



Dove Real Beauty Sketches: Case Study

Background

“You are more beautiful than you think.” The tagline for Dove’s Real Beauty Sketches Campaign is simple, and yet, perfect for its mission – to halt psychoanalysis of imperfections.

The campaign gained ground with Dove’s desire to build and maintain brand loyalty. More importantly, however, the heart of the campaign lies in transforming women’s negative perceptions of their own beauty into something beautiful: confidence.

The People Behind It

Unilever, manufacturer for **Dove**, was instrumental in the campaign and boasts most-viewed video ad campaign with “Real Beauty Sketches.” The company possesses a PHD International Global Strategy Unit that worked on the campaign. **PHD International** is an “innovator” in communications planning and buying across various types of media (Authentic). The company worked in tandem with **Ogilvy & Mather**, a leading global marketing communications agency. Its location in Brazil worked on the campaign and was subsequently named Agency of the Year for its outstanding efforts. Dove’s principal PR firm, **Edelman**, is the world’s largest public relations firm and was responsible for promotion to the public.

The Story Behind It

Ogilvy was fully aware of the emotional aspect of the campaign, and for that reason, decided to take a rather unconventional approach. There was only one way to portray the raw emotions of the women interviewed, and that was through a short film. However, Ogilvy prefers to call it something other than a mere campaign. “[Dove] didn’t approve a script; they approved a social experiment,” said Anselmo Ramos, VP and creative director at Ogilvy Brazil (Grose).

Ogilvy Brazil began by hiring an FBI-trained sketch artist named Gil Zamora and casting women to take part in the video. Zamora, without seeing the women, would ask them to describe their complexion and would draw them based on their account. Afterwards, a stranger that had previously spoken with the woman would describe her to Zamora. He would then draw her a second time based on the stranger’s viewpoint. Every single time, the drawing derived from the stranger’s explanation would be more attractive, and consequently, more accurate.

The Reason Behind It

Dove has long supported the notion of women embracing their own beauty. Their target audience was women of all ages, but was also appealing to men that would think of their mothers and sisters when watching the video. The “Real Beauty” campaign was launched by Unilever in 2004 and has since released different sub-campaigns to continue the tradition. With the omnipresence of social media and unrealistic societal expectations of beauty, Dove decided to take a stand and instill the realization that despite these external forces, women remain their own worst critics.

Situation Analysis

Women are not the only critics. A plethora of individuals have responded to the “Real Beauty Sketches” campaign, some positively and others negatively.



Microenvironmental Forces: Strengths

As aforementioned, Unilever launched the “Real Beauty” campaign for Dove back in 2004. Thus, Dove was able to target the vast social media following it had already amassed before the release of “Real Beauty Sketches” in hopes of expanding that audience. Little did they know, it would expand to the point of becoming the most-viewed video ad campaign. To accomplish such a feat, Dove utilized a multitude of resources and alliances.

Perhaps the primary reason for its large number of views was the fact that Dove uploaded the short film in 35 languages to 46 Dove YouTube channels. The video was viewed in more than 110 countries across the globe. Dove did not simply use the traditional YouTube, however. Instead, it purchased TrueView in-stream and TrueView in-search through YouTube to launch the video globally. With these resources, Dove was able to see “...paid views drive earned views” because they would only be charged when the advertisement was viewed for at least 30 seconds (Authentic).

Dove also retained valuable partnerships. Its alliance with Mindshare allowed them to place a YouTube homepage masthead in the U.S. that linked to the video. They also partnered with YouTube and Unruly Media in London to “facilitate the distribution and seeding strategy (Real Beauty).”

The campaign remained a top priority for Unilever and Dove, and was constantly talked about around the world for over a month. “Real Beauty Sketches” reinforced Ogilvy & Mather’s reputation as a leading marketing communications company, landing Ogilvy Brazil the title “Agency of the Year.”

Microenvironmental Forces: Weaknesses

Although profoundly successful in most endeavors, every campaign has its pitfalls. Statistically, only 4% of women around the world consider themselves beautiful, a cultural flaw that Dove had to be willing to transcend.

However, Dove did not equally portray diverse women in its ad campaign. The women shown in the video are mostly Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes. Throughout the entire short film, “people of color are onscreen for less than 10 seconds (Griner).” The lack of diversity did not bode well for the company, creating the impression that Dove condoned discrimination.

Furthermore, Dove seems to depict beauty an attainable success. This idea only reinforced societal expectations and standards. To make matters worse, the ad is backed by Unilever, which also owns the brand Axe and the company that creates Fair & Lovely skin lightening cream. Critics agree that within the campaign there is sheer hypocrisy (Griner).

Macroenvironmental Forces: Opportunities

Although somewhat hypocritical, there is no denying that Dove has managed to retain loyal customers. It is the No. 1 personal wash brand in the U.S., allowing for familiarity and greater exposure to target publics. Dove has always been dedicated to “featuring real women in advertising” since the Dove Beauty Bar in 1957. The female demographic is no doubt extensive and often tends to invest in beauty products. Dove was able to see their window of opportunity many years ago and seized it.

