

Dove: Brand Analysis

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Background & Purpose:

Within this brand analysis, the goal will be to highlight all of the elements of Dove in order to fully assess the strengths and weaknesses of the company. This analysis will be broken down into the following sections: positioning and personality, culture, image and reputation, message synergy and consistency, and complete overview of brand as a whole.

Dove is a personal care brand owned by Unilever, a British-Dutch conglomerate based in the United Kingdom. Manufactured and sold all over the world, Dove has access to cost efficient revenue streams and global outsourcing. Dove is a global brand, which sells products in every major grocery store, pharmacy, as well as online. Dove products are available in more than 80 countries worldwide. Dove has an extensive history, having been first introduced in the U.S. in 1957. The brand was launched as a revolutionary beauty cleansing bar soap, but since then has evolved to a full range of products including; body washes, lotions, facial cleansers, hair products and much more. Dove is among the leaders in addressing social issues through product and advertising and exists as a positive symbol of real women, real beauty and confidence.

Brand Positioning & Personality:

Dove stands apart from its competitors because this company makes an effort to make all women feel beautiful and included. Dove is user-oriented because they focus on the needs of their target audience, rather than emphasizing the benefits of their products (Perry, p. 54). They use differentiated positioning by using strategies that make their product stand out from their competitors, such as creating campaigns that have a positive social impact in women (Perry, p. 50). Dove creates campaigns that appeal to all women, and not just a small niche of people. Dove

showed how inclusive they are in their “Show Us” campaign. This campaign took place in 2019 and they asked their consumers to send them pictures of themselves with *#ShowUs* on their social media pages (Dove, 2019). Their research discovered that over 70% of women do not feel that they are represented in media or advertising (Dove, 2019). Women are constantly seeing advertisements on how to change their body to look perfect. Dove communicates a different message compared to other brands because they encourage people to see that they are already beautiful. With this campaign, over 5,000 images were collected and put into Dove’s photo collection on their website (Dove, 2019). Dove has collected images of people from all around the world and they believe that with this campaign, they are redefining what beauty is. Dove embraces body positivity and confidence in women. This is also demonstrated in their “Self Esteem” campaign. This was meant to encourage and inspire young people to be confident in themselves (Dove, 2016). Dove actively communicates inspiring messages to their consumers and is continuously working to break stereotypes. Dove includes real people in their advertisements and they show women how there is more than one standard of beauty. This message and interaction with their consumers sets them apart from their competitors.

Culture:

Dove is a brand that stays consistent with the type of culture that it supports. The cultural movements currently surrounding beauty products talk about natural beauty and women and men feeling good in their own skin. With the launch of Dove’s campaign for “Real Beauty,” the brand firmly planted itself in the body positivity movement. Over the years the movement has slightly shifted; however, Dove’s focus and culture has remained the same. Although Dove does not force itself to create a brand movement, being a part of the cultural movement makes them part

of the conversation. Each of Dove's campaigns show their dedication to being involved in a movement to empower women and men in their real, true selves.

The organization of Dove is completely authentic. The brand positioning that Dove has is maintained within their positive culture. Lola Ogunyemi, one of the models who appeared in an ethnic diversity commercial for Dove, defended the company after public allegations of racism. Ogunyemi said that her participation in the Dove campaign gave her the chance to "represent my dark-skinned sisters in a global brand" (Kazeem, 2017). While Ogunyemi defended the brand, Dove failed to respond to the backlash. The lack of crisis communication from Dove does not represent the brand, and in recent years Dove has made more of an effort to share their thoughts and processes with consumers. This increase in communication supports Dove's mission in creating body positivity for women. The success of the communication was "research-based and employed a host of methods to understand the issues women face with respect to Dove products and perceived beauty." (Kemp, 2019). Consistency is shown through Dove's efforts with promoting positivity, maintaining their brand, and keeping a culture aligns with their values.

The culture and promotion of Dove go hand in hand. The social mission of Dove stays true to its own values. Three commitments that Dove maintains are; always featuring women and never models, portraying women as they are in real life, and helping 40 million young people build self-esteem and body confidence (Unilever, 2020). These commitments that Dove has made are evident through their marketing. The global vice president of Dove stays true to the brand's focus to normalise more authentic depictions of women (Kemp, 2019). Galvani says, "Our research has shown that 67% of women are calling for brands to step up and start taking responsibility for the stock imagery they use and, because of this, we wish to make a real

systematic change in the way media and advertisers depict women.” (Kemp, 2019). The company also supports these ideas within the office; Dove’s Work Culture scored an 80% which places it at the top among its’ competitors (Comparably, 2019). The positivity within the company makes it easier for workers to go to the office and effectively communicate and market to their audience.

