

Analyzing Dove's brand knowledge conveyance: a case study on the "Real Beauty" campaign

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Abstract. Conveying brand knowledge to the target customer is hard in practice. An effective strategy is creating campaigns suitable for the brand's core values. However, many existing campaigns only serve to damage the brand's reputation, as they are built on promotional strategies that need to be revised. This article attempts to take a critical look at the "Real Beauty" campaign conducted by Dove to understand its delivery of brand knowledge better. Launched in 2004 to challenge traditional beauty standards, the "Real Beauty" campaign promotes authenticity, inclusiveness, and self-esteem. This analysis combines content analysis and evaluations using social media metrics to determine whether the campaign was as effective – diverse representation, emotional storytelling, and strategic use of digital platforms. By examining advertising and user-generated content and partnerships, this essay attempts to gauge the impact on key factors where businesses desire recognition, brand awareness, consumer engagement, and any changes exhibited in market share. This essay addresses difficulties and criticisms from different aspects of authenticity and the sustainability of a claim. The conclusion underscores the critical role of conveying a strong brand knowledge in creating a firm basis of people who will buy products and stick with the firm over long periods, in other words, loyal customers, highlighting some wider points that implicate social concern campaigns in the beauty industry in general.

1 Introduction

Conveying brand knowledge to the target market requires more than a marketing push. A more substantial approach is to begin a campaign that not only sells products but also closely matches the brand's core values and looks at the social issues that are both relevant today. Dove, the largest personal care brand of Unilever, has perfectly embodied this strategy by launching its "Real Beauty" campaign in 2004. The initiative sought to change people's understanding of what is beautiful by focusing on honesty, acceptance, and self-confidence, marking a major departure from traditional marketing practices in the beauty industry [1].

The "Real Beauty" campaign is a response to common dissatisfaction toward narrow or unattainable standards of beauty as depicted in media. One of the goals of featuring various women was to create a more inclusive and positive view of oneself on the part of its audience

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[1]. Not only did this novel campaign resonate deeply emotionally with consumers, but it also positioned Dove as an industry standard-setter in terms of socially responsible advertising.

This essay will analyze the story that Dove transmits within its “Real Beauty” campaign differently, utilizing content analysis and assessing indicators from social media. In this respect, diverse representation, emotional storytelling, and cross-platform digital integration are the core values being targeted. The methods of this analysis will include ads, user-generated content, and strategic partnerships. Results will be judged on how the project affected brand awareness, consumer involvement, and market share.

Dove’s marketing strategy has been hugely successful, mainly because it fits Dove’s brand concept: authenticity and inclusiveness. This is not only good for building consumer feelings, but it also drastically affects how consumers perceive and process messages from product brands [2]. However, the campaign has also faced criticism and challenges, even though it is very authentic and complicit in commercializing feminist values [1, 3].

This essay will examine these challenges and criticisms. Meanwhile, it underlines the necessity of transmitting brand knowledge efficiently to create loyal customers who ultimately will help generate profit for further years. It will also illustrate the wider implications for social campaign activity in beauty, showing brands how to tap into their marketing strategy and start transcribing advocacy values to retailers, driving positive change while delivering business gains.

2 Literature review

2.1 Understanding brand knowledge

Brand knowledge is a cornerstone concept in marketing, which refers to all of the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions consumers have regarding products or services that they can link to the brand [4]. If the consumer has it, brand knowledge can affect their decision-making and brand loyalty, which is a key target of marketers. Two components of brand knowledge are brand awareness and brand image. Brand Image and Brand Awareness: According to Keller’s article, brand awareness is the extent to which a consumer can recognize or recall a particular product, while brand image refers to mental associations or consumer perceptions about the products.

2.2 Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign

Launched in 2004, Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign is an excellent exemplification of how to convey brand knowledge effectively. The content sought to break with the existing beauty canon, pursuing authenticity, inclusiveness, and self-esteem. This was a socially responsible move by Dove. This endeavor was in response to the general public’s displeasure with how unrealistic media portrayals had become. They aimed to redefine beauty in a more broad-based and relatable manner [1].

