PROVA: BRAND FANS

EXAM

BRAND FANS

One look at the logo on your T-shirt and people know that you 'just do it'. Everyone can see the three stripes on your trainers and they realize that 'impossible is nothing' for you. But those signs send another message to the world, a message that speaks about you and the products you use. They say clearly that you're a brand fan.

Once upon a time, companies made products and their advertising campaigns focused on the quality of the materials they used in the manufacturing process. However, as advertising methods became more sophisticated, research discovered that people don't spend their free time discussing what their trainers are made of. People talk about Rafa Nadal's great victories, Lionel Messi's fantastic goals and Shakira's amazing concerts. In other words, people discuss memorable emotional experiences. It was then that some companies decided to stop making products and to start creating experiences.

Today, most of the world's biggest sports clothing manufacturers don't actually own any factories. Factories in the developing world, particularly in Asia, are contracted to make their products, using workers who earn extremely low salaries by Western standards. Nevertheless, the sports clothing manufacturers do have employees in the USA and Europe who look after the image of the companies' products. Their job is to make sure that the world continues to associate their brands with sporting success and having a good time, and this usually involves creating advertising that features stars from the worlds of sport and entertainment. These are stars who appeal to some of the sports clothing manufacturers' most important customers: teenagers.

There is one important difference between today's teenagers and teenagers of the past: money. Today's teenagers have more disposable income than before and, as a result, companies work hard to attract them to their brands. But the sports clothing manufacturers don't just want teenagers to buy one or two of their products – they want to convert them into lifelong customers. Research has shown that people remain loyal to brands throughout their lives, so manufacturers are keen to attract young customers who have yet to become fans of a particular brand. To reach them, they use the internet and sponsor special social events. You can visit the Facebook and Myspace pages for their brands and chat with other fans to share your impressions about how 'cool' you feel when you use the company's products. You can go to events such as pop concerts that provide the 'lifestyle experiences' the company wants their brand to be associated with. In fact, it seems that companies don't want teenagers to see their brands as products at all, but as famous celebrities.

Despite the fact that having a celebrity image for a product helps boost sales, according to Canadian journalist Naomi Klein, it can also have a negative impact. Klein, who wrote the well-known book *No Logo*, says that bad news about brands is now celebrity news, not business news. When some companies were discovered using workers in sweatshops, it didn't appear in the business sections of newspapers and TV programmes; it was headline news all around the world. As a result, if companies

want people to love brands in the same way that they love their favourite celebrities, they'll have to behave ethically and make sure that workers in the developing world are treated well. Otherwise, their fans might stop feeling proud of wearing their logos, and more importantly from a business point of view, they might take their loyalty and custom somewhere else.

salaries – sous / sueldos
sweatshop – taller de treball esclau / taller de trabajo esclavo
headline – titular / titular

Part 1: Reading comprehension

Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is possible.
[0.5 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.16 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

1. **What do the logos you wear clearly tell people?**
   a) You're enjoying yourself.
   b) You like buying branded products.
   c) You can do anything.
   d) You always wear sports clothing.
2. **In advertisements in the past, companies would say …**
   a) how they made their products.
   b) what materials were used in the manufacturing process.
   c) how sophisticated their products were.
   d) how good the materials they used were.
3. **Research discovered that friends chat about …**
   a) what they do in their free time.
   b) sport and popular entertainment.
   c) advertising methods used by companies.
   d) the price of trainers.
4. **Workers in the developing world …**
   a) don't work directly for the sports clothing manufacturers.
   b) are paid low salaries by Asian standards.
   c) work in factories owned by the sports clothing manufacturers.
   d) look after the image of the sports clothing manufacturers' brands.
5. **Celebrities are used in advertising for sports clothing because …**
   a) they make the products more famous.
   b) they have a good time making the adverts.
   c) they attract teenage customers.
   d) they are the brands' most important customers.
6. **Sports clothing manufacturers want teenagers to …**
   a) be their customers for many years.
   b) buy one or two products each.
   c) stop being fans of other brands.
   d) buy their products on the internet.

7. **What can you do on the brands' social network pages?**
   a) Chat to celebrities.
   b) Exchange your opinions.
   c) Buy tickets for pop concerts.
   d) Order products.
8. **Today, news about brands ...**
   a) is found in the business section of newspapers.
   b) always increases sales.
   c) could produce a negative reaction from a brand's customers.
   d) is more important than news about celebrities.

Part 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Write about number 1 or 2. Minimum length: 100 words. [4 points]

1. You are out shopping for clothes with your mum or dad. You want to buy a jacket that is a popular brand, but your mum or dad disagrees and thinks you should buy a less expensive one. Write the dialogue between the two of you. Make sure you go NOT use your own name.

2. 'Shopping at shopping centres is fun.' Discuss what you think about shopping at shopping centres. Write an essay.