54% of women admit that they’re the most critical of themselves, which is equivalent to 637 million women around the world. Dove was able to take this data as an opportunity to create a campaign addressing the issue (Stampler). Soon, others were intrigued by the campaign and got involved.



November 16, 2016

Neeka Eghbali

Popular users on YouTube, such as *meganheartsmakeup*, generated video responses to the ad campaign and ignited discussion within their fan base. Even other brands began sharing the ad, and these external publics combined allowed Dove to reach a wider, more diverse audience.

Macroenvironmental Forces: Threats

Reaching wider audiences can also have its drawbacks. After releasing the video ad campaign, a “blogger backlash” ensued claiming that the definition of beauty described is too narrow. Although I agree that the short film focuses on women’s visual beauty, I do not believe it was Ogilvy’s intent to exclude other forms of beauty (Stampler).

Secondly, the campaign was more of a social experiment that Dove had to be willing to invest in with the knowledge that the result may not be successful. Ogilvy was responsible for bringing together an FBI-trained sketch artist and mixing it with a woman’s self-esteem; again, unconventional and a potential threat at the time, but also the reason for unprecedented success.

Spoofs and parodies were created as a backlash, out of boredom, or both. One of them, entitled “Men: You’re Less Beautiful Than You Think” received over 3 million views on YouTube. The video portrayed men speaking highly of their own appearances and the strangers, women in this case, disagreeing when describing the men to the artist. Creative lead on the “Real Beauty Sketches” campaign Anselmo Ramos embraced the spoofs instead of condemning them, a wise tactic to lower the amount of parodies made in the future.

Core Problem/Opportunity

The future was the main concern for Dove as it is for many companies. At the heart of the campaign is an underlying and overarching problem—getting women to acknowledge their natural beauty.

Working with some of the most well-known firms worldwide, Ogilvy and Edelman, integrated communications tactics were employed to ensure that the full potential of the message was conveyed to the largest audience possible. *Advertising* strategies were clearly emphasized, with the short film representing the entire ad campaign.

The main promotional technique was the repetition of the tagline, “You are more beautiful than you think.” Often, if a phrase is repeated multiple times to an audience, it starts to become an integral part of their everyday thought process. Edelman PR was in charge of *promoting* the campaign, and wrote a press release headline to garner *publicity* and attention. Indeed, it did. News outlets and independent bloggers were engrossed in the campaign for over a month. The headline read:

FBI-TRAINED FORENSIC ARTIST CONDUCTS A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT TO ILLUSTRATE THE ONGOING STRUGGLE WOMEN HAVE WITH RECOGNIZING THEIR OWN BEAUTY

Marketing was another PR strategy utilized, for Dove is a company with the intent of selling its products. Recycling the long-lasting “Real Beauty” campaign in an innovative way was Ogilvy’s idea of the way to sell. After the video was released, Dove hosted a *special event* by teaming up with Google+ Hangout on Mother’s Day in Canada. Three moms and their daughters were given the opportunity to be interviewed by the same artist, Zamora.



Evaluation

Dove and Ogilvy's decision to make a video the central element of the campaign was a wise decision considering the accelerating amount of social media users. The video is easily shareable on all platforms, and was able to accumulate the most attention on Facebook, achieving 3.6 million shares (Stampler). In this case, *earned media* greatly outweighed any funds that went towards paid media.

The campaign's tagline, "You are more beautiful than you think," refers mainly to outward appearance, but can easily be interpreted as also meaning inner beauty. The PR team's unique *angle* of telling an emotional, documentary-style story was the main source for its prolonged relevance in the public eye.

Edelman's clever *press release* headline was perfect because it does not waste space listing the entities involved; instead, it focuses on the message of the campaign. According to PR Newswire, credibility is also established in the headline by mentioning the use of an FBI-trained forensic artist. (Skerik)

Finally, the special event Dove hosted on Google+ Hangout increased *media impressions* and was a way to get even closer to its target audience. For the original video, there was a casting process involved to select the women, but for this event, it was even more believable because it was live and featured three women with their daughters.

Critical Analysis

Hypothetically, if I were the PR agent for Dove's "Real Beauty Sketches" campaign, I would emphasize the diversity of the women. The campaign, although successful in evoking emotion, failed to be entirely inclusive. It showed women of color for under 10 seconds in the video, something that may not have been intentional but is still open to criticism.

Secondly, diversity takes on many different meanings to different people. What if beauty also means *inner* beauty? In my opinion, the campaign's message should encompass that aspect as well. My strategy would have been to have participants also describe the personality traits they were able to extract from the strangers that they met and have each person discuss their character insecurities in addition to outer beauty.

I believe this would quell some of the backlash and criticism that the campaign received for having a definition of beauty that is too "narrow." However, I do believe the campaign was overall successful in its mission. Dove revolutionized the meaning of beauty and turned it into a source of confidence for women.



Sources

Authentic expression of Real Beauty catapults Dove to 163 million global views on YouTube. (2012).