The success of the “Real Beauty” campaign can be attributed to several key elements:

- 1) **Diverse Representation:** Dove normalized its campaign adverts by featuring real women of all ages, sizes, and races, reiterating different ideas about beauty beyond thin standards [5]. These were able to positively connect with consumers by providing diverse representation, leading to a more inclusive and positive brand image [3].
- 2) **Emotional Storytelling:** The campaign tapped into emotional stories that resonate with its audience more deeply. Dove shared genuine stories and experiences,

which led to strong emotional bonds with consumers, consequently leading them to have a higher brand attitude [3].

- 3) Strategic Use of Digital Platforms: Dove was able to penetrate the market across borders and reach out to more consumers through various mediums, such as online promotions through social media. As a result, this tactic permitted real-time interaction with the audience and even received user feedback around content engagement over the brand [3].

2.3 Content analysis and social media metrics

To evaluate the effectiveness of the “Real Beauty” campaign, content analysis and social media metrics are essential tools:

- 1) Content Analysis: Systematically analyzing communication content to determine its patterns, themes, and meanings. Content analysis is used to analyze advertisements, user-generated content, and other media associated with the campaign that illustrate how its messages are constructed and their reception [6].
- 2) Social Media Metrics: These metrics allow Dove to track consumer engagement and sentiment by measuring likes, shares, and comments (the positive) or complaints (the negative). Reviewing this data helps marketers measure campaign success while they are still ongoing, yielding critical insights into consumer behavior and preferences [3].

2.4 Consumer responses to femvertising

Femvertising, or feminist advertising, is advertising that employs pro-feminist themes and messages to promote commercial products. Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign is one of the early examples of coastal marketing research, encompassing female empowerment and body positivity to gain brand awareness through increased consumer engagement [3]. There has been research on this topic, and femvertising has been found to increase brand perception and brand loyalty, especially among women with feminist values [3].

However, femvertising campaigns are subject to challenges and criticisms around authenticity or co-opting feminist ideals for economic gains. Critics argue that while these campaigns might be a way to communicate constructive social messages, they could also instrumentalize the use of social issues for commercial gain and, therefore, reduce reliance both on brand and the feminist movement [7].

2.5 Impact on brand knowledge

The “Real Beauty” campaign has substantially helped Dove develop its brand knowledge, simultaneously increasing the breadth and depth of impression. Since challenging the old image of beauty with its message of inclusivity, Dove marketing has become a model for others to follow. By adopting the logic of this strategic approach, strong emotional bonds that create brand loyalty are forged with consumers, driving ongoing business success [1].

According to Feng et al.’s research, the campaign has positively increased brand awareness and affected consumer feelings about Dove [3]. Therefore, the use of numerous digital platforms will further reinforce this point. A combination of diverse groups and emotional storytelling has struck a chord with people in general, reinforcing the brand’s monopolizing tendencies while burnishing that all-important image even further [1]. Moreover, using the internet and social media in clever ways has enabled Dove to address people from all walks of life engagingly [3].

3 Emotional storytelling and engagement

Dove uses emotion as a key part of their strategy to create that deeper, more personal connection with its audience through an emotional storytelling concept at the heart of its “Real Beauty” campaign. Through sharing genuine stories and real women’s experiences, Dove creates strong emotional connections that empower the brand image while instilling consumer loyalty. Similarly, this model is consistent with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs as it meets the higher-level (psychological) needs of esteem and self-actualization [8]. The campaign provides women with a sense of belonging and, therefore, self-esteem and confidence; their esteem needs are then able to be met, which prompts them on a path towards achieving some self-actualization.

For instance, Dove commercials feature women giving testimonials about how they have felt insecure in their bodies and by societal standards of beauty. These stories also resonated with viewers, feeling validated and supported [3]. The emotional involvement also ensures that a robust positive brand association is built over time, leading to loyalty and lifelong advocacy.

Dove has also integrated digital platforms and social media to leverage the power of emotionally charged storytelling in a strategic context. Through platforms like YouTube and Instagram, Dove shares these real stories with a broader audience in real time. This digital strategy has enabled the brand to connect with customers in ways that make them feel part of a community. Social media analytics, such as likes, shares, and comments, act like qualitative content that facilitates Dove’s understanding of the community’s feedback on their brand messaging for the best target [3].

