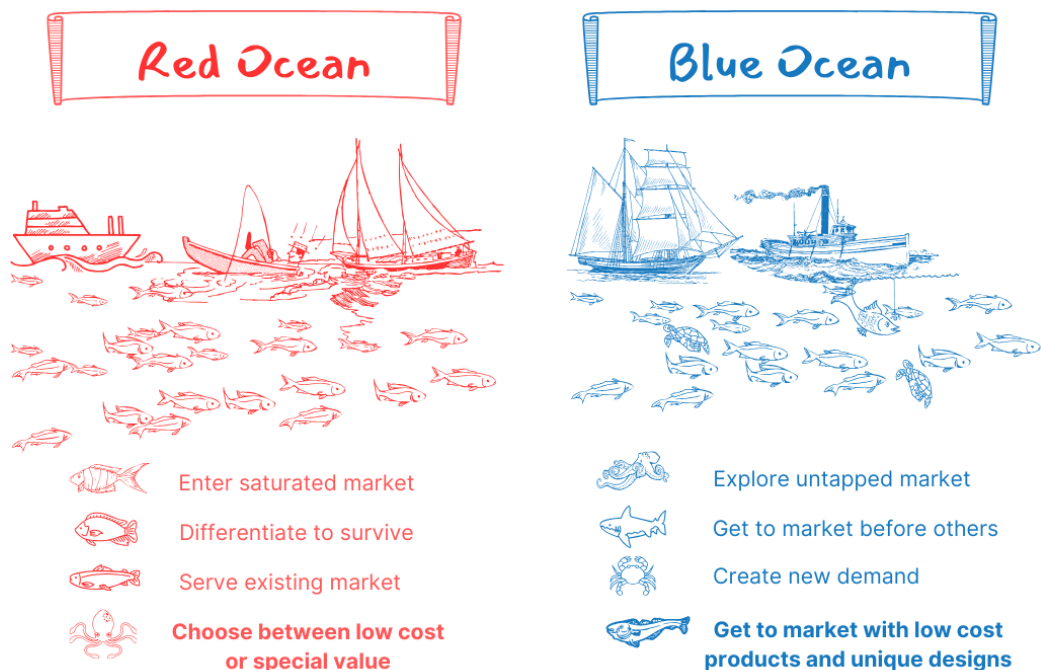


Figure 5: Red Vs. Blue Ocean Overview



## The Red Ocean: Intense Competition in Athletic Footwear & Apparel

- **Current Landscape:** Nike operates in a highly competitive market where athletic footwear and apparel are dominated by major players like Adidas, Puma, and Under Armour.
- **Competition:** The market is saturated, and brands are aggressively competing for market share with incremental innovations. Companies focus on brand loyalty, price reductions, and continuous product improvements, often leading to price wars and high marketing expenses.
- **Challenges:** In this crowded space, distinguishing oneself becomes increasingly difficult. Nike combats this by focusing on cutting-edge performance, innovative technology (e.g., Nike Air), and leveraging athlete endorsements to maintain its competitive edge.

## Blue Ocean: Innovation, Sustainability, and Digital Transformation

- **New Opportunities:** Nike has successfully pursued Blue Ocean strategies by pushing beyond traditional product offerings. Some key examples include,
  - **Sustainability Initiatives:** Nike’s “Move to Zero” campaign focuses on achieving a zero carbon and zero waste future. Innovations like the use of recycled materials and sustainable manufacturing processes position Nike as a leader in eco-friendly sportswear.
  - **Digital Transformation:** Nike invests heavily in digital services, such as the Nike Training Club, Nike Run Club, and the Nike App, offering personalised fitness experiences and enhancing customer engagement.
  - **Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) Model:** Nike’s shift to a D2C approach through its digital platforms enables more personalised customer experiences, direct communication, and stronger brand loyalty.
  - **Customisation:** With services like “Nike by You,” consumers can design their own custom footwear, offering a unique and personalised product that stands out from competitors.

