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Dove's "Real Beauty" Campaign: A Critical Analysis of an Integrated Communications Campaign that Sought to Change Fat Stigma

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Dove's "Real Beauty" Campaign: A Critical Analysis of an Integrated Communications Campaign that Sought to Change Fat Stigma

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Abstract

My Capstone project analyzed Dove's "Real Beauty" integrated communications campaign to determine whether it succeeded in its original goals and to see what it could demonstrate for the future of campaigns and branding. The campaign sought to make women feel comfortable in their own skin, and since 2004 it has launched dramatic billboards and short videos to get the attention of women of all ages and share empowering messages and images with them.

I created a survey that asked questions similar to what Dove originally asked women in 2004 when it began its campaign. My goal was to see what trends women picked up on the most from Dove's campaign and the media landscape in general about women's body image. The survey showed that the issues Dove sought to handle with its campaign were much more deeply ingrained in society, and it would take more than a campaign to be able to change them as much as it hoped. Overall, Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign showed the differences between advertising to different generations of women, and the way brands should address their campaign messages to them. Though the campaign sought to change an ideology held in society for decades, I discovered that it will take much more than clever messaging and images to make a long-term change in society.

Executive Summary

In 2004, the soap and beauty company, Dove sought to make history by being one of the first companies to step away from using traditional female models and provide more realistic expectations for how women should look and feel about themselves. Dove created the "Real Beauty" campaign with the mission of empowering women to feel comfortable in the skin that they were in.

In my project, I describe that by creating the "Real Beauty" campaign, Dove was distinguishing itself from its competitors, and promoting messages that resonated with women of all ages to appeal to a wider range of audiences. Dove was taking a risk by focusing its advertising on messages that were not directly correlated to the products it sold.

As Dove's campaign has been around since 2004, it has reached international audiences via online news outlets, television shows, and comments from celebrities and everyday people on social media. The praises for the campaign revolve around Dove being authentic and transparent, because it did not use real models or photoshop for the images it created for the campaign. The criticisms of the campaign have been wide-ranging, however. The largest criticism has been that Dove focuses too much on beauty being the only goal women should strive for.

I used Dove's campaign to show what other companies can learn from and take for their own campaigns in the future. In order to make these determinations, I distributed a survey to over 300 women, and the results showed me how different generations respond differently to campaigns. Overall, my survey showed me that even though a campaign can support a cause that effects many in society, at the end of the day it will take from than clever messaging and advertisements to change an ideal that is engrained in society.

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Acknowledgments

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Advice to Future Honors Students

My advice to future Honors students is to get started on your capstone as early as possible. Any time that you have over the summer or on breaks use to your advantage to get ahead on your work. Even just by doing an hour of writing when you have time during the week, it will make the project that much easier to handle as you keep going along. You will thank yourself as the end of senior year comes along and you have multiple deadlines approaching!

Chapter 1

Introduction

The international supermodel Cindy Crawford once famously said, “I wish I looked like Cindy Crawford.” She was not stating this as a sign of self-pity, but rather to make a statement that reflects the last 100 years of advertisements that have edited and altered the images of women’s bodies to make them look like someone they are not. Models today are subject to Photoshop and other photo-editing technologies, and models from the 1900s often were photographed in positions that made them look weak, or like sexual objects for men.

In the 21st century, fat is often perceived as “bad” and being overweight or obese is seen as a terrible condition that one must avoid at all costs. This perception of fat was not always the case, however. In prehistoric times, some goddess figures were portrayed as fat or pregnant, and in the Victorian era being fat was a sign of wealth and status, and was seen as making a woman more sexually appealing (Rothblum 78). Perceptions about fat began to change in the 1860s, when advertisers sold weight-loss products, like diet pills, which promised to shrink people’s bodies. These early advertisements and products began the transition to society viewing fat people as unsuccessful and fat being “bad” (Farrell 26).

At the start of the twentieth century, fat stigma became even more widespread. Society was rapidly changing, with many new technological advancements and ideologies developing every day. Society faced a moral dilemma because new waves of immigrants with larger builds than Americans were entering the country, and food was more readily available to the average American, which made it easier to gain weight (Farrell 25).

Simultaneously, the media capitalized on these growing perceptions and magnified fat stigma even more through the messages and products it put out to the public. Magazines like "Life" and daily newspapers began to run ads for weight loss products, and "Harper's Weekly" ran ads that made fun of "people with excess" (Farrell 40). By 1912 there was a rise in advertisements selling weight loss products, despite the fact that there was no regulation on such products (Farrell 26).

As these perceptions toward fat changed, the ideal body type shifted as well. No longer were the curvy women from the Victorian era seen as attractive; by the 1920s, flappers exemplified the ideal body with their small hips and flat chests. Advertisers created images that suggested flappers were the "it girls" and were more sexually active than the average woman. About 40 years later when the model Twiggy, known for being incredibly thin, rose to fame, the very thin, boy-like body type was again seen as the "perfect body" (Rothblum 80).

It soon became accepted that in order for women to exhibit "true womanhood" they had to portray the standard of beauty, exhibit accepted behavior and wear specific clothing. This idea continued to last through the twentieth century and is till true today, though the standards of beauty have changed based on the time period. If a woman gained weight, it had multiple implications towards her as a person and her place in society. Overweight women were seen as individuals who could not control their appetites and were often isolated in society. In addition, overweight women also faced disparities in the workplace, often receiving lower pay or not being offered jobs because of the stereotype that people who were heavier were lazy and unmotivated (Farrell 49).

By the 21st century, the decades of misleading advertising that used women's bodies to maintain fat stigma caused younger and younger girls to start changing their lifestyles to avoid

gaining weight. *Esquire* magazine conducted a poll of its female readers in 2007, and it found that more than half of the women said they would rather be dead than fat. In 1970, the average age for girls to start dieting was 14, but in 2015 the average age was 8 years old. The average 1920s Miss America pageant contestant had a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 22, but today the average is 18, which is considered underweight on the BMI scale (Brown 25). As technology has advanced throughout the 21st century, the image of the perfect body has changed as well. The use of online tools like Photoshop alters models' bodies so much that they often don't even look like themselves. The more that highly Photoshopped models are portrayed to the public, the more pressure it puts on women to fit a beauty standard that is not attainable (Kilbourne, "Killing Us Softly").

Historically, women in advertisements are often dehumanized, sexualized, or both. Women's bodies often get turned into things or objects in ads, usually being contorted in a way that makes them appear submissive or weak. Jean Kilbourne, an author, speaker, and filmmaker internationally recognized for her work on the images of women in advertising, stated in her documentary, "Killing Us Softly," that this tactic by advertisers "creates a climate of widespread violence against women" because the first step in justifying violence toward women is dehumanizing them (Kilbourne, "Killing Us Softly").

If women are not being dehumanized in ads, they are being sexualized. Younger girls are often the target of these sexualized ads, either through the products being sold or the messages being portrayed. Items like padded bras and sexy underwear are targeted to younger girls today, and advertisements often teach young girls that they should aspire to be size zero, or basically shrivel down to nothing. The messages unfortunately do not change the older girls get. Adolescent girls are portrayed as vulnerable, sexual, and frantically outgoing (Rothblum 80).

The act of sexualization creates a systematic institutional problem in which our society believes that being attractive is the highest measure of success for young girls. This pressure on girls ends up making them feel even more insecure and vulnerable, and causes their self-esteem to drop once they hit puberty. The ads they see everyday teach them that they will be judged for their appearance and sexiness instead of their personality or intelligence, and they and their peers internalize these teachings to put pressure on themselves to look a certain way, or put down others who do not fit "the look" for young girls (Kilbourne "Killing Us Softly").

A common message in ads that has maintained the culture of fat being "bad" is to make women feel ashamed for eating or wanting to eat food. Companies that sell unhealthy snack food, like Oreos and Kraft Mac n' Cheese, recognized that the more guilty women felt eating their food, the more erotic their messages could become. Oreo created a tagline for one of its cookies called "the most seductive cookie ever," and Kraft advertised its macaroni and cheese using the phrase "you know you want it" (Kilbourne "Killing Us Softly"). Making women feel guilty for eating and gaining weight, or for just eating at all, heightens disordered eating problems and lowers self-esteem.