Further, the “Real Beauty” campaign has more successful elements to open up and face people’s wariness towards femvertising through emotional storytelling. According to Hutt’s article [7], Dove avoids the perception of being an unethical capitalist company that capitalizes on social issues because it makes a concerted effort to be genuine and transparent in its connections with their own brand values. Such a genuine way to pitch the ad not only amplifies the campaign’s reach but also reminds us all that Dove is still in this fight for promoting beauty and body acceptance, amongst other things, making it more real as well.

4 Digital and social media strategy

Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign has used the digital landscape very well, using various platforms, including social media. These platforms are critical to today’s marketing efforts, enabling live engagement, feedback, and fast, widespread sharing of content. Dove uses the strength of digital media to deliver its brand insights and land key campaign messages that promote authenticity, inclusivity, and self-esteem.

One of the greatest advantages offered by digital is direct consumer engagement. Dove undertakes the digital and interactive nature of platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to create a community that feels intimately linked with its audience. These platforms are used by Dove to disseminate advertising, user-generated content, and testimonials in such a way as to encourage consumers to engage in discussions surrounding real beauty. This engagement can be realized in the form of likes, shares, and comments, which gives a snapshot of consumer sentiment toward the effectiveness of the campaign [3].

The social media metrics offer the success evaluation method in a “Real Beauty” campaign. The company uses these metrics, which involve engagement rates, reach, and sentiment analysis, to see how the message lands with different audience segments. In the same thread, if Dove launches a campaign that features hashtags such as #RealBeauty to footnote their campaigns, then they could discern or gather intelligence on where and when

their messaging is coming through and gauging consumer behavior or support. Dove analyzes these metrics, aiming to improve its strategies and ensure the content is still relevant [3].

Additionally, the digital component of the “Real Beauty” campaign goes deeper than simple engagement metrics. This also included finding the deeper intent of consumer interaction through content analysis. Dove can use user-generated content to understand the sentiment and state of mind of its campaign. Dove can then continue to analyze and improve its messaging so that it resonates with the values of its viewers [6].

The strategy of involving digital routes and social media can actually extend the charm and efficacy of this “Real Beauty” campaign into a wide range. At the same time, it will further support Dove’s role in promoting real beauty and self-acceptance. That is how Dove creates an engaged, loyal customer base and sustainable business for the future. This is an example of how brands can use digital media to communicate brand knowledge and endear their audience with greater relationships.

5 Challenges and criticisms of the “Real Beauty” campaign

Despite its success, Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign has faced several challenges and criticisms:

- 1) **Authenticity:** One of the biggest challenges is preserving the campaign’s authenticity and credibility. As ads for women increase, consumers are increasingly wary about brands using the good cause of society to make a profit. To the brands, campaigns that follow such rules are the things that should be challenged [7].
- 2) **Commercialization of Feminist Ideals:** Dove promotes an idealistic body image, and the campaign is used to encourage people of all shapes and sizes. Critics argue that while doing so, the campaign weakens and alienates feminists who might have supported it in the first place [7]. There is also the feeling that the similarity between Dove’s messages and the parent company Unilever’s broader business practices makes people question whether or not they can trust what it offers [7].

6 Future recommendation

Dove can maintain its growth easily and help spread more knowledge about the brand if a few strategic suggestions are practiced. The first is that Dove needed to double down on its authenticity agenda. That means keeping the campaign true to its heritage of diverse vision and emotional narrative and finding new ways to have an authentic conversation with customers. Working with various influencers and women who truly represent what they stand for can help solidify the authenticity behind Dove’s messaging even more, making them an inherently relatable brand. The core reason for this suggestion is to create or enhance the brand community, aiming to effectively convey the brand knowledge and deepen customer engagement [9].

Moreover, Dove must be innovative enough to use new digital and social media technologies. Augmented and virtual reality are enabling the creation of interactive experiences to captivate consumers in new ways. Advanced data analytics can also be used to provide personalized content to better cater to and enhance Dove’s understanding of its target consumers. These technologies will allow Dove to build richer and more customized interactions, leading to higher engagement and increased loyalty.

Consumers are showing a growing preference for sustainability and ethical practices. These are categories in which Dove should strive to be sustainable and ethically sourced, from using eco-friendly packaging and sourcing sustainable ingredients to making laborers

follow an ethical way of work. Openly communicating these efforts can significantly bolster the Dove brand reputation and gain greater consumer trust. The brand, as part of its sustainability pledge, could further engage with issues like the environment and social concerns in support of a consumer trend, including corporate social responsibility.