Retrieved from https://storage.googleapis.com/think-emea/docs/olddove-real-beauty-sketches_case-studies.pdf

Griner, D. (2013, April 19). 5 Reasons Why Some Critics Are Hating on Dove's Real Beauty Sketches

Video. Retried from <http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/5-reasons-why-some-critics-are-hating-doves-real-beauty-sketches-video-148772>

Grose, J. (2013). The Story Behind Dove's Mega Viral "Real Beauty Sketches" Campaign. Retrieved

from <https://www.fastcocreate.com/1682823/the-story-behind-doves-mega-viral-real-beauty-sketches-campaign>

Real Beauty Shines Through: Dove Wins Titanium Grand Prix, 163 Million Views on YouTube. (2013,

June). Retrieved from <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/case-studies/dove-real-beauty-sketches.html>

Skerik, S. (2013, April 19). Content We Love: The Press Release Behind the Dove "Real Beauty

Sketches" Campaign. Retrieved from <http://www.prnewswire.com/blog/content-we-love-the-press-release-behind-the-dove-real-beauty-sketches-campaign-7039.html>

Stampler, L. (2013, May 22.) How Dove's 'Real Beauty Sketches' Became The Most Viral Video Ad Of

All Time. Retriever from <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-doves-real-beauty-sketches-became-the-most-viral-ad-video-of-all-time-2013-5>

Stampler, L. (2013, April 22. Why People Hate Dove's 'Real Beauty Sketches' Video. Retrieved from

<http://www.businessinsider.com/why-people-hate-doves-real-beauty-ad-2013-4>

Unilever. (1957). Dove Logo [Digital image]. Retrieved from

<http://www.dove.com/content/dam/unilever/dove/global/Dove.png>



SWOT Analysis

| MICROENVIRONMENT: STRENGTHS | MICROENVIRONMENT: WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dove was able to upload the video in 25 languages to 46 Dove YouTube channels and viewed in more than 110 countries; have the manpower and resources (Resources) • Launched video globally with alliance with TrueView in-stream and TrueView in-search; “Saw paid views drive earned views.” (Resources) • Able to reach large audience with their existing online following from their “Real Beauty” campaign series launched by Unilever in 2004 (Past Performance) • Campaign has been a top priority for Unilever and Dove (Issue Priority) • Anselmo Ramos, a VP and creative director at Ogilvy Brazil, was one of the creators of this ad (Management Support) • Ogilvy & Mather Brazil hired an FBI-trained sketch artist named Gil Zamora (Current Alliances and Partners) • In 2013, “Ogilvy & Mather is one of the largest marketing communications companies in the world” and Ogilvy & Mather Brazil was named Agency of the Year (Past Performance) • Dove had a partnership with Mindshare, allowing them to place a YouTube homepage masthead in the U.S. (Current Alliances and Partners) • Dove created a follow-up Google+ Hangout on Mother’s Day in Canada where 3 moms and their daughters were interviewed by the same artist (Technological) • Dove worked with YouTube and Unruly to “facilitate the distribution and seeding strategy.” (Service Delivery Capabilities/ Current Alliances and Partners) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 4% of women around the world consider themselves beautiful (Cultural) • The women they portray in the video are all Caucasian, 3 of which are thin and have blonde hair with blue eyes; “Out of 6:36 minutes of footage, people of color are onscreen for less than 10 seconds.” (Internal Publics) • Convey beauty as success, reinforcing that there are societal expectations and standards (Past Performance) • The ad is backed by Unilever, the company that also owns the brands Axe and the company that creates Fair & Lovely skin lightening cream (Past Performance) |



| MACROENVIRONMENT: OPPORTUNITIES | MACROENVIRONMENT: THREATS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dove is the No. 1 personal wash brand nationwide (Cultural) • Demographic characteristics change, but Dove has always been loyal to “featuring real women in advertising” as early as the Dove Beauty Bar in 1957 (Demographic) • In 2006, Spain banned super thin models from the runway; Dove responded with a video called Evolution to show “unrealistic perceptions of beauty.” This caused Dove to continue with the campaign because the issue was omnipresent (External Publics) • 54% of women admit that they’re the most critical of themselves, not anyone else = 627 million women around world (Cultural) • The video became the most viewed online video ad of all time according to Unilever at 163 million global views • Other brands began sharing the film (External Publics) • Popular users on YouTube created videos in response to the campaign which also received many views from their audiences, as well as celebrities and brands (External Publics) • Ogilvy used women of diverse backgrounds (Caucasian, African-American Asian); (Demographic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ad has created a “blogger backlash” claiming that the definition of beauty described is too narrow; the backlash has also gone viral (External Publics) • “The clients...didn’t approve a script; they approved a social experiment.”; there was a possibility that it wouldn’t work and they would invest in resources that would prove to be useless, but they had a gut feeling that the idea would work (Cultural) • Ogilvy brought together an FBI-trained sketch artist and women’s self-esteem; there was no guarantee that it would be a good match (Demographic) • Spoofs and parodies have been created of the ad, such as “Men: You’re Less Beautiful Than You Think.” These can be potential threats, but Anselmo Ramos (creative lead) embraced it as hilarious (External Publics) |