The contrast between how women and men are portrayed in ads is perhaps the most damaging aspect of the media landscape today. While women are made to look weak and small in order to be pretty, men are objectified to look bigger, faster, and stronger. Ads often encourage boys to be violent, and push the message that violence is what it means to be a man (Kilbourne "Killing Us Softly"). Women are expected not to age and to find ways to combat it. Older models are often infantilized in commercials, with their hair, makeup, and clothing specifically chosen to make them look much younger than they are, like having frilly dresses and Shirley Temple-style curls. Older men, on the other hand, are often applauded and held in higher regard

in society (Kilbourne, “The Dangerous Ways”). The most degrading aspect of advertising targeted to men is that ads often discourage boys from acting feminine, vulnerable, or emotional because these are seen as signs of weakness. This message solidifies men as the dominant gender, and can make women feel self-conscious and vulnerable just for being women (Kilbourne “Killing Us Softly”). These anti-feminine ideals from ads coincide with how society views boys and girls. The phrase “boys will be boys,” emphasizes that boys can get away with acting violently or aggressively just because that is how boys are expected to act. In addition, if a boy tells another boy he “runs like a girl” or “acts like a girl” when he is crying, it enforces that being a girl is a bad thing and makes one gender automatically weaker than the other.

These degrading messages are all the more destructive because people today are bombarded with ads daily. In 1964 the average American saw about 76 ads a day, but today people see thousands of ads daily. Advertisements are so ingrained in our daily life that babies at the age of 6 months today can even recognize corporate logos (Kilbourne, “The Dangerous Ways”). Jean Kilbourne discussed the implications of this over-exposure are severe because ads are “quick and cumulative,” and are able to stay with people subconsciously and tell us who we are and who we should be (Kilbourne “Killing Us Softly”). Due to this overexposure to advertisements, people become more apt to conform internally and externally to cultural norms surrounding body types and weight (Brown 134).

The more the media is incorporated into people’s daily lives, the more it becomes a cosmetic panopticon for women, or making women feel like they are constantly being watched and judged for their appearance, and leading to self-disciplining practices like dieting and excessive exercising. One study found that some form of attractiveness message was observed in 1 out of every 3.8 commercials today (Rothblum 80). While other factors in society help create

this panopticon, like fat stigma, the way advertisements are presented and the products being sold enhance these perceptions and create the idea that people need to follow the messages and ideals portrayed in ads in order to be accepted in society. This panopticon creates a culture in which any woman who violates the standards of beauty is vulnerable to gossip, discrimination, and social segregation (Giovanelli and Ostertag 289).

The media's portrayals of women and the standards now upheld in society have increased not only pressure on women but on what men expect women to look like. A study on male college students who choose to watch television programs with traditionally beautiful women found that these men tend to have higher standards of attractiveness at all times. The majority of the men in the study reported that "the average woman no longer looks as good," which suggests that media portrayals of beautiful women raise society's standard of attractiveness and regular women no longer look good (Rothblum 63).

These ideas of beauty are reinforced by how and how often fat women are portrayed in the media. In a 2005 study on representation of fat women on primetime TV shows, the majority of fat women were portrayed as side characters who were not as successful as their thin counterparts; their personal dating lives were never mentioned, and men rarely showed interest in them. Many of their lines consisted of them talking about food as well (Giovanelli and Ostertag 286). Non-scripted TV shows have depicted fat women like this for a long time. For example, two episodes of the "Maury Povich Show" in the 1990s were titled "When She's Twice the Woman You Married" and "Fat Myth: Can Fat Women be Successful, Sexy?" Another talk show in the 1990s, "Geraldo," aired an episode titled "Fat Women and Families Who Hate Them For It" (Wann 24). These talk shows suggested that being fat is so bad that it can ruin your

relationships with your closest friends and family and hinder your ability to be perceived as successful or sexy.

Due to this long history of misrepresentation of women in the media and variety of stigmas existing toward women's bodies, when Dove set out to launch a campaign towards building women's self-confidence it found an audience that was seeking a change, but had few outlets to unify around and empower others through. The work of Dove in its "Real Beauty" campaign, and other campaigns and movements similar to it, helped make some of the early steps towards helping women recognize that they were not alone in how they were feeling about their bodies, and that they could learn to love themselves at any shape or size.

Chapter 2

Breakdown of PR Terms

"Public relations" is a widely used term that does not have one universal definition. In order to understand Dove's campaign, it is important to understand the basic meanings and applications of the term. It is universally agreed that the practice of public relations, conducted either by a company or an agency on behalf of a company, involves a mutually beneficial relationship between two parties that work strategically to promote the management functions of a company or organization (Jeffers).

Above all, the "Real Beauty" campaign is an example of an **integrated communications campaign**. This means that the campaign was an intentional plan that had a specific purpose from the start, and was made with the purpose for the company to reach its customers on a deeper level. Strategic communication practices are almost always based on research, and are subject to measurement or evaluation following their launch. The campaign is integrated because it includes a variety of communication tactics, including public relations, marketing, advertising, sales, and community relations (Smith 52).

Communication tactics are chosen to influence a specific group of people who have a common interest, often called **publics, key publics, or stakeholders** (Smith 51). Publics can be broken down into three different sectors, depending on the individuals in the public. **Aware publics** share an issue but are not organized to discuss or act on it. **Active publics,** on the other hand, discuss and act on a shared issue (Smith 51). Lastly, **latent publics** are individuals who are subject to a problem, but do not recognize that it is there (Smith 51).

Campaigns are created for companies to develop their own **brands**, or products or services that are easily distinguishable from their competition's, so it is easier to market and

promote the company ("Glossary of Terms"). Brands cannot prosper without being unique and having strong brand loyalty from customers. **Brand loyalty** is when customers continue to buy products from a company because they believe in the values and mission that it promotes. A company that has strong brand loyalty will usually have long-term relationships with its customers (Smith 60).

One strategy that allows brands to establish strong customer loyalty is **corporate social responsibility (CSR),** or **community relations programs**. This is where companies use their influence to better the neighborhoods, cities, and regions where they are located. According to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), CSR "involves dealing and communicating with citizens and groups within an organization's operating area" ("Glossary of Terms"). Companies put their time and money into CSR programs after they see a need and a way that it can help. The companies that develop close relationships with community members allow customers to put faces to company names and make them feel more connected to the brand, which helps to develop their positive reputations.

Similar to CSR, **cause-related marketing (CRM)** involves companies doing something good for people in need, but there is an incentive to make money from the program. It is the combination of communicating the marketing efforts of an organization with doing something to help the community ("Differentiate Between CSR and CRM").

Before any integrated communications campaign can begin, there are certain steps required to ensure that it will be successful. Most companies follow a four-step process created by John Marston in 1963. The process, referred to as **RACE**, is broken down to research, analysis, communications, and evaluation. Within these four steps, there are nine total steps to

follow to formulate a successful campaign (Smith 102). According to Ronald D. Smith in "Strategic Planning for Public Relations," the process is as follows:

Research

1. Analyze the situation
2. Analyze the organization
3. Analyze the publics

Analysis

4. Establish goals & objectives
5. Formulate action & response strategies
6. Develop the message strategy

Communication

7. Select communication tactics
8. Implement the strategic plan

Evaluation

9. Evaluate the strategic plan

(Smith 14).

Dove's 9 steps toward creating the "Real Beauty" campaign:

1. Analyze the situation

A situation is a set of circumstances, either opportunities or obstacles, facing an organization (PRL 325 lecture 9/3/17). Before companies begin campaigns, they need to determine whether they are facing an issue that needs to be overcome or if there is an ongoing effort they want to support to build a positive reputation. In 2003, for example, Dove looked at

its place within the beauty industry and saw that it did not offer anything to make it stand out from its competitors. It also noticed that the conversation in the beauty industry was beginning to change, as more women were starting to get fed up with the same types of models being shown in every beauty advertisement, and promoting only one body type that could be considered beautiful ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

With the help of the public relations agency Edelman, Dove conducted research, an integral aspect in the campaign integration process, to hear from everyday women about their opinions on beauty, self-confidence and how the women that they see in advertisements affected their self-esteem (Smith 12). Dove worked with third-party experts to ensure that its survey questions would answer what they were searching for, and used the expertise of Dr. Nancy Etcoff from Harvard University and Suzy Orbach from the London School of Economics ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

The results of the survey, which were published under the title "The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report," and I will discuss in the next chapter, reflected a major problem in society: Women do not believe they are beautiful, and society's standards for beauty have a huge influence on how women perceive their own beauty. According to Edelman's research, the results of the survey "helped validate the hypothesis that women wanted more than the unattainable portrayals of beauty perpetuated by mass media" ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

2. Analyze the organization

Companies need to analyze their internal and external environments before launching an integrated communications campaign. This is often referred to as a **SWOT Analysis**, which means an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

An organization's strengths can be in anything from its strong customer loyalty, to being involved in a prospering industry. An organization's weaknesses often relate to areas where it does not match against its competitors, or if its products have not been selling. In the case of Dove, in 2003 its sales were declining and it was not regarded as highly as its competitors in the beauty industry. The majority of Dove's customers were over 50 years old, and Dove's popularity had fallen because it was seen as a brand only for older women (Jeffers).