Aiming to stay globally relevant, Dove must repress their “Real Beauty” campaign so it fits with the cultures they intend. Aligning the company’s identity with brand knowledge and brand messaging is crucial in maintaining brand reputation [10]. Knowing local beauty standards and societal problems would allow Dove to release more powerful and relevant campaigns in different markets. Working with local influencers and groups can also improve the reach of these campaigns, ensuring that Dove’s message is culturally relevant and runs deep in a region.

Several lessons to be drawn from Dove’s successful strategies exist for companies that are poor in delivering their brand knowledge. For starters, these firms should make certain their marketing creations mirror the essence of who they are and what they do. And, of course, beyond anything else, authenticity – if a campaign does not fit with the brand and is in line with what it really stands for, it just won’t resonate. This can be achieved in emotional storytelling, as illustrated by Dove. Brands should share genuine tales and testimonies of what they stand for, inviting customers to relate with them on an emotional level.

Utilizing digital as well as social media channels to convey brand information is also essential. A brand can leverage these platforms to directly interact with its customers and understand what they like and dislike so that it can enhance its strategies accordingly. Analyzing interactions from consumers using social media metrics, such as Dove has done with this campaign, can shed light on how effective campaigns are and will help deliver future efforts more personally to individuals. This can help companies appeal to a wider demographic and foster inclusivity, as Dove has done in its marketing materials.

Feedback and subsequent continuous improvement are other crucial strategies. The company itself needs to do better diligence on its client feedback and analyze it. Not only are they tracking social media metrics, but they are also performing surveys and focus groups or other types of market research. Companies must confront criticisms and obstacles publicly to build trust in consumers. Taking this lesson from Dove, companies must deliver on their promise and message consistently if they want to avoid the backlash of hypocrisy or being exploitative.

7 Conclusion

The “Real Beauty” campaign is a perfect relevant example of how conveying a brand’s core values can massively turn around where the brand sits in the market and with consumers. Dove has been able to build a lasting and powerful brand by challenging beauty norms, as well as championing values like body positivity, inclusivity, and confidence, which its audience truly identifies. Among other things, the success of this campaign is due to its smart inclusion strategies that depict real diversity, emotional storytelling, and digital engagement, helping forge stronger consumer connections for long-lasting loyalty.

This content analysis of a sample Dove online campaign demonstrates that insights derived from combining traditional metric types with new social media metrics allow for a deeper analytic understanding of the effects of these strategies. This focus on real women and authentic stories may not only improve brand perceptions but also satisfy higher-order psychological needs (self-esteem, self-actualization) as proposed by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Furthermore, its activity in digital channels has allowed Dove to interact with people and get feedback quicker than before, thus solidifying the relationship even deeper.

Moving forward, Dove can further improve its brand knowledge delivery via more authentic engagement, broader digital distribution channels, commitment to sustainability,

and localized campaigns. The key lessons from Dove for other companies are to guide their campaigns with core values, build them on emotional storytelling, find a place in digital platforms, and listen closely to customer feedback. Introducing these strategies would help companies establish meaningful emotional connections with their consumers, communicate brand knowledge successfully, and achieve lasting business success.

However, this essay is limited. The Dove case study, for example, was heavily weighted toward the brand's digital and social media strategies, which may not be a complete mirror of how consumers are engaging with the brand in non-digital touchpoints. Second, content analysis and social media metrics being used in the study may also introduce bias when interpreting qualitative data or sample representativeness. Future research might also benefit from exploring these findings in light of a more comprehensive approach to understanding the effects of Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign on brand perception and, ultimately, consumer behavior – for example, through longitudinal studies. In addition, research exploring similar campaigns using different types of cultural and demographic groups would provide a greater understanding of the abstract universalism that Dove is implementing strategies on.

In conclusion, Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign is an excellent example of values-based marketing in action, engaging with customers on a deeper level to create meaningful connections that increase not only loyalty but business growth. If Dove continues to be an innovator and stays loyal to these values, it can reinforce the place that it holds as one of the leading brands in social responsibility. This case study should be valuable for other companies in terms of how to best tell their brand story effectively to consumers and the overall market. This helps brands build meaningful relationships with those who buy their products and drive positive social change in new and innovative ways while aiding business sustainability.

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