Image & Reputation:

Dove’s desired perception can be understood through their following mission statement: “To ensure that the next generation grows up enjoying a positive relationship with the way they look—helping young people raise their self-esteem and realize their full potential.” (Dove, 2016). Dove wants to break the typical mold of what is “beautiful” in the media. Dove considers themselves a “home of real beauty”, in which their vision of the world is one where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety (Dove, 2016). They aspire to be a brand synonymous with diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. The “Real Beauty Pledge ” created by Dove illustrates this company’s dedication to show a wide range of beauty; therefore, they only feature real and unedited women who reflect the population’s diversity in their advertisements. This started a global conversation to expand the definition of beauty and raise awareness to work towards ending the media’s unattainable standards (Fernandez, 2013). Dove is not afraid to collaborate with nontraditional models like Molly Burke, a popular blind YouTuber, when releasing their new ‘Shower Foam’ line. The “Real Beauty Sketches,” released in 2013 was a viral sensation in which they promoted self-worth and explored the gap between individuals’ image of themselves in comparison to how strangers see them (Dove, 2016). Within twelve days of release, more than 50 million people had viewed the video.

Dove strives to be known for their body-positive message that focuses on a women's assets and not her flaws. In essence, they want their reputation to go beyond just being a personal care product line, and actually take a stand on important social issues. Moreover, the "Dove Self-Esteem Project" in 2004 was created to work with leading experts in the area of body image. They have already reached over 20 million youths by providing free education and resources to build body positivity (Dove, 2016). Moreover, despite past controversies, consumers and the media still regard Dove highly as supported by a Salesforce Social Studio analysis (Salesforce Studio, 2020). A majority of the sentiments were positive with Twitter comments praising the brand for its hypoallergenic and skin sensitivity line. The media and consumers not only think highly of Dove's products, but they also are supportive of their stance regarding social issues.

Message Synergy and Consistency:

Dove is very successful in the consistency of their real beauty message because their current campaigns – such as "Show Us", "Confident Girl", and "Girl Collective" – all emphasize confidence and being true to yourself. As Percy (2018) mentions, "People often think about brands in terms of human characteristics. This can occur as a direct result of how they perceive users of a particular brand, or perhaps owing to a celebrity endorser" (p. 25). Dove doesn't use celebrity endorsers – their brand is you, the consumer. And that is what makes it real.

This positive image is authentic because of how they handle their campaigns. As the saying goes, *if you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk*. In the "Show Us" campaign, they've partnered with Getty image, GirlGaze, and the customer for photos of real women (Dove, 2019). With their "No Digital Distortion Mark", they pledge to never use

manipulated photos (Dove, 2018). They are not telling you that their products make you beautiful – they are empowering you.

Another example of Dove supporting the consumer in her acceptance of herself is the CROWN Coalition. Dove co-founded it to “advance efforts to end hair discrimination and to create a more equitable and inclusive beauty experience for black women and girls” (Dove, 2019). As part of achieving that message, Dove partnered with writer and director Matthew A. Cherry in his animated short film, *Hair Love*. In an interview with ESSENCE, Mr. Cherry stated, “Dove actually supported our film at the Kickstarter level” (Evans, 2020).

As discussed earlier in this analysis, the “Real Beauty” campaign was overall successful, but not without controversy. Although Dove failed to respond to critics at first, they did learn from their mistake. According to Zed (2019):

Dove rang a bell for asking instead of telling when it announced #ShowUs in a full-page ad in *The New York Times* that led with a mea culpa. Not only did Dove hear and admit it sometimes gets things wrong, the company asked for input.

As far as internal brand culture, Dove’s commitment to paternity leave reinforces their reliable reputation. Their “Dear Future Dads” campaign shows they are leading the field in caring about their employees, as well as other companies' employees (Dove, 2019).

These are all examples that show the consistency that leads to Dove’s trustworthy reputation. Dove cares about the consumer, and their message is backed by action. In addition, they continue to use the graphic of the dove on their marketing materials, packaging, and social

media. This illustrates and confirms that they are still the dependable brand that they have been for so many years.

Brand Analysis:

Dove as a brand promotes inclusion, body confidence, and feeling good in one's skin. Dove manufacturer quality products that are multifunctional for everyday use. With a variety of unique soaps, hair care, deodorants, body washes, and more, consumers have the opportunity to purchase exactly what they need. With a majority of their products containing a quarter of moisturizing cream, their superior ingredients do not leave residue on skin. They cater to all skin types and produce a variety of dermatologist recommended, unscented and hypoallergenic products. A key strength to Dove's marketing is its convenience as consumers can purchase the brand in most grocery stores, drug stores, and even through online retailers. With the digital age, it is also important for companies to reach larger audiences by creating an online presence. Dove has a well-functioning website that is easy for users to navigate. They have a commanding social media presence, consisting of hundreds of thousands of followers across all major platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Through a combination of owned, earned, and paid media strategies, Dove has had an influential role on the personal care market.

While Dove has products for both men and women, research shows that most consumers are women. The target audience of Dove's products and campaigns are focused on females, giving the brand a feminine connotation. Steps are being taken to appeal to all demographics as shown in their "Dear Future Dads" campaign in which they aim to bring awareness to paternity leave by donating and petitioning others to do the same (Dove, 2019). While the company culture is rated at the top of its market, Dove can still implement changes to strive for a more

unified bond with employees which may even increase worker productivity. Expanding the diversification in their offices is essential, as it has been recorded that employees of Dove typically come from the same racial background. Another weakness of Dove is their crisis communication strategy. Despite having a loyal audience, Dove has shown to revert to media blackouts and stay silent when facing public backlash or criticism. Having a strong brand identity is not sufficient; Dove needs to continue to incorporate marketing, public relations, and advertising strategies to further spread their company's message of body acceptance.

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