



**BENEATH  
THE TREND**

# How Generations Feel When Brands Take a Stand



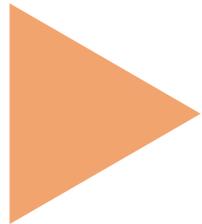
# The Set-Up

Quester is in the process of conducting a new joint project with 747 Insights and Collaborata:

## **GENERATION NATION 2019: Defining America's Gen Z, Millennials, Generation X and Boomers**

This study provides a comparison of attitudes and behaviors across these four cohorts, to expand upon current intelligence and cut to the core of what it means to be an American in 2019.

Aided by technology, media, politics, and more, we can see Generational values shifting at a faster pace than we've ever seen before.



One of the discussion areas centered around perceptions of whether brands should take a stand on social and political issues ...

# So Let's Recap Generation Nation - Should Brands Take a Stand?



## GEN Z

It depends.

Maybe ... if it's not too extreme

## MILLENNIALS

They probably shouldn't. It could cause tension, and employees may not agree.

But it could be okay if it's not offensive and they really believe in it.



## GEN X

It's not really my business – they can if they want to.

But it's probably not for the right reasons.

## BOOMERS

It's their right, but they might lose business. They probably shouldn't do it. Unless it's something really non-controversial.



# Generation Nation Brand Completion

So we asked all of those questions about general brand perspective and finished all of the discussions.

Brand thoughts!



The Best Laid Plans ...

And  
then—  
one  
week  
later ...



# The Reaction

So we went back in and talked to about 100 people in each generation.  
And reaction to brands taking a stand got a lot more definitive.

**YES** – Brands should take a stand on social or political issues:

GEN Z



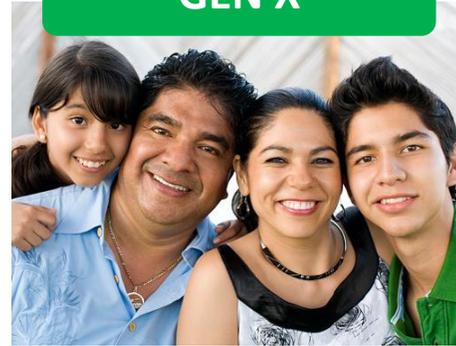
50%

MILLENNIALS



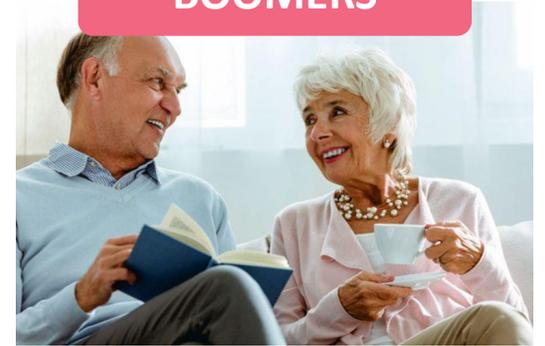
46%

GEN X



33%

BOOMERS



33%

# What Did They Think? At a Glance



## GEN Z

63%

45%

56%

22%



## MILLENNIALS

60%

52%

40%

36%



## GEN X

46%

38%

34%

22%



## BOOMERS

42%

30%

25%

11%

**Strongly/mostly agree** that athletes have the right to voice their protest to social injustice during a professional event

**Feel extremely/very positive** toward Nike for running the CK ad

**Buy Nike – and just as likely** to continue to do so

**Buy Nike – and even more likely** to continue

# What Did They Think of the Nike Campaign? A Recap ...

Note that there are strong opinions on both sides – across generations.  
However – some themes emerge ....



## GEN Z

In general, Gen Z sort of doesn't get what the big deal is.

Why would it not be okay?

## MILLENNIALS

They are actually the MOST positive toward Nike in this context.



## GEN X

They're cynical and not super onboard with Colin.

## BOOMERS

They are the most negative toward Nike and find the whole thing "disrespectful."



# What Did They Think – In Their Words

## GEN Z



“

Honestly **I don't think it was a big deal**. He should be free to express himself without being judged. It's not like he used violence, it was a simple peaceful protest. **I've always been a fan of Nike and I'm not gonna let something as petty as this stop me.**”

## MILLENNIAL



“

Issue aside, **I respected his ability to be brave enough to practice his right to freedom of speech**. He used his voice as a celebrity to voice his choice. It is just freedom of expression. **It was his right** and I respect that without bias.”