Every organization has different opportunities that it can utilize in order to change its branding and make stronger relationships with customers. For Dove, after it conducted research and found that the overwhelming majority of women it surveyed did not love their bodies, it found an opportunity where it could use its presence as a beauty brand to promote body image appreciation.

The threats that face an organization are internal or external factors that could create limitations on the company being able to reach the most audiences possible. Organizations should analyze their competition, which in the case of Dove have been health and beauty companies like Olay, Lux and Nivea. In 2003 while Dove had a stereotype of being a soap company for older women, its competitors did not have similar obstacles facing it. In addition to competition, companies often face external impediments that limit the effectiveness of a campaign. For Dove, the fact that it is owned by the consumer goods conglomerate, Unilever, has opened the campaign to much backlash. I will bring up this criticism in more detail in later chapters, but the other companies Unilever owns do not promote similar messages to Dove's,

which has caused intense criticism that Dove has had to overcome to ensure consumers are still connected to the campaign.

3. Analyze the publics

Companies need to understand their key publics, what their wants and needs are, and the best way to get their messages across to them if they want key customers to see the campaign. While Dove's main publics in 2003 were older women, when it launched the "Real Beauty" campaign it sought to focus its effort on women of all ages. There were no specific demographic requirements of the women targeted for the campaign because Dove wanted to get insight from as diverse a group of women as possible to see what real women from different backgrounds thought about themselves. According to Edelman, "the campaign communicated our unwavering commitment to represent beauty of all ages, ethnicities, shapes, and sizes" ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

By focusing the campaign on any and all women, Dove sought to turn women from an aware public to an active public. Dove's initial survey found a common trend among women—that they were not accepting of their bodies—but the majority of women did not talk about how they felt on the issue. Dove's messages in its campaign sought to make women talk about these issues and hopefully change the conversation.

4. Establish goals and objectives

Every company needs an organizational goal that drives the general direction of the company. This is a short, concise statement that breaks down what the organization wants to

accomplish in the next three to five years. Dove's goal for the "Real Beauty" campaign was "to create a world where beauty is a source of confidence and not anxiety" (Vega).

Organizational objectives are statements that emerge from goals that are clear, short-term and measurable (Smith 48).

5. Formulate action & response strategies

Companies create campaigns to work either in action or response to a current situation. Action strategies are conducted when an organization is seeking to achieve its objectives for the campaign, and is proactively working to change the conversation and reputation of the brand. Response strategies are when an organization is acting following a crisis or situation that likely tarnished its reputation. Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign was an action strategy because it was not reacting to a crisis; rather, the company saw a larger problem happening in society and sought to make a campaign to change it.

6. Develop the message strategy

Message strategies for campaigns use combinations of ethos, pathos, and logos to get the intended point across. The first and most important strategy used by Dove is pathos, or appealing to emotions. The entire campaign was centered on how women felt about themselves and their bodies, so Dove incorporated messages that would resonate with and inspire women. Dove utilized logos, or appealing to reason, by giving statistics from its initial survey on the percentage of women who do not think of themselves as beautiful to justify why it was bringing the issue to light. By proving that it was discussing a common trend in society, it could show women that they needed to pay attention to the messages it was promoting and that they were not alone if

they felt the same way. Lastly, Dove used ethos to develop credibility and trust from its key publics. It was open and honest with its publics about how real women, not models, were featured in its ads, and openly scrutinized how advertisements portrayed women. This transparency improved Dove's likeability among its consumers and made the brand more relatable.

7. Select communication tactics

A successful campaign needs to strategically choose how it gets its message across to consumers. The type of media an organization pitches to can dictate whether a company's key publics are ever exposed to the campaign. Dove utilized digital media by pitching to online media that were focused on covering women and health and beauty, and by promoting the campaign on its social media accounts. It utilized traditional media with its short films being featured on television talk shows like "Good Morning America."

Companies also include the use of influencers to spark even more conversation and organic reactions to campaigns. Influencers do not necessarily work for any specific company, but they have large social media followings and have a big influence over their followers' shopping decisions. Dove first started to use influencers when it released "Evolution" in 2007 and has been using them ever since ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

8. Implement the strategic plan

No integrated communications campaign is complete without a schedule and budget. The schedule should include how many times a campaign message will be promoted in specific activations and which media are being pitched to and when for each activation. Companies that

pitch to the same media outlets over a period of years develop strong relationships that can ensure positive feedback from the media in the long run.

When creating budgets, companies need to be realistic and detailed in their accounts for each activation. When companies start to plan for their next activation, they can use previous budgets to accurately plan for the cost (Smith 48).

9. Evaluate the strategic plan

Evaluating campaigns is an important but often forgotten step in the campaign implementation process. There are programs available to calculate media impressions, the number of people who visited a page, saw a social media post, or saw the sentiment on social media toward the campaign and the brand as a whole. Companies can also utilize focus groups or surveys to ask real people their responses to the campaign and its messages to reveal if the company was able to get its message across accurately.

Many of Dove's evaluation efforts were focused on responses received on digital and social media. It did not evaluate its campaign just through media impressions, but it sought to find out how women were speaking about themselves on social media and whether the campaign was able to change the discussion at all. It used programs to determine whether Dove was in fact able to change women's conversation on social media about their bodies and self-confidence ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

Chapter 3

Overview of Campaign

Imagine a world in which beauty is not a source of anxiety but a source of confidence. The majority of women today do not think they are beautiful, and compare themselves with the unrealistic images created by advertisers. In 2004, Dove recognized this issue, and decided to use its position as a popular soap brand for women to change the conversation around women's beauty and portrayal of their bodies in advertisements.

Until 2004, few advertisements showed women who were not white, incredibly tall, and astonishingly thin. Many ads used misogynistic symbols, like making women appear vulnerable and weak compared with their male counterparts, in order to sell their products.

Women constantly compare themselves to the models they see on billboards and in commercials, which ultimately makes them lose confidence in themselves and their own beauty. This self-criticism takes a deep toll on women, so much so that when Dove interviewed 3,000 women in 10 different countries in 2004, it found only 2 percent of women thought they were beautiful (Bahadur). With the help of Ogilvy & Mather Dusseldorf and London, Dove launched the "Real Beauty" campaign, which would last more than a decade and be the first campaign that sought to change the conversation regarding female body image in the media. While it was subject to criticism and backlash throughout its 10-plus-year history, it still changed and will continue to change how the media depict women and their bodies.

Campaign Mission

According to Fernando Machado, global vice president for Dove Skin at Unilever, the campaign's mission was "to create a world where beauty is a source of confidence and not

anxiety" (Vega). In short, Dove sought to create a public relations campaign to encourage women to be comfortable in their own skin, while simultaneously building brand loyalty ("Authentic Expression").

Dove also established a Real Beauty Pledge to be carried out throughout the campaign. The three vows, according to Sharelyn Devonish at Edelman, one of the agencies that worked on the campaign, are "We always feature real women, never models. We portray women as they are in real life. We help girls build positive body confidence and self-esteem" ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish"). In order to show its long-term commitment to the campaign, Dove re-signed the Real Beauty Pledge in 2018, about 14 years after the campaign launched.

With this mission and pledge in mind, the "Real Beauty" campaign began.

