

Joshua DeMore

Storytelling in Marketing

Brand Advertisement Analysis



Kyle Larson: A Story of Redemption

Kyle Larson is the driver of the historic number five Hendrick Cars Chevrolet Camaro. This past season he was able to capture the championship in what most fans and industry professionals have called dominant. So dominant in fact, that this run this past year by him, and his team, that it has been compared to other great seasons by the likes of Dale Earnhardt and Jeff Gordon. Two champions and Hall of Fame residents that set the bar high for Larson, and the sport as a whole. However, his story was not all champagne showers, trophy celebrations, and media tours. He would display behavior unfitting of a champion. This behavior saw fans, teammates, sponsors and friends leave him in droves.



His story is just as the titled states, one of a man redeemed. He was born in 1992 to a Japanese mother, and an American father. His full name being Kyle Miyata Larson. His first taste of racing would come in his hometown of Elk Grove California driving mini sprint cars. He would begin his racing career on the dirt as most youth do, racing in the United States Auto Club (USAC for short) with Keith Kunz Motorsports. This USAC dream had become so successful that he would become a triple crown winner in the series, a national champion, track record holder, and all before his 21st birthday. He would eventually find himself racing in the NASCAR Camping World Truck series soon after. His talent was recognized quickly as he would become the first rookie to score wins in just his first season. It was this success that led him to a relationship with arguably one of Racings greatest owners, Chip Ganassi. Ganassi would sign Larson to drive for him in the feeder teer to the main NASCAR Cup Series, The NASCAR Xfinity Series. The team would prove to be fruitful over its six-year run. They would grab twelve wins and seventy-eight top tens in 108 races. It was from this seat that he would be hired to driver Ganassi's famous number forty-two in the NASCAR Cup Series in 2014. Larson would prove immediately why he earned the nickname "Yung Money" as a youth. Larson would win



the 2014 rookie of the year, and score the best points finish for Ganassi in three years at seventeenth. Yung Money would not see his first Cup Series win until 2016. Over the course of the next few seasons, he would find himself fighting for a championship in some capacity. His talent would never waver, only the equipment he would drive sadly. Chip Ganassi and Kyle Larson would reach limits that the forty-two car had not seen in over ten years. However, this would all come crashing down for Larson in 2020. The NASCAR series much like every sport was affected by the global pandemic. The sport would try to resume some sort of normality with the use of the racing sim game iRacing. Larson would don his digital fire suit and strap into a 3D rendered forty-two car. Upon waiting for the green flag, Larson would opt to use a word synonymous with hate, bigotry, prejudice and continued social division to this day. Larson would use a racial slur to describe a friend asking where he was. This despicable act would see the once promising rookie removed from his job with Chip Ganassi Racing. Furthermore, companies such as Columbia, Chevy, McDonalds, and Credit One would drop him as sponsorship. The world and country were sent into a shockwave of justful sentiment expressing the need to remove Larson from NASCAR permanently. Larson would see another blow as he would see his USAC license

suspended indefinitely as well. The young twenty-seven-year-old was stripped of the only profession that he had ever known. NASCAR and USAC would set the bar high for him, should he attempt to make a comeback. Over the next 7 months, Larson would spend much of his time in the inner cities of New York committing himself to countless hours of community service, sensitivity training, and classes designed to help White America learn the cold hard truth about the social division that is very real in America. In time, with backing from prominent African American athletes such as fellow NASCAR driver Bubba Wallace, he would find his forgiveness and a driver in NASCAR and USAC. In January of 2021, Larson was afforded a chance of a lifetime. Not only was this chance to comeback but to drive for one of the, if not the greatest team owner in NASCAR history, Rick Hendrick. He was tasked to take over the flagship number five Hendrick Cars Chevy Camaro. Even more so, he was able to race for childhood car owner Keith Kunz in the USAC Midget National Tour. The stage was set, for not only redemption, but to prove that he could be the role model asked of him in an already socially torn country. Larson would go on to become a triple crown winner in USAC once again, capturing Eldora, Knoxville and the Chili Bowl Nationals. Out of 28 starts for the 2021 season in USAC he would amas 11 wins. His NASCAR season was something out of a fairytale book. Yung Money would have a comeback year not only for himself, the historic five car team as well. The kid from Elk Grove would see him take home twenty top fives, seven top tens, and capture ten wins in just a thirty-six-race season. The kid was dominant, he was able to redeem himself and capture the 2021 NASCAR Cup Series Championship. He was able to become the redeemed. He was able to transcend and become the hero of his own story.