- **Strategic Focus:** Nike's Blue Ocean strategies allow the brand to create new market spaces, focusing on sustainability, innovation, and personalised services, which not only differentiate it from competitors but also generate fresh demand in the market.

ASPECT	RED OCEAN	BLUE OCEAN
<b>Market Conditions</b>	Highly competitive, crowded market with established players (Adidas, Puma, New Balance).	Untapped or minimally explored market space with unique opportunities for differentiation and growth.
<b>Focus</b>	Competing for existing market share with incremental product improvements.	Creating new demand in an uncontested market through innovation, sustainability, and customer-centric services.
<b>Competition</b>	Intense, with price wars and constant efforts to gain market share.	Minimal direct competition, as Nike carves out new spaces in areas like sustainability and digital transformation.
<b>Strategy</b>	Price competition, brand loyalty, and product enhancements (e.g., Nike Air).	Innovation through digital services (Nike Training Club, Nike Run Club), sustainability (Move to Zero), and product customisation (Nike by You)
<b>Customer Engagement</b>	Focused on maintaining brand loyalty with promotions and endorsements.	Direct-to-consumer (D2C) model to create personalized experiences and foster deeper customer relationships.
<b>Challenges</b>	Difficulty in differentiating products in a saturated market, leading to high marketing costs.	Risk of investing in untested markets, but the potential for long-term brand leadership and differentiation.

Figure 6: Nike Approach Red & Blue Oceans

## PESTEL Analysis

### Political Environment

As the company is headquartered in US, the company enjoys stable political environment in general.

### Economical Environment

A volatile inflation trends after the pandemic continue to put pressure on the company turnover.

### Social Environment

Nike is considered a brand of status in some categories. With continued commitment to quality, Nike was able to retain market capitalization.

### Technological Environment

As a company pioneered in innovation and early adoption, Nike continues to thrive as a brand with a strong application of modern technology.

### Environmental Background

Although company is committed for sustainable energy targets, it is unclear for what extend the company is applying them in practice.

### Legal Environment

Nike as a multinational company, continues to engage in legal proceedings and compliance requirements.