Phase 1: Tick Box Billboards

The first activation of the campaign took place in Canada, and then spread to the U.K. and the U.S. It was titled "Tick Box Billboards" and was focused on creating billboards that would engage audiences while still spreading Dove's campaign message. The billboards featured women of all ages and body shapes with two tick boxes next to them that had choices like "fat or fit?" or "grey or gorgeous?" In keeping with its pledge to "portray women as they are in real life," Dove did not hire any professional models for the billboards, but rather featured everyday women. Passersby could go to Dove's website to vote, and then see the percentage of votes for each tick box. The website also featured a discussion board for participants to discuss their opinions on the billboards, and their personal struggles with beauty and self-confidence. Overall, this activation brought 1.5 million people to Dove's website (Bahadur).

(Bahadur)

A few months after the original Tick Box Billboards were launched, a new set of billboards were created, which featured women of diverse ethnicities and various body shapes in their underwear (Bahadur). These billboards made an even bigger statement for the brand, because it proved that it supports women loving their shape and being confident enough to be photographed in their underwear.

(Bahadur)

Phase 2: CSR Programs

Dove did not want to create advertisements that just promoted images of self-confidence and body acceptance; it wanted to develop a relationship with local communities to build self-confidence among girls, especially as they entered puberty. To do this, the brand wanted to appear more human to its publics, and become a trusted source that women could look to in order to find tools to increase their own beauty and confidence. At the end of 2004, after the "Tick Box Billboards" reached the U.K. and the U.S., Dove created a fund to partner with organizations like the Girl Scouts of America, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and Girls Inc. It organized educational activities about online bullying and ran photo projects that would help young girls see beauty in themselves and the world around them. The goals of these partnerships were to motivate young girls and to boost their self-confidence (Bahadur).

Dove created another initiative in 2004 to help encourage young girls to see their own beauty beyond what they saw in the media. It established the national Self-Esteem Project in Canada to develop tools and resources to help Canadian women build their self-esteem (Macleod). The project delivered self-esteem education to young girls, ages 8 to 17, through lessons in schools, workshops for youth groups, and online resources for parents ("Dove Self-Esteem Project"). Dove worked with world-renowned body image experts and universities to develop "evidence based and academically validated educational tools" ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish"). According to the Dove Self-Esteem Project website, its mission is to "help young people overcome body image issues and fulfill their potential by building positive body confidence and self-esteem" ("Dove Self-Esteem Project"). Today, the project has educated more than 20 million girls and has become the greatest provider of self-esteem education of its kind ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

Phase 3: First Launch of Short Films

In 2007, Dove wanted to continue to raise awareness for the "Real Beauty" campaign and funding its community relations outreach, specifically the Dove Self-Esteem Fund. It also sought to shift the campaign's focus to include not just young girls but older women as well, to emphasize that women can be beautiful no matter what their age (Awazi). In one year Dove released three short films, each with its own unique message that ties back to the "Real Beauty" mission.

Release #1: "Evolution"

The first film released in 2007 was titled "Evolution" and it became a viral hit nearly overnight. It was created by Ogilvy & Mather Toronto and released on June 13, 2007. The inspiration for the video came in 2006 after Madrid, Spain, banned overly thin models from its runways ("Authentic Expression"). The video begins with an image of a female model with no makeup on and her hair in a bun. Over the course of the short film she gets made up with cosmetics and hair products, and then Photoshop tools contort her face, lift her eyebrows, re-shape her chin, and more. By the end, the woman looks entirely different than she looked in the beginning ("Authentic Expression").

("Authentic Expression").

"Evolution" was created as a reach-driven tactic, which means it purposely showed a dramatic transformation in order to impact and reach the largest audiences possible. It was used to show audiences how the female body was manipulated in advertisements, and that women shown in advertisements are not depicted as they actually look. Due to "Evolution" being a reach-driven tactic, it did not drive sales for Dove's products as much as spread awareness of Dove's brand (Santos).

Almost immediately after "Evolution" was released online, the short film went viral, first across the U.S. and then around the world. "Evolution" had 40,000 YouTube views on its first day, two million after the first two weeks, and eventually rose to 16.9 million views (Bahadur). The public relations agency Edelman New York was brought in specifically to help make the video go viral. It helped the film get played on "Good Morning America," "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," and "The View," which ultimately made Dove and "Evolution" a household name ("Top

15"). The film earned $150 million worth of media time, and became the most viewed story on CNN.com on October 24, 2007 ("2007 Creativity Award").

In addition to going viral, "Evolution" was able to succeed in its goal of raising awareness for Dove's community relations tactics. Within minutes of releasing the film, Dove's self-esteem workshops, which were offered as part of its Self-Esteem Fund initiative, were sold out ("2007 Creativity Award"). Overall, "Evolution" showed the power that reach-driven marketing had for the brand, and even though it may not have increased sales, it was able to generate a positive reputation for Dove.

Release #2: "Onslaught"

"Onslaught," the next film released by Dove, aired on October 2, 2007. This was a sentiment-driven campaign that was meant to dramatically portray what young girls hear and see about other women in the media. The film starts with a long close-up of a young girl, and then audiences are suddenly bombarded with images from TV advertisements and billboards that feature images like women in lingerie promoting weight loss pills, getting plastic surgery, doing excessive workout regimes, purging, weighing themselves, and more. The end image is a call to action, stating, "Talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does," and gives the link to Dove's Self-Esteem Project.

This dramatic ad struck a chord particularly with mothers who had young daughters, because it portrayed a common perspective in a powerful way, and made them concerned for how their daughters would react to the images they are bombarded with in the media as they grow up (Santos).

Release #3: "Daughters"

The last short film to be released in 2007 was titled "Daughters" and was created by Ogilvy Paris. This piece depicts a dialogue between teenage girls and their mothers. The teenage girls talk openly about feeling self-conscious, not pretty enough, and stressing about having to conform to the expectations of their peers. The mothers in the film talk about their struggles of teaching their daughters how to love their bodies and respect themselves. The end of the film promotes Dove's Mother Daughter Workshops, which are a part of its Self-Esteem Fund, and are meant to help mothers and daughters work together to build the daughter's self-esteem (Macleod).

The film received relatively little criticism, and was purposely released right before Dove's Fifth Annual Self-Esteem Weekend, which took place at the United Nations. The initiative included Dove partnering with organizations around the country to provide opportunities for self-esteem boosting resources online and in person. Throughout the week, Dove also utilized a social media campaign asking women who they #FeelBeautifulFor and to post on their personal accounts with the hashtag (Tenore).

Phase 4: "Real Beauty Sketches" and Promoting Online Content

A few years after its first round of successful short films, Dove produced another film with the help of Ogilvy & Mather Brazil. It was released on April 26, 2013 and titled "Real Beauty Sketches" ("Top 15"). The film features a variety of women being sketched by a forensic artist. The first drawing is done based on the women's descriptions of themselves, including the aspects of themselves they like and dislike. The second drawing is done from other women's descriptions of the artist's subject (Bahadur). The first round of sketches for all of the women

ended up being much less attractive-looking than the second round, which drove the main message of the film: women see themselves in a harsher light than others see them. Overall, Dove reinforced that women are their own harshest critics, and should not be so hard on themselves about their appearance.

(Bahadur).

Dove utilized “Real Beauty Sketches” and the momentum it received from its previous films to help the campaign go viral. “Real Beauty Sketches” was first launched to Dove’s YouTube channels in the U.S., Canada, Brazil, and Australia, but soon after it went global and ended up being launched in 25 languages to 46 Dove YouTube channels. Ogilvy chose to launch the film on YouTube since it provided the easiest way for viewers to watch, engage, and share the content. The film became so popular, generating 163 million views globally, that it had a YouTube masthead for a day to become the first advertisement viewed on the website (“Authentic Expression”).

To ensure that every audience possible would be able to find or come across the film, Dove and Ogilvy utilized TrueView in-stream service, which is a search engine optimizer that made it easier for audiences looking for the video to find it, and anticipated people who would

want to search it. In total, the service was able to gather 8 million views of the film ("Authentic Expression").

Along with the release of "Real Beauty Sketches," Dove created various YouTube brand channels that encouraged audiences to look at other content the company was creating. This also encouraged fans to produce response videos to Dove, which created more traffic and views for Dove. One of the highest watched response videos received more than 56,000 views ("Authentic Expression").