## GEN X



“

I think **Nike is bold to use Kaepernick** in their campaigns to fight for equality. Nike has always been a **trend setter** so they know what they are doing ... they knew exactly what would happen using him in their campaigns.”

## BOOMER



“

I think **it is disgraceful**. He is the one who started this whole 'take a knee' thing during the National Anthem which is extremely **disrespectful and offensive**. If he wanted to take a stand against some issue do it outside of his 'job.' It was this country that gave him the opportunity to become a pro football player and make the big bucks. He had much better choices to make his concerns seen heard and to actually help the cause he believes in. Instead he chose to further divide this nation.”

# Gen Z

**Gen Z doesn't really understand what the big deal is.**

They are most likely to:

30%  Feel neutral toward Nike for running the ad

56%  Say that they buy Nike – and that they're just as likely to continue

They're really fine with brands taking a stand – and they are most likely to focus on Nike when discussing reaction to the situation



“

I think the **reaction was a bit overdone**. I understand that people didn't agree with the choice but they didn't have to boycott the brand. **The reaction was blown way out of proportion.**”

“I feel like Colin Kaepernick's **peaceful protest during the national anthem is more than justified and not disrespectful at all**. When he ran the ad with Nike I fully supported their decision and felt it was **relevant and important** to what is going on in today's world.”

# Millennials

**Millennials have the most positive reaction to the ad.**

They are most likely to:

**Feel positively toward Nike for running the ad**

36%



Say they buy Nike and are even more likely to continue (this is significantly higher than any other group)

In discussing their reaction to the ad, they are less likely to focus on the brand, and more likely to use language like “inspiring”



“

I like it a lot. It shows that Nike is siding with the side of justice. I also believe that the NFL has blacklisted Colin Kaepernick, which is morally wrong, for kneeling during the national anthem. I've always liked the air max ninety five shoe so I buy Nike sneakers regardless. This just makes me want to support the cause. Stand up against racial injustice.”

# Gen X

**The older one gets, the more likely they are to have issues with Nike, and with Kaepernick.**

Our cynical Gen X friends aren't thrilled but aren't in Boomer territory – quite – as far as their negativity.

30%



**Strongly/mostly disagree** that athletes have the right to protest social injustice during events

They don't feel as negatively toward Nike as Boomers – they are more likely to be neutral

They express some cynicism (a way for the brand to get attention) and there is some passion in the language they are using in negative responses – and they are the group most likely to mention the military



He has the right to his opinion but he has turned the NFL upside down with these kneeling protests. **Companies should stay out of politics.** Nike has their opinion of this kneeling controversy, which they should. But **they are doing nothing with this ad campaign except shaking the beehive**, getting people all riled up again.”

# Baby Boomers

**Boomers see themselves as tolerant because they were the original hippies – protesters for justice, defenders of diversity ...**

Lovers of irony? They are most likely to:

39%



**Strongly/mostly disagree** that athletes have the right to protest social injustice during events

32%



**Feel extremely/very negatively** toward Nike and say they're not going to buy Nike moving forward

It's important to note, as with other generations, that there are those who are supportive of the campaign –this is not one size fits all – but the pattern of negativity follows an age trend

Boomers are particularly focused on the idea of disrespect in discussing Kaepernick



“

Colin Kaepernick has a good idea wanting to improve conditions for minorities but he is going about it the wrong way by **insulting our country, our veterans and our military. His behavior is extremely disrespectful.**”

“Why would Nike want to use this platform with a questionable athlete? They could have come up with a better way to promote if they wanted to. **There are other ways to promote diversity with advertising.**”

# Letters to Nike

One fun technique we like is to ask respondents to speak directly to the company – as if they were writing a letter ...