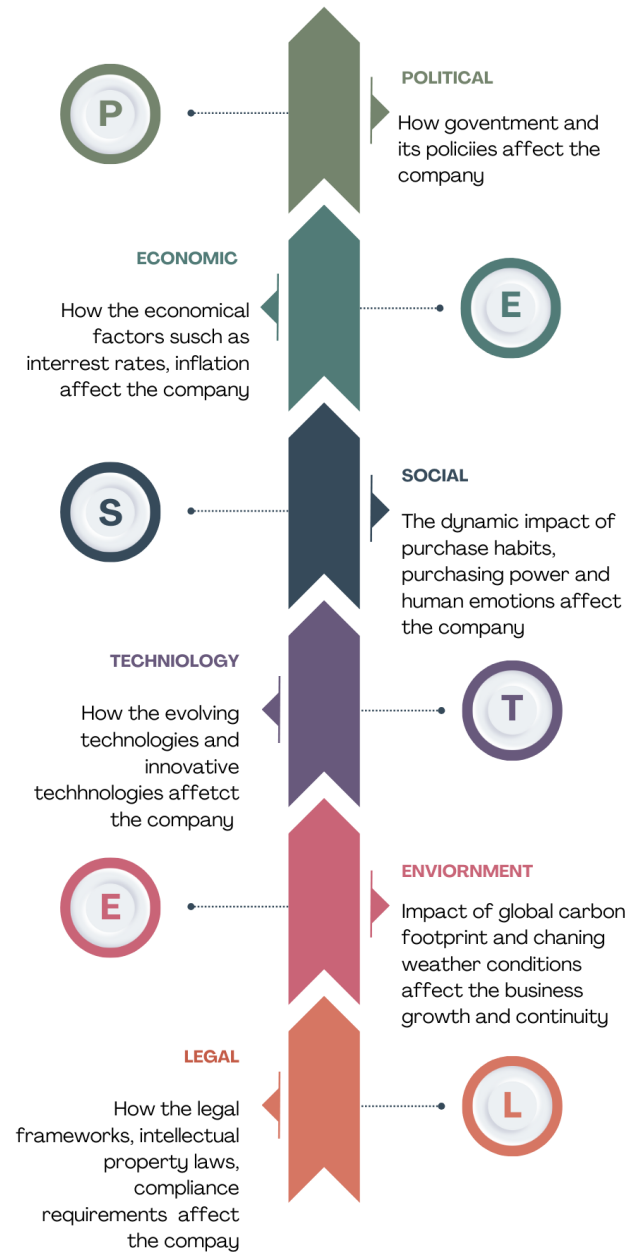


Figure 7: PESTEL Analysis Overview

# Business Strategy

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats Analysis

SWOT analysis is a method that is used to analyze a company or organization's resources (Emet, 2017). SWOT analysis consists of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities that Emet also believed aimed to make micro evaluations, uncover opportunities, and discover strategic issues and developments.

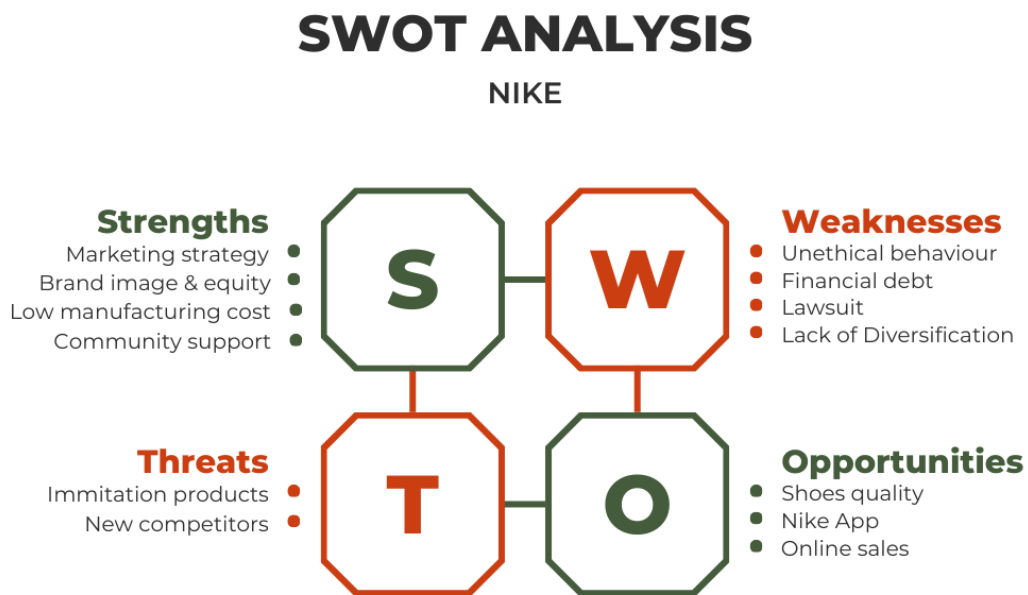


Figure 8: Nike SWOT Analysis Overview

## **Strengths**

Nike's strength is its brand identity, where it sells not only shoes but also stories, identities, and spirits. Those values are emphasized in most of their campaign and marketing, including the "Just Do It" campaign. The campaign was viral featuring an elderly person running and according to (Nayak, 2017), the campaign has significantly boosted their sales and brand identity in the world as an empowering brand and has been their marketing strategy until now.

Other than that, Nike also became brand equity, where they can sell a simple t-shirt with a small logo and set a price where people would still be interested and even desire to own it. With this attention from the public, Nike could easily launch new products and there will be people who are after it.

## **Weaknesses**

Despite its strengths, Nike must also focus on its weaknesses, especially its ethical behavior which could threaten its brand identity. Nike has been associated with some unethical issues, from the sweatshops in Indonesia and how the factory in Vietnam contains too many chemicals that are not acceptable for the workers, (Auburn University, 2024). To deal with the issue, Nike decided to monitor the supply chain properly and to make sure they were paid fairly.