Dove sought to continue growing its online and social media presence for the "Real Beauty" campaign later in 2013. After the film was released, Dove surpassed 1 million "likes" on its Facebook page, and "Real Beauty Sketches" was able to reach 1 out of every 10 Facebook users. It was also able to generate 4.6 billion blogger impressions worldwide. The company organized a Google+ Hangout on Mother's Day in Canada, which was about a month after the film was released. At the Google+ Hangout, three moms and their daughters were interviewed by the same sketch artist utilized in "Real Beauty Sketches" to talk about their perceptions of their own beauty, and how it translates to how their daughters think of themselves. The video coverage from this day was used as a TrueView ad campaign, and helped Dove get more than 275,000 followers on Google+ ("Authentic Expression").

While "Real Beauty Sketches" was one of Dove's most successful activations, it received a mix of positive and negative reactions. Supporters of the ad said that it tapped into the deep-rooted emotions of consumers about appearance and body type, which made them trust the brand more. The ad also made many parents stop and think about how their young children would start to think of themselves based on how the ad showed women thought of themselves. Many critics of the ad, however, pointed out that the tagline, "you're more beautiful than you think," puts too

much emphasis on beauty and appearance being the only goal women can strive for (Vega). Other critics claimed that the entire film was untrue because the sketch artist knew the desired outcome. Nevertheless, the film was highly discussed online, and has even generated 15 parody videos since it was launched (Bahadur).

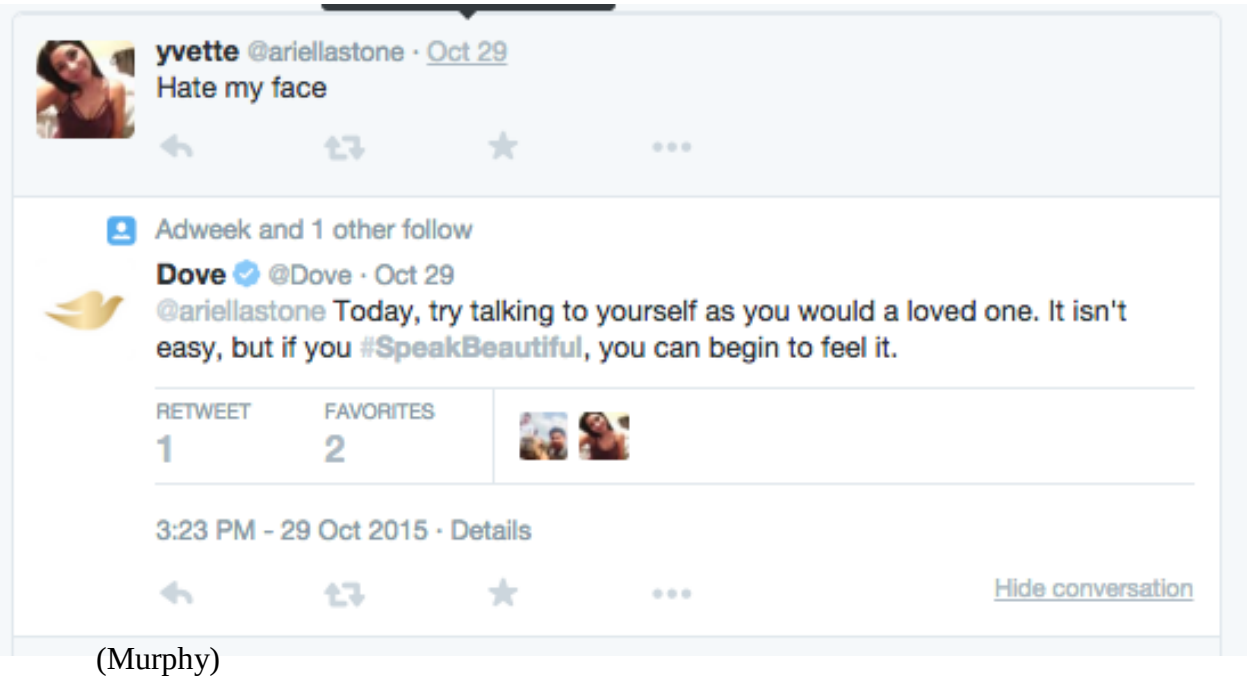
Phase 5: "Selfie"

In January 2014, Dove released another short film titled "Selfie," which first aired at the Sundance Film Festival. The piece is seven minutes long, which is several minutes longer than the company's previous films. The film follows a group of teenage girls and their mothers who engage in an open dialogue about their insecurities and how social media can help or hurt one's idea of beauty. All of the women took selfies that highlighted their biggest insecurity, which were then printed and hung in a photo exhibit where participants could write positive comments next to the pictures. At the end of the film the participants realize that some of their biggest insecurities are what others consider to be most beautiful, so they should not shy away from showing them off in a selfie. By embracing the selfie, Dove is encouraging its audiences to influence the conversation and spread the campaign's message via social media (Murphy).

Phase 6: #SpeakBeautiful Social Media Campaign

In 2015, Dove launched a partnership with Twitter in an effort to make a direct impact on women outside of its usual campaign activations. It created the #SpeakBeautiful campaign after conducting research that showed 50 percent of women are as likely to say something negative about themselves on social media as they are to say something positive. Dove saw how social

media was affecting the self-esteem of millions of women, and sought to make a direct impact on the online community.



(Murphy)

The campaign utilized technology that connected women to social and self-esteem experts and turned ugly, self-degrading tweets into positive ones. From the time the campaign launched in 2015 to the end of 2016, negative beauty conversation on Twitter decreased by 36.8 percent, and 28,000 women signed up for the #SpeakBeautiful Effect technology. This campaign showed the impact that Dove had on online conversations, and how social media still held a large impact on how women perceived their own sense of beauty ("Interview with Sharelyn Devonish").

Phase 7: Real Beauty Productions

In March 2017, in support of the Self-Esteem Project and with the help of Edelman, Dove launched Real Beauty Productions. This project is a collection of short films that, according to its

website, were created to “shift the power of storytelling from Hollywood into the hands of real women to ensure all women and girls can see their #RealBeauty represented in media and culture” (“Dove Real Beauty Productions”). The inspiration came after research showed that 69 percent of women agreed that they did not see themselves reflected in advertisements, movies, and television today (“Interview with Sharelyn Devonish”). Shonda Rhimes, the Emmy-nominated producer and writer, is the creative director on the project, and the film crew is made up entirely of women.

According to Sharelyn Devonish at Edelman, the project “gives women and girls the opportunity to share personal stories that expand the definition of beauty. By putting the power directly into the hands of real women and girls, they can truly represent who they are, as beautiful, confident, and diverse individuals” (“Interview with Sharelyn Devonish”).

The project has created three films so far, each featuring a woman who has overcome great difficulties in her life but is still able to stand confident and love herself.

Phase 8: Body wash bottles in all shapes and sizes

In May 2017, Dove sought to take the messages it was promoting in the “Real Beauty” campaign and implement it directly with its products. The company launched a new line of body wash bottles in various shapes that were made to look like shapes and sizes of female bodies.

According to Sophie Galvani, Dove's global brand vice president: “The custom bottles of different shapes and sizes reflect the beauty in diversity through visual representation and are designed to spark a lively debate and discussion about what real beauty means" (“Dove Has Introduced Soap Bottles”).

The launch received almost immediate backlash via traditional and social media. Many responders mocked the bottles, and others criticized the company for categorizing people solely for their body shape. Despite the harsh criticism Dove received, the company did not end up losing many customers from this activation. After the body wash bottles were launched, Morning Consult surveyed 2,209 Americans and found that 82 percent still had a favorable view of Dove, and 41 percent said the bottles gave them a more positive view of the brand. Only 3 percent of respondents said that the bottles gave them a less favorable view of Dove (Farber). The survey results show that even though Dove missed the mark with this activation, it has a loyal and long-standing relationship with its customers that did not deter them from purchasing its products.

Phase 9: Racist Facebook ad

Dove came under fire a few months after the body wash bottle controversy when it released a controversial ad on Facebook in October 2017. The ad was three-seconds long, and featured three women taking off their shirts to reveal another woman underneath. The part of the ad that received criticism was when a black woman removed her shirt to reveal a white woman, giving the impression that the black woman was dirty and Dove’s soap could make you clean and white.