“

I feel like you have come this far in the industry and obviously **you know what you are doing**. Do not change a thing because of some peoples' beliefs. **Your product is still the same and people who are of the right mind will understand that**. The people who are burning Nikes? I think that's absurd. They pay money for shoes then they burn them. It's not hurting you guys. I mean, they spent the money on them and you guys have the money. **I think this is all ridiculous, honestly. Keep doing what you do because you are very successful as it is**. Just people being oversensitive in this day and age. – Gen Z

”

## GEN Z

*I think what you're doing is **incredibly bold and extremely progressive**. I'd like to commend you on your work and hope that you will **continue to advocate against social inequality**.*

## MILLENNIAL

*Dear Nike, your **commercial with Colin Kaepernick was beautifully done**. It's too bad people took one part of your ad and decided to bash it. I think your ad gives people hope, especially to the under privileged in the US. I'm **proud to wear Nike**.*

## GEN X

*It's **brave of this company** to take Colin K's side - although I'm sure you assessed the risks and knew monetarily that you could afford the repercussions. You got tons of attention, good or bad, **its still a lot of free press - so good job**.*

## BOOMER

*I am **very disappointed with your choice for this ad**. I think it would have been **more effective and had a bigger impact if you had used a veteran**. Someone who actually has done something for the USA. There are thousands of stories of veterans who have come back from fighting for this country that have dreamed, and more importantly, achieved their dreams.*

# Letters to Colin



“

I appreciate what you are doing, but in order to highlight the hypocrisy of middle America, I would love to see you doing more publicly with soldiers and law enforcement to show them you don't think all cops are bad, or that the protests have nothing to do with the military. - **Millennial**

”

## GEN Z

*Dear Colin Kaepernick, I'm not a 49ers fan. I'm not sure anybody knows how to solve the problems you protested against. But **taking a stance on an issue you care about is important** and if it weren't for people like you this country'd probably be a lot worse. **Keep up the good fight.***

## MILLENNIAL

*You have already done so much to make a difference and stand for what's right. **Keep doing what you feel in your heart is the right thing** to do and it will **keep inspiring** all of us.*

## GEN X

*Dear Colin Kaepernick, **You have sacrificed nothing.** Stop making yourself the victim. Maybe you weren't a good player and that is why no one will hire you. By kneeling **you are insulting the men and women who fight for your right to kneel.** They give their lives. What have you given? You gave up millions of dollars. Big deal. They risk their lives. Why don't you risk your life for what you believe. .... You are a perfect example of an entitled **cry baby** who doesn't get his way.*

## BOOMER

***I completely recognize your legal right to peacefully protest but this was an unfortunate venue** as it goes to the heart of how your viewers feel about football and how it is inextricably tied to America.*



# What Does it Say about Our Country?

One thing we agree on – this is an example of where we are as a country. **30%** say we're "divided" – and the rest express concern.

## GEN Z



“

It shows how divided we really are on social issues and how much we nit pick things on a whole. **The United States seems about as divided as it can be since the civil war ... the citizens don't seem like a unit anymore.**”

## MILLENNIAL



“

Our country is definitely split right now. Especially since the election of our President. **We need to come together and do what is right for our country.** I do believe there is **a lot of change that needs to be done** but how we go about that is very important.”

## GEN X



“

I think it says that **our country is way too divided.** People are continuously looking for things to pick sides on when **we should be working together** for the better of all.”

## BOOMER



“

It is scary. **We have lost our compassion and what this country was founded on.** We are not the world leader anymore in progression. We all have the right to protest but **I think it's ignorant and self serving that they don't see the hypocrisy.**”

# Our Conversation



## Who We Talked To

- >> Generational quotas
- >> Rep Click Sample



## 440 Interviews

Conducted online with artificial intelligence moderator



## Techniques Applied

- Customized probing
- In-depth language review
- Quantified qualitative language analysis

1

How do you feel about Nike running an ad featuring Colin Kaepernick? (Closed-end, 7 point scale)

So now I want to hear from you, in your own words – tell me about your reaction to the Nike Colin Kaepernick ad.

>>

2

How much impact does the Colin Kaepernick ad have on your likelihood to buy Nike products in the future? (CE)

Now again, I'd like to hear from you in your own words – help me understand what leads you to say that.

>>

3

I want you to imagine that I was giving you the opportunity, right now, to tell Nike anything you wanted to tell them about what you think of the Colin Kaepernick ad campaign. Here's your chance – tell them the unvarnished truth about what you think. Let's imagine you're sending them an email – fill this in: "Dear Nike ..."

>>

4

Thanks for that. Now ... here's our chance to do the same thing with Colin Kaepernick. What would you like to tell him? Fill in the rest of this – "Dear Colin Kaepernick .... "

5

I know this is a big question, but I'm going to ask it anyway – what do you think that the Nike ad campaign, and the reaction to it, says about the state of our country right now.

>>

6

In general, do you think brands should take a stand on social or political issues? (CE)

>>

7

Talk to me about why you say that.



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