Because of the previous issue, Nike has to be more careful with their supply chain and should be more transparent with the public on how the factory is running to gain the public's trust again.

## **Opportunities**

With its brand image, Nike can still grow so much more as there are several opportunities to explore, starting from its Nike app to starting a community to enhance its online sales. Nike can focus on the app to engage with the users to track their fitness and also give them rewards.

Not only improving their brand image, the App can also be a platform to promote their products, which can be more profitable later.

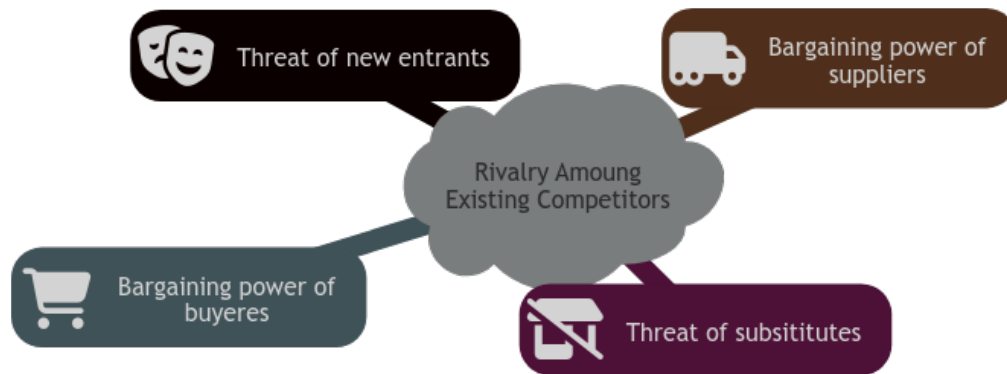
## **Threats**

With this previous issue, Nike has to be very careful with the supply chain to avoid the previous misconduct. Despite the internal issue, Nike also has

to be more innovative to expand their business to have more options since more competitors are coming into the industry with cheaper prices, new technologies and collaboration.

According to(Fortune Business Insight, [2024](#)), some sports apparel brands started to collaborate to gain more market share, such as collaboration between Lululemon and Lazada and Adidas with Balenciaga.

## Porter's Five Forces Model



### Bargaining power of suppliers

Nike is a leader with its huge brand value in the sports industry. Nike is the top seller of athletics apparels in the world, and it works with about 800 suppliers in 51 countries and China's Pou chen, Indonesia's PT Pan Brothers and Vietnam's Fulgent Sun Group are the major supplier (Locke et al., 2007). Bargaining power can be defined as the ability to influence the cost of the products. Nike is one of the largest companies in the sports industry due to its huge economic scale it can negotiate terms and conditions on its favor.

Also, Nike has a vertical integration strategy which gives full control of its supply chain. Furthermore, many of the supplier business heavily depends on the business with NIKE and there are number of suppliers which want to do business with Nike. Although major suppliers also supply its products to other rivals such as adidas and puma, because of its huge brand value and availability of supplier, Nike has more bargaining power over its supplier.

### Bargaining power of buyers

Buyer's bargaining power is the concept that consumers have the ability to influence the price, quality and service of the product. The bargaining power of the buyer depends on the various factors as follows.

- **Access to alternative:** Sports industry is very competitive and there are brands like Adidas, Puma, Under Armour which provides similar types of products like Nike. Due to the availability of large number

of selections and easy access, buyers can easily switch to other brands. And also, Nike's high price on some products compared to other brands causes the switching of consumers. Therefore, in this case buyers have more bargaining power.

- **Consumers' loyalty:** Nike offers a huge range of quality products which has created loyal customers. There is a huge segment of consumers who prefer to buy Nike's products for its quality products although there are alternatives available in the market. So, due to its wide range of quality products and loyal customer, consumer have less bargaining power over Nike's.