(Bach)

A screenshot depicting that moment of the ad went viral, and Dove immediately removed the ad and released an apology on its Facebook page: "Dove is committed to representing the beauty of diversity. In an image we posted this week, we missed the mark in thoughtfully representing women of color and we deeply regret the offense that it has caused" (Bach).

Most of the backlash claimed that the ad was racist, and many used the incident as a call to action for all brands to be more inclusive with their hiring so this kind of misstep does not continue to happen, and also to force brands to rethink their messages and ensure they are not perpetuating racist ideals.

Chapter 4

Reactions and criticisms

During the 14 years that Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign has been active, it has received both positive and negative reactions from consumers and other brands around the world. One of the ways word spread so quickly on the campaign was because of the "water cooler effect." The campaign talked about issues that affected all women, so it was easy for women to open up and connect with one another in casual settings, like at the office, about the topics it brought up (Jeffers).

Many of the positive reactions that came out of the campaign was that it reaches audiences on an emotional level that other brands have not been able to do, while negative reactions criticize the campaign based on its messaging, or the Dove brand in general. It is important to bring up the positive and negative reactions to the "Real Beauty" campaign to show which aspects of the campaign stood out to audiences the most, but also that not all audiences supported the campaign in its entirety.

Positive Reactions

Reaction #1: Emotional connection to campaign

Media commenting on the "Real Beauty" campaign often commended the brand for being open and honest, and creating a campaign that resonated emotionally with its audiences. *AdWeek* wrote that the brand was successful because it was selling realism, not fantasy, and the campaign opened discussion on a topic that had never been publicly discussed before.

Supporters of Dove's campaign have used social media to express their reactions to its various activations. "Real Beauty Sketches" was the first of the activations to receive a large

number of comments on social media, with responses coming from everyday consumers, celebrities, and leaders in the business world. The comments ranged from expressing how powerful the ad was in connecting with audiences emotionally, to parents remarking how the ad made them think about how their daughters would view themselves as they grew up.

Actor George Takei made a Facebook post about the short film that said, "[The ad] brought tears to my eyes through its powerful message," which received more than 29,000 likes (Vega). Women like stay-at-home mom Audrey Olive in Phoenix, Arizona, made comments on social media about how the ad was able to connect with her on a personal level. In a Facebook post Olive wrote, "As women we are hard on ourselves physically and emotionally… [The ad] gets you to stop and think about how we think of ourselves" (Vega).

"Real Beauty Sketches" also caused many audiences to think about how their daughters saw themselves, or would see themselves as they grow up. Russell Glass, the CEO of Bizo, wrote in a Facebook post that the video made him tear up thinking that his young daughters might have the same perspective when they look in the mirror every day as the women in the video (Vega).

In addition to comments from everyday women and celebrities, leaders of the fat acceptance movement have also made comments about the positive impact of the campaign. Stacy Bias, who has spent over 20 years as a fat and feminist activist, wrote in her satirical cartoon piece "12 Good Fatty Archetypes" that Dove created a "new" body type called "Real Women." Bias commented that women with these body types embody real women who have curves, and combat the stereotype that the stick-thin model body type is considered a "real woman." Bias added that these women "fit into the new median where everyday woman exists

between the fictional characters created by beauty rags and the 'truly fat' women that compose the 'obesity epidemic' (Bias).

Reaction #2: Creative and authentic branding

In 2015, *AdAge* named the "Real Beauty" campaign the number one ad campaign of the 21st century. The ranking was determined by a group of judges made up of top executives in the world's largest advertising and marketing companies. Most of the feedback from the judges commended the campaign for its boldness, truthfulness, and ability to change the discussion to help women build their self-confidence. Among the phrases used to describe the campaign: "elegantly crafted," "bold. Brave. Smart," "a message the world needed," "created a movement," "they committed to the issue and remained consistent," and "inspiring icon" ("Top 15").

One aspect the judges commended the brand most on was its authenticity. Rei Inamoto, CCO and VP of AKQA, expressed that Dove's authenticity would pave the way for how brands will create campaigns in the future. He said:

> "Authenticity is the new 'storytelling' of advertising. The beauty of [Dove's] campaign is that it's using the power of its brand to reflect and celebrate the authenticity of its audience—women—by showcasing real people. In the digital age of radical transparency, brands can't hide behind their own stories anymore. This campaign did—and continues to—reflect the truth by putting the scale of the brand to use" ("Top 15").

Other judges also used the campaign's authenticity as insight into the future of advertising. Alcocer, President of ECD Latin Works, said the campaign "brought truth to advertising." Greg Hahn, CCO of BBDONY said, "[The campaign] shows what can happen when a brand adopts a higher purpose… [Dove] chose to lead you to their point, not simply tell you their point." Lastly, Keith Reinhard, chairman of DDB Worldwide, said, "The real beauty of

this campaign is that by challenging a popular conception of beauty, it showed how advertising can lift sales and self-esteem at the same time" ("Top 15").

Negative Reactions

With any campaign that has gathered international attention, there will be critics. Negative reactions to the "Real Beauty" campaign are fairly widespread, from the phrases used in its messaging, to the "real women" portrayed in the ads, to the Dove brand as a whole.

Criticism #1: Focus on beauty and attractiveness

One of the largest criticisms on several of Dove's activations is that the campaign's messages seem to promote that looking attractive is the only goal that women should strive for. The claim is that this messaging implies that beauty is the only way women can measure their self-worth and confidence, rather than intelligence or personality (Griner).

The 2017 controversy over Dove's soap bottles made to look like female bodies also created much criticism about the brand being too focused on body shape and appearance. The bottle shapes implied to women that they are defined only by their size (Bach). One critic on Twitter pointed out that this product categorizes people "solely by their bodies" and is not inclusive to all women ("Dove Has Introduced Soap Bottles").

Other critics pointed out that while Dove advertised that it used real women in its ads, most of the women in its short films fit the stereotypical standards for attractiveness, because they were tall, skinny, blonde, and young. Dove's "Real Beauty Sketches" received the most criticism on this topic, with critics pointing out that the women in the short film included a "slim brunette in skinny jeans," another with "piercing blue eyes and long golden hair," and the middle

aged women all had “contemporary hairstyles and makeup so tasteful it looks as if a Bobbi Brown stylist applied it” (Zweig). According to In-Mind.org, the use of these women in the ads makes the campaign appear to have "naïve integration” with women with non-traditional looks (Celebre and Denton).

Some critics oppose Dove promoting its use of “real women” in the campaign because they claim this makes the campaign appear inaccurate and damaging to everyday women. In-Mind.org stated that by using examples of “real women” the campaign might have caused young girls to become more self-conscious about their bodies if they did not look like the women in the ads (Celebre and Denton). David Zweig at *Slate* felt that using real women made the campaign even worse for everyday women because “it has the pretense of representing them, and yet they still must notice they fall far short of ‘real.’ At least every woman *expects* to not look like the models and actresses in standard beauty advertising” (Zweig).

Criticism #2: Unilever controversy

Critics of the “Real Beauty” campaign have also commented on the campaign’s greater context. Dove is owned by Unilever, which owns a variety of other well-known consumer brands, including Axe and Fair&Lovely, that promote messages and products that contradict Dove’s messaging.

Axe is a male soap company that has a history of creating ad campaigns that promote the thin ideal and/or sexualization of women. An example of one of its campaigns is the “Bow Chicka Wah Wah” (BCWW) campaign. Participants could go on Axe’s website and search the “In Your Area” page, which shows a map of where women have been affected by the Axe scents. The website encourages participants to “choose a hotspot on the map below and watch

women across the country lose their inhibitions, their minds ... and often their clothes" (Celebre and Denton). This is one of dozens of examples of misogyny in Axe's ads, which directly goes against all that Dove's campaign stands for. According to Dr. Susan Linn, director and co-founder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, "The Axe campaign makes clear that any concerns Unilever has about girls' well-being take a backseat to their *desire* to exploit stereotypes for profit. With Axe, Unilever is creating the same toxic environment addressed by its Dove Campaign" (Celebre and Denton).

Another company owned by Unilever, Fair&Lovely, sells skin-lightening products. The majority of its marketing is toward dark-skinned women and promotes a desire for "lighter skin." An example of an advertisement from Fair&Lovely depicts a dark-skinned woman who cannot get her dream job because of her skin color, but once she uses the company's products she is able to not only get the job, but also get asked on a date and overall boost her self-confidence. The messages and products released from Fair&Lovely directly contradict Dove's acceptance of all women, no matter their ethnicity or skin color. It also goes against Dove supporting women in embracing their uniqueness by promoting products that try to make all women appear the same (Celebre and Denton).

