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# Nike Breaking 2 was so much bigger than an athlete breaking 2 hours

By Richard Dunn

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If you were to name the marathon athletes who attempted to break the two-hour barrier in the Nike Breaking 2 campaign last weekend, I would be surprised if more than 1% of you would get one name correct.

Nike's Breaking 2 was not about celebrating an athlete's remarkable quest to go under two hours, it was unashamedly a PR stunt from one of the world's leading sports apparel brands – a brilliant stunt, a fantastic piece of PR.

The content was littered with Nike product and superlatives, bullish claims about how great their shoes and clothing are; how ultimately wearing their product would make you go faster. Typically brash and American, but brilliantly executed – great Nike advertising.

When you look at Nike, there can't be much debate that historically over the last 30 years Nike have been the masters of great advertising. A company that has always backed bold advertising ideas, compared to Adidas that has had the more conservative German approach.

The problem recently is that Nike's advertising has been great, but in terms of marketing, their biggest rival Adidas has being chomping away at it's market share. This is because advertising and marketing are not the same thing.

Advertising is the activity of developing different types of communication. Marketing is the understanding of consumer needs and delivering solutions against those needs. This is where Adidas has been in a different league, listening to its consumers and giving them the products they want.

The Adidas share price has given you a remarkable 70% return over the last year, while Nike would have given you a negative 10% return on equity. The Adidas share price trades at a P/E of 33, compared to Nike at a P/E of 22. This says a lot about what investors think. Why? Because Adidas are currently better marketers: they are listening more to what consumers want and delivering the products they need. They are currently leading the sneaker war, a category in which they seem to be defining the rules. They have also re-energised categories. Their global Find Your Focus hoodie campaign is a great example of this.

This takes me back to what makes great marketing. Marketing is about understanding a consumer insight and delivering a functional and emotional benefit against it. There are many brands that produce great advertising, but too few that do great marketing. Nike have historically pioneered great advertising and continue to deliver world class communication, like the Breaking 2 concept, but ultimately great marketing has the bigger influence on the bottom line and the three-stripe brand are proving it.

## ABOUT RICHARD DUNN

Richard Dunn is the CEO of Playmakers, which is the 2013, 2014, 2015 & 2016 Discovery Sport Agency of the Year.
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