### **Threat of substitution**

Sports industry is competitive and competition is never ending, along with Nike there are big brand like Adidas, Puma, New Balance, Under Armour etc. which are always the threat of substitutes to the Nike's products because these company also provide similar quality of products to the customers. Also, brands like Converse and Sketcher offer more casual products which draw the attention of the consumers. There are also some budget-friendly products of the retail chain like Kmart and Big W, which compete with Nike in terms of the high price products. Another threat for Nike is replica products especially in developing countries.

Therefore, Nike has less to moderate threat of the substitution, due to its consumer can switch because of availability and price of the products according to their interests.

### **Threat of new entrants**

In any industry there is always the threat of new entrant form a new competitor, and it depends on the entrance barrier of the industry. Higher the barrier makes the threat of new entrants (Wan & Bullard, 2009). In the case of Nike, the threat of new entrants is less because of its strong brand value. The new competitors need to spend huge amounts of capital development in order to develop a brand like Nike. Also, the economic production, marketing and research of Nike is huge in the sports industry, which is nearly impossible to the new entrant to achieve that economic scale in the market.

Furthermore, customer loyalty is another factor that is hard to beat Nike by any new competitors. But the new entrant can have access to various distribution channels and apply new technology for the distribution of its products. For example, a new entrant can distribute their products through



online platform like amazon, eBay and store like Walmart, Kmart, BigW which can reach to large number of customers can impose threat to the Nike corporation.

## Low-Cost Strategy vs. Differentiation Strategy

Nike has long been a leader in the athletic footwear and apparel industry, utilizing both Low-cost and Differentiation strategies, depending on market conditions, customer needs, and product categories. Each approach has its advantages and challenges, and Nike leverages both to strengthen its competitive position.

### Differentiation Strategy

Nike's primary strength lies in its Differentiation strategy, which focuses on offering products that are perceived as unique, high-quality, and innovative, thus allowing the company to charge a premium price. Differentiation involves creating distinct products that resonate with customers through innovation, branding, and a strong emotional connection.

#### Key Elements of Nike's Differentiation Strategy

1. **Innovation and Technology:** Nike is known for its constant innovation in performance technology. Products like Nike Air, and React Foam demonstrate Nike's commitment to developing cutting-edge athletic footwear and apparel that enhance performance.
2. **Branding and Endorsements:** Nike's powerful brand is reinforced by its partnerships with high-profile athletes such as Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, and LeBron James. These endorsements help Nike maintain its perception as the premium brand in sports and fitness.
3. **Sustainability:** Nike's Move to Zero initiative focuses on sustainability, incorporating recycled materials and reducing waste, creating differentiation in a market increasingly concerned with environmental impact.
4. **Customization:** Through services like Nike by You, Nike allows customers to design and personalize their footwear, offering a unique and individualized product that differentiates the brand from competitors.

### Low-Cost Strategy

A low-cost strategy involves offering products at a lower price point than competitors while maintaining acceptable quality. Although Nike has not focused exclusively on low-cost, aspects of this strategy can be seen in specific

areas of their business. For instance, Nike's global supply chain optimization and economies of scale allow the company to produce large quantities of products efficiently, minimizing production costs. This strategy enables Nike to price certain products competitively, ensuring accessibility for a broader customer base. For example,

- **Nike's Partnering with Manufacturers:** Nike has developed strong relationships with manufacturers in low-cost regions, which helps reduce production costs and allows them to pass savings onto customers.
- **Product Range:** While premium products like Nike Air Max command higher prices, Nike also offers more affordable options, such as their entry-level running shoes and apparel, appealing to budget-conscious customers.

However, a consistent low-cost strategy is not Nike's core approach. Nike often faces the risk of eroding its brand equity by competing on price alone, which can undermine the perception of quality and innovation associated with the brand.

## **Balancing Both Strategies**

While Nike emphasizes differentiation as a core strategy, it also benefits from elements of low-cost operations. The company does not fully embrace a low-cost strategy but ensures that its operational efficiency supports its premium offerings. This enables Nike to maintain its market leadership while appealing to different segments of the market, from budget-conscious consumers to those seeking premium, cutting-edge products.