Criticism #3: Campaign is racist and not inclusive to all ethnicities

"Racist" was not a criticism that Dove received in the first several years of its campaign. However, after several failed activations since 2011, it is a comment that the company has received much more often. In 2011, Dove released an ad that had three women standing side-by-side with signs reading "before" and "after" behind them. The black woman was standing in front of the "before" sign with visibly cracked skin, and the white woman was standing in front

of the “after” sign with smooth skin, with the tagline below them that read “visibly more beautiful skin.”

(“Dove Has Introduced Soap Bottles”)

The placement of the women gave the impression that the black woman was the less attractive “before” image, and the white woman was more attractive and had more beautiful skin (“Dove Has Introduced Soap Bottles”). This ad led to the first intense backlash around Dove being racist, and critics called for the ad to be taken down.

Dove was called racist again a year later in 2012, when it produced a lotion that was labeled “for normal to dark skin” (“Dove Has Introduced Soap Bottles”). This implied that dark

skin is not normal, but white skin is. Five years later, in October 2017, one critic took to Twitter to point out that the same lotion is still being sold by Dove, despite the harsh criticism the product received ("Dove Has Introduced Soap Bottles"). In that same month, the three-second Facebook ad was released that received intense backlash for being racist.

Despite the fact that there was a five-year time lapse between the original incidents, critics did not forget the earlier criticisms of Dove around race. They took to social media to show their anger, with many bringing up images of the 2011 ad and lotion from 2012 and calling out Dove for "strike two" or digging a "deeper hole" for itself (Taylor). Criticisms called out Dove not only for being ignorant and racist but for its internal processes not being diverse enough to recognize a racist trend in its advertisements. Many called for Dove to re-staff with more minority individuals in order to prevent another racist ad from being produced (Taylor). The reactions to Dove's campaign began a call-to-action for all brands to re-think their structure to ensure that they do not promote racist attitudes and to have more diversity in their staff.

Chapter 5

Corporate Social Responsibility vs Cause-Related Marketing

When analyzing how Dove's sales have been affected since "Real Beauty" was launched, it is important to note the fine line that the company walked between utilizing **corporate social responsibility** or **cause-related marketing**. From its inception, the "Real Beauty" campaign has shown that brands can promote inspirational messages to improve the lives of their customers, and have sales as a secondary focus. The extent to which Dove's focus was on sales when it created the campaign, however, is impossible to tell.

The definition of CRM states that it is one of the aspects that make up CSR, but it has more marketing aspects behind it ("Differentiate Between CSR and CRM"). No matter how strong a campaign's messaging—especially for long-term campaigns—customers will always keep in the back of their minds that they are receiving those messages from a company that needs sales in order to stay in business. A lack of trust from customers always prevents people from "buying into" campaigns completely (Turnbull 15).

Though Dove is largely focused on brand sentiment for the "Real Beauty" campaign, it has seen growth in its product sales since it was launched. The company's sales have increased from $2.5 billion to $4 billion since 2005 ("Top 15"). The greatest leaps in sales have taken place after campaign activations, and sales then usually plateaued in the months when there were no activations. For example, in 2005, a year after the campaign began, Dove's sales increased by 20 percent. However, by 2006, sales had begun to flatten again (Joni).

Dove's messaging was intended to build trust between the company and its customers, which in the long run would develop stronger relationships and then more sales. According to

Joah Santos, an international advertising executive who worked on the campaign, one way market success is measured is by "increasing brand sentiment to increase market sales, market share or profit" (Santos). Santos implied that Dove used CRM, because it wanted to help others but also make money for the company. Brenda Fiala, a senior vice president at Blast Radius, a digital advertising agency, explained the reasoning behind this strategy in an interview for *The New York Times*. She said, "When customers go to the store to buy toiletries, they will remember the warm feelings they have associated with [Dove]. If you have to choose between one deodorant and the other and you see Dove, you'll think, 'That's the brand for me,'" (Vega).

On the other hand, some of Dove's most successful campaign activations were almost entirely focused on driving emotions and connecting with audiences, implying that Dove utilized CRS instead of CRM. Santos used the "Evolution" short film as an example, stating that it did not particularly drive sales because it was a sentiment-driven campaign and did not focus on Dove's products, but it was one of Dove's first videos to go viral worldwide and made the brand and the campaign known to millions more people than a normal product advertisement would have (Santos).

The fine line between CSR and CRM was seen in the campaigns Dove made following the launch of "Real Beauty." The "Speak Beautiful" campaign, for example, which was launched in 2015, was created to change how women spoke about themselves on Twitter. There were numerous activations to the campaign, including launching with a 30-second commercial during the 2015 Oscars red carpet. The campaign added to the "Real Beauty" campaign's message, since it wanted to help women feel more confident and decrease their negative perceptions of their bodies online. After its first year, the campaign found success on multiple levels. It helped decrease negative tweets about body image by 36 percent, and increased Dove's brand sentiment

by 17 percent, meaning more of Dove's customers viewed the company in a positive light. Lastly, "Speak Beautiful" helped increase Dove's overall sales by $5 million at the end of 2016 ("Dove and Twitter #SpeakBeautiful"). The "Speak Beautiful" campaign showed another campaign led by Dove that was meant to drive emotions, though it is also hard to tell how much of a focus long-term profits were for the campaign.

In the next few years, Dove plans to continue expanding its original mission from the "Real Beauty" campaign into the "Self Esteem Project." This campaign aims to, "flip the usual marketing message of 'new year, new you' on its head with a series of raw, un-retouched images that feature young girls with zero modeling background" (Theodosi). Launching in January of 2018 and with plans to continue at least through 2020, Dove will utilize online interventions and workshops to promote body confidence among young girls (Theodosi).

Chapter 6

Insight for Future Campaigns

It is impossible to tabulate the direct effect that Dove's campaign has had on society in the last fourteen years. Dove conducted research and a survey when it first began the campaign to try to see how it could best impact its key publics, so I sought to create my own survey to see how women today feel about the media and their personal perceptions of beauty.

Between December 2017 and January 2018 I surveyed 326 women over the age of 18, and asked them questions similar to those that Dove asked women in 2004. The goal of the survey was to determine whether Dove had succeeded in its mission of changing the conversation on body image and self-confidence among women of all ages. The results I received showed me ways in which Dove succeeded and failed, often with varying results between different age groups. In my survey, 270 participants were ages 18-34, and 51 were ages 35-64. The differences in responses of the varying age groups can help show areas where Dove succeeds or fails for particular publics, and can help show trends that other brands should note before implementing their own campaigns.

Trend #1: Millennial women hold brands to very high standards

The participants aged 18-34 are part of the "millennial" generation, which is known to expect brands to be transparent in all their business practices. Millennials also are much more likely to buy from companies that promote messages they support and that interact with their communities, rather than just focusing on selling their products. These factors explain why nearly 66 percent of the Millennials who took my survey agreed "brands should be using their

advertising efforts to show women how to feel more beautiful." In the 35-64 age group, however, only 20 percent of participants agreed with the statement. This factor can be helpful for other brands to recognize if they are targeting millennial audiences; by creating campaigns with messages that go beyond selling products and seeking to address an issue in society, they can resonate with those publics and develop stronger relationships with them.

In addition, Millennials put much importance into choosing the brands they want to engage with. One of the most highly valued aspects that Millennials seek in a brand is authenticity. They support companies that are honest about their practices, and present themselves in a truthful and relatable way (Tolentino). For the purposes of my survey, Dove's recent crises dealing with being labeled as racist and selling soap bottles in the shape of women's bodies may have damaged this age group's perception of the brand messaging that the campaign is putting out.

Trend #2: The images and messages from brands have a deeper effect on millennial women than on older women

Millennial women in particular are very knowledgeable about social media, and when they see models in advertisements or the media, they are more likely than other consumers to be affected by the images. Dove's campaign promised it would represent real women of all body shapes, races and ethnicities, so it is not surprising that when I asked in my survey if seeing these diverse women in advertisements and the media affected their personal standards of beauty, 70 percent of the Millennial respondents agreed.