Defining the Larson Brand

Archetype Used:

While some would consider his Archetype potentially a Hero, I would strongly disagree. I believe that Larson demonstrates the Sage Archetype. Larson while was incredibly successful as a dirt racer. Was truly never able to capitalize on his talent, especially once he was barred from NASCAR. He still yearned to find himself within the sport, he stilled was searching for his own harmony or paradise. This was even more evident as once he was privileged to come back to the sport, there was so many unknowns. Sure, you can have great equipment, but ultimately it is the person in the story that has to make sense of what is going on in front of him and search for his/her paradise. In this case, his winning and competitive form.

Hero's Journey Elements:

There are quite a lot of elements that follow Larson on his journey. The few that I would like to highlight would of course be his mentors. These would be found in Chip Ganassi for giving him one of his first chances to break out. Jeff Gordon and Rick Hendrick for allowing him to return to the sport. Allowing him to return to the sport after his ordeal/death of his own character. The start of his career while successful as a rookie was still a huge test. Especially when you considered he was making the switch from dirt to pavement. His road back was long. Some say he should have been suspended for a longer period. However, he proved he is capable of change. He made the right choices off the track and was paramount in getting young children in poverty-stricken areas opportunities to race cars. His resurrection was found in the chance of a lifetime to race again. His elixir, well simply put it was a culmination of all of these trials to realize his full potential and become champion.

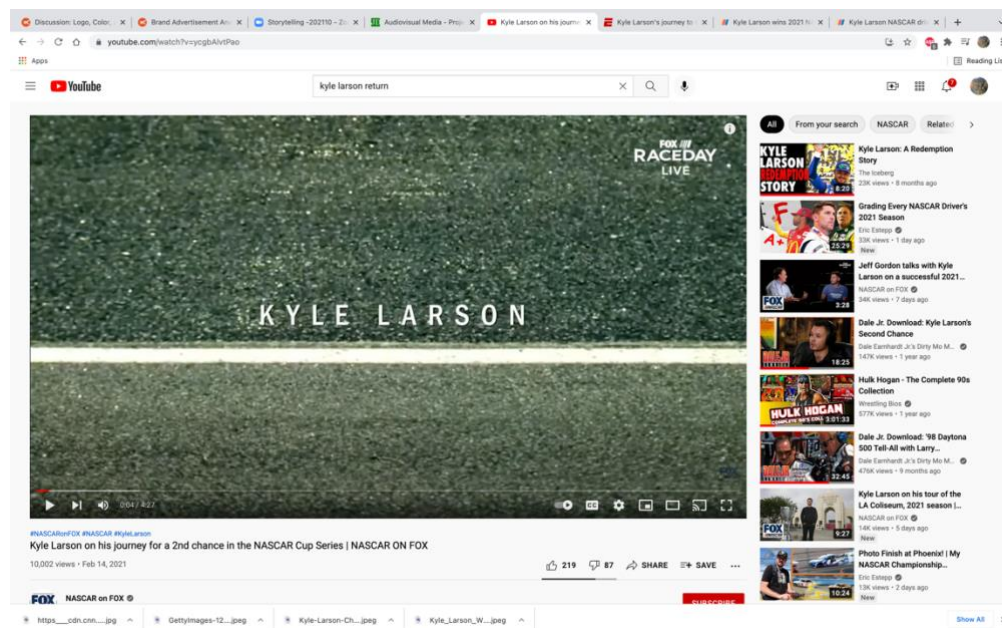
Logo/Font/Color:

This is by far one of the coolest topic pieces of this assignment pertaining to Larson. NASCAR in general is known for their unique liveries. These paint schemes not only include clever corporate intervention, but team cohesiveness as well. The font used for the driver's name and number is called Aachen. The cars number, five, has a historic past. The car was originally made famous by Terry Labonte in the 90's and early 2000's. The number five also was the first car that Rick Hendrick ran in NASCAR. Fans and industry professionals alike will recognize this as the car that not only made Labonte famous but Cornellius and Tony the Tiger from Kellogg's Corn Flakes and Frosted Flakes. The paint livery itself also has deep rooted history. The deep blue mixed with red aside from bringing a positive and energetic

vibe to the car. It pays tribute to the team's owner Rick Hendrick, and his late son Ricky Hendrick. Ricky used the same paint scheme in the late 90's on his then NASCAR Craftsman Truck.