# Functional Strategy

## Value, Rarity, Imitability & Organization

VRIO (Valuable, Rarity, Imitability and Organization) was first introduced by (Barney & Hesterly, [1991](#)). Jay and William believed that VRIO analysis was used to analyze cases and businesses to help decision-making and strategy.

## VRIO Analysis

RESOURCES	VALUABLE	RARE	IMITABILITY	ORGANIZATION
HUMAN RESOURCES	✓	✓	✓	✓
TECHNOLOGY	✓	✓	✓	✓
CUSTOMER LOYALTY	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRAND EQUITY	✓	✓		✓
GLOBAL PRESENCE	✓			✓
RAW MATERIALS	✓		✓	✓
PRODUCT INNOVATION	✓	✓	✓	✓
MARKETING	✓	✓	✓	✓
FINANCIAL RESOURCES	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 9: Nike VRIO Model Overview

## **Value**

All the valuable resources combined result in a sustainable competitive advantage for them. The valuable resources they have shaped them into a global company. Nike has loyal and high-quality human resources that can create innovation and participate in their success.

Nike's global presence and brand equity also play a big part in helping them attract more people and gain more profit in the company because the public already has trust in them.

## **Rarity**

Nike resources' rarity differed from its competitors since they have product innovation and technology to maintain their quality product. However, Nike is not the only sporting brand that has a global presence, there are Adidas, New Balance and some other brands.

With that being said, Nike has to be more careful to maintain its uniqueness and differentiation to maintain their global presence and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

## **Imitability**

Nike's non-imitability resources have brought them into today's presence. Nike has strong brand equity, and when a brand has equity, people are willing to pay more money to have their logo or associated brand. Even though this is one of Nike's strengths, however, this could lead to imitated products with a lower price and lower quality.

This imitated product could harm Nike's image for the quality that they mistakenly got from the original one.

## **Organization**

Nike has successfully organized its resources to create a fun and good environment for human resources to create, not only on the product quality but also on the marketing that has been globally recognized.

Nike also engages with its loyal customers to maintain its relationship.

# The Results

## Sustainable Competitive Advantage

**Competitive advantage is the long-term tactical philosophy adopted by the organization through which to outperform other organizations serving the same customer(s) and market sector(s).**

(Chaston, [2012](#))

It is evident that Nike was able to gain the competitive advantage through multiple venues. First and foremost being the early adopter and innovator in the shoe making sector resulting in substantive gain in organizational experience and trust.

Progressively, Nike has aligned themselves as a company serving a narrow target audience of athletes. However with strategical directions of the corporate culture, company was able to capture the late 80s increasing popularity for walk-for-health, where average people started to focus on their health by staying active, justifying their widened market focus by categorizing everyone with a body is an athlete.

Establishing on differentiation strategy, the company business and functional strategies are projected towards innovative product designs. This in turn means they are comparatively pricey but their technological advantage and carefully kept brand trust helps to negate the impact of changing buyer affordability.

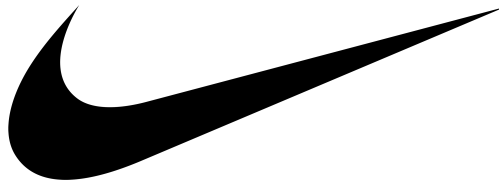
Nike has recently started new product lineup category under equipment is another solid showcasing of how the company utilizes its current competitive advantage and continue to threaten its rival market share. **Therefore, it can be safely justified that Nike has sustainable competitive advantage and continue to growth their standing.**

# Conclusion

Based on extensive research carried out, Nike can be identified as a one of the success stories in the world of business. Founded by passionate athletes to solve a real world problem that continue to exist for decades come, Nike has proven themselves as a well organized brand that carry its original spirit.

Nike's corporate, business and functional strategies are spontaneously synchronised resulting in brand being placed on top of the most valuable list of brands in their trade.

*Innovative product lineup, solid trust in the brand and community engagement justify Nike's present position.*



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