On the other hand, out of the participants ages 35-64, 62 percent of participants agreed that seeing more diversity affected their personal beauty standards, while 38 percent said that it did not. This smaller margin can be explained by looking at the trend of women shifting from a "proving" to an "improving" mindset as they age. According to a 2016 study conducted by the *Harvard Business Review*, as women get older they become more self-aware and more self-confident. Women, in general, are less confident when they are younger and are seeking to "prove" themselves and their worth. Once most women reach their mid-20s, however, their confidence usually rises steadily until their mid-60s (Zenger and Folkman). This proves that Dove's campaign messages and images would likely have a deeper effect on Millennial women who are just beginning to develop their self-confidence and focused on "proving" themselves.

Trend #3: Campaigns can't move mountains

At the end of the day, while the "Real Beauty" campaign has been able to reach thousands of women around the world, Dove on its own cannot change an ideology that has been embedded in society for longer than the company has been selling soap. This realization can be seen through my survey results; 80 percent of my survey respondents said seeing the campaign did not change how they viewed their appearance, and about 75 percent said that it did not improve their self-confidence. While Dove may have seen positive reactions and a general rise in sales from the campaign, "Real Beauty" is dealing with issues that are very personal, and cannot be changed overnight through a four-minute video or motivational Tweet.

Brands should make an effort to promote messages that they feel can change the world for the better, but they also should realize that consumers are bombarded with thousands of messages daily, some of which may contradict what they are sharing. For example, in a

campaign that directly contradicts “Real Beauty,” Victoria’s Secret launched the “Perfect Body” campaign in 2016. The majority of the models in the campaign ads were white and incredibly thin, and the name of the campaign implied to customers that if they wanted the “perfect” body they would need to look like the models they saw in the ads (Elphick). Statements from brand leaders have also promoted ideas about women’s bodies that contradict Dove’s messages. The CEO of Abercrombie & Fitch, Mike Jeffries, made a statement in 2013 that “Abercrombie is only interested in people with washboard stomachs who look like they’re about to jump on a surfboard” (Schlossburg). In that same year, the founder of Lululemon, Chip Wilson, said in response to criticisms over the sheerness of the company’s leggings, “Frankly, some women’s bodies just don’t actually work for the yoga pants” (Lustrin and Patinkin). While Dove has made progress toward body image acceptance and women’s empowerment, messages like these can make it difficult for brands to change an individual or group’s ideology.

Despite the variety of messages consumers are exposed to, it is important for brands to remember that the images consumers see from brands can resonate with them personally and affect them on a deep level. About 65 percent of my survey participants said that they felt worse about their bodies after seeing an advertisement, showing just how much impact messages and images in advertisements can affect consumers. As Catherine Hope writes in an article for *Campaign*, “What we really need is for advertisers and brands to fully realize their role in wider cultural change. They have the money and the means to have a voice and it’s our responsibility to guide them on how to wield the privilege” (Hope). Brands should find causes they believe in and not be afraid to speak out about them, but they should also be aware that the larger the cause they take on, the harder it may be to bring about societal change.

Chapter 7

PR Plan

As Dove looks to the future of the "Real Beauty" campaign, I have created a hypothetical public relations plan that the company can use to further extend the campaign and its impact on women and society. The outline for this PR plan was provided by Professor Annette Willnat during my Public Relations Campaigns class in Fall 2017.

Summary:

A brief synopsis of what the plan is trying to address, and the timeframe involved in carrying out the plan.

Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign has had much success with its variety of short films published online and on social media to spread its key message across to its publics. However, the campaign still lacks community relations outreach. There was a focus on it in the beginning of the campaign in 2004, when it developed partnerships and experiences for communities of women and girls to be influenced directly by the campaign, but in the decade since then there has not been a major focus on community relations. This new public relations strategy will help Dove reconnect with women in communities that need to hear the campaign's message the most, and develop a closer relationship with its key publics.

Starting in 2019, Dove will be partnering with non-profit organizations in various locations across the United States that work to empower and educate young women on how to build their self-confidence and make healthy life choices. One of these organizations will be Ophelia's Place, which is headquartered in Liverpool, New York.

This community relations outreach will begin on International Women's Day in March 2019 with the announcement of the Real Beauty App, which will connect girls across the country with Ophelia's Place counselors and other girls who are struggling with similar issues. From March through June 2019 Dove will launch an after-school speaker series in which representatives from Ophelia's Place and similar small organizations across the country will travel to schools in their

communities to speak with girls of all ages about how to build self-confidence and fight the stereotypes and expectations put on them. The work conducted at the programs will be filmed and pitched to the media on July 1, 2019.

Analysis:

The situation in context of what the PR plan is trying to address: the current public opinion of the subject of the plan, how it compares in the public's eye to its closest competitors.

Dove has faced its share of criticism for the "Real Beauty" campaign since it was launched in 2004, but it never before received as much backlash as it did in 2017. The company had two crises, leading to it being labeled racist rather than inclusive. Dove needs to work with a non-profit organization like Ophelia's Place to get back to the crux of why the campaign was started in the first place: to make women feel comfortable in their own skin. Prior to the crises in 2017, Dove was already being criticized for focusing the campaign too much on making women feel beautiful, and not making them feel more confident through their personality or intelligence. By working with real women and girls in their communities, Dove can help change the conversation among members of its key publics that are struggling, and in the long run rebuild its reputation to show that its campaign is doing more than helping women feel pretty.

Dove's main competitors are beauty companies Olay, Nivea, and Lux. Olay and Lux have recently created female empowerment campaigns and advertisements similar to "Real Beauty," with the most recent being the "Your Best Beautiful" and "We Are More" campaigns, respectively. Nivea has faced heavy criticism for being racist in 2017 with its ad selling lotion to women in Africa that promised to lighten their skin.

Goal

A statement that directly addresses the issue or opportunity in your analysis

To work with young women in their communities to enforce messages of body positivity and self-confidence, and give them proper tools and education that will shape their outlooks as they grow up

Objectives

Specific and measurable actions to be completed for the public relations plan that have a specific deadline for completion.

Objective #1: Launch Real Beauty app and get 5,000 downloads

Deadline: March 8, 2019

Objective #2: Create video coverage to showcase the discussions taking place at the after-school program

Deadline: July 1, 2019

Target Audience

The publics that the communication efforts will be focused toward

Target Audience #1: Teenage girls ages 13-18

Target Audience #2: Mothers with young or teenage daughters

Key Messages

Specific words or phrases from your public relations plan that you want to resonate with your audiences.

Key Message #1: Women and girls are defined by much more than their beauty and appearance

Key Message #2: Education and awareness can help young girls see their full value and potential

Key Message #3: Women can help other women by supporting one another and encouraging them to be their best self

Strategies

The methods that you will you use to get your message across.

Strategy #1: Pitch story and video content to women's lifestyle media

Strategy #2: Pitch story of app launch to teenage girls popular media and tv shows

Tactics

Specific action items you will take to support your strategies and meet your objectives.

Tactic 1: Post short clips of after-school programs on Dove's social media

Deadline: July 1, 2019

Budget: $0

Tactic 2: Pitch to women's lifestyle media video from after-school programs

Deadline: July 1, 2019

Budget: $0

Tactic 3: Create short video of highlights and interviews from after-school program

Deadline: June 20, 2019

Budget: $2,000

Tactic 4: Pitch to women's lifestyle media about app launch

Deadline: March 8, 2019

Budget: $0

Tactic 5: Pitch new app to talk shows popular among teenage girls, like E! News

Deadline: March 8, 2019

Budget: $0

Measurement

How and when you plan to evaluate your public relations plan once it is completed.

In July 2019 after the after-school program ends and the app has been active for three months, Dove will conduct a focus group of teenage girls to ask their thoughts on the app and what recommendations they have to make it better. Depending on the response, Dove will keep the app running as it is or make the necessary changes.

On July 14, 2019, two weeks after the short video from the after-school program is released, Dove will calculate the number of media impressions and social media views it received to see whether it reached its goal of the total number of people that Dove wanted to see the film.

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Appendix

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“Daughters”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTZqHkEwfng

“Real Beauty Sketches”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=litXW91UauE

“Selfie”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFkm1Hg4dTI

“Real Beauty Productions”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poIrZELfEME