Call to Action:

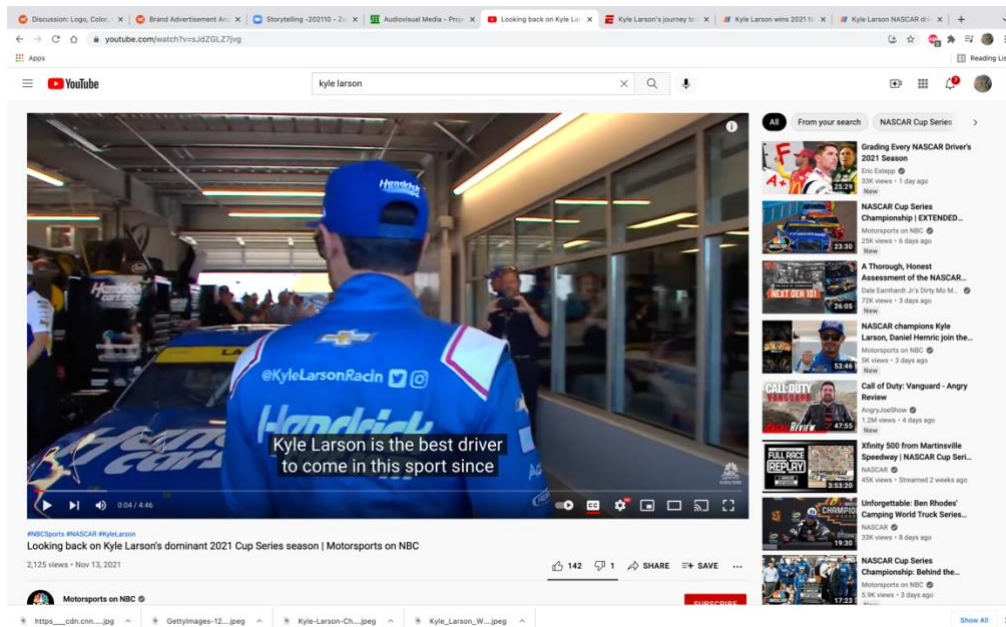
At the start of the season, Larson had many questions. This all surrounded his use of a racial slur. He would do an interview with Emmanuel Acho to discuss what he had done, what he has done to become redeemed and the future. One of the biggest things that Larson goes on record here in saying is that he accepts responsibility for what he had done. Furthermore, he chooses to wear it almost as a sponsor to showcase that he has actually changed as a man.



NASCAR (2021 February 14) *Kyle Larson on his Journey for a Second Chance in the NASCAR Cup Series* [Video File] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrgbAlvtPao>

The next promotional video showcases just how much of a dominant driver he was in 2021. This particular video makes comparisons to him and another Hendrick Hall of Famer, Jeff Gordon. It

highlights each of his ten wins this past season while also asking about what his expectations were at the start. The video contains conversation about the charity work he continues to do in poverty cities across the United States and what he hopes this commitment can bring to not only the kids he helps but the sport of NASCAR as a whole.



NASCAR (2021 November 13) *Looking Back on Kyle Larson's Dominant Cup Series Season*

[Video File] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJdZGLZ7jvg&t=4s>

References

McGee, R (2021 November 7) *Kyle Larson's Journey to the NASCAR Cup Series Championship also brings Responsibility*

ESPN. https://www.espn.com/racing/nascar/story/_/id/32578766/kyle-larson-journey-nascar-cup-series-championship-brings-responsibility

Staff Reporters (2021 November 7) *Kyle Larson caps Dominant season with Cup Series Championship*

NASCAR. <https://www.nascar.com/news-media/2021/11/07/kyle-larson-caps-dominant-season-with-cup-series-championship/>

MRN Staff (2018, January 1) Kyle Larson Driver Bio

Motor Racing Network. <https://www.mrn.com/2018/01/01/kyle-larson-driver-bio/>