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Integrated Promotion and Brand Strategy

Exam 2

Dove: Evolution of a Brand

The Beauty Bar

Before Unilever transformed Dove into an iconic Masterbrand, it was a functional, recognizable brand. In order to market a new product to consumers, Dove had a competitive advantage. Introduced as a revolutionary form of soap, Dove swept the market in 1957 when it launched its beauty bar, a new formula. The beauty bar removed Dove from the cognition given to a regular bar of soap. It was not ordinary soap, which was now “old-fashioned”; it was a beauty bar that had the ability to moisturize and cleanse while eliminating the usual irritation and dryness received from toilet soap. This differentiation enabled brand awareness for Dove.

Dove immediately identified itself as an honest, natural, and authentic brand. Dove created a story of a functional product with various added bonuses distinctly different from brands before it. Dove immediately captured important brand elements. Using a simple dove as its symbol contributed to the recall of its brand name. The basic colors, white and blue, displayed cleanliness, purity and innocence; these attributes gave customers the ability to recognize the brand as natural and honest. The spokes models also displayed natural beauty, while the taglines such as “Dove creams your skin while you bathe” provided functionality with a sensory, luxury feeling.

Original advertisements and publicity provided an abundance of information to consumers. This brand was offering the effects of soap; however, it was different because it was milder and one-quarter cleansing cream. Even the shape of the bar was new; it was “sculptured to fit the hand”. The ads used buzz words like “rich, moisturizing, creamy, sensational, and lather” to give sticky associations to the product. To continuously provide separation from its competitors, Dove never referred to the product as soap, “because it was technically not soap at all”. These efforts provided the market with an attractive framework of Dove’s brand.

For support, Unilever, “pioneers in the science of soap-making”, guaranteed that Dove was better for the consumer’s skin, and reminded them that they could trust Unilever to deliver a quality product. Furthermore, the beauty bar was eventually endorsed for the treatment of dry skin by physicians and dermatologists, showing that the brand had surpassed awareness and had become preferred by its customers and experts. Consumers had more reason to try the brand, become satisfied with its delivery, and start to prefer it.

Finally, consumers pledged loyalty to Dove because of the functional and added benefits. For 40 years, Dove led the soap market, and had become “one of America’s most recognizable brands”. Consumers trusted Dove to deliver a product that would be good for their skin. Dove had gained positive brand equity, superior to the generic soap brands, by combining these functional and valued benefits.

The Campaign for Real Beauty

In 2000, Unilever called on Dove to become a Masterbrand because of its continuous success as a leader in the soap industry. Along with the Masterbrand title, Unilever wanted to enter into other personal care categories. Dove was the perfect candidate for this brand extension because of its positive brand equity and its resonance with the market.

Unilever realized, however, that Dove would need to enhance its associations past utility for the other products to be successful. In an age where consumers were using brands as staples of themselves, Unilever decided that Dove would need to develop a meaning and stronger identity that its users could relate to and believe in.

It was apparent that other personal care brands were giving women phony promises, letting them buy just to attempt to become as beautiful as the models. Dove saw that these promises were unattainable for most women, especially the ones that were consuming their product. After surveying women worldwide, researchers found that only 2% of women actually described themselves as beautiful; the greatest percentage, 31%, identified themselves as natural. Dove had always represented

natural looking women, so the brand grabbed this information and spearheaded the “Campaign for Real Beauty”. The Dove brand was evolving from its functional beauty bar to an extension of personal care products that meant natural beauty.

Evolving the Brand

Dove had the awareness it needed as a functional, trusted brand. As always Dove would continue to deliver a functional, natural, quality product. To support the new products, the “Campaign for Real Beauty” had to be supplemented with a renewed brand story, and a marketing communications strategy to go with it. At the core of the media communications strategy was the knowledge, from “The Real Truth About Real Beauty: A Global Report”, that on average 67.3% of women surveyed “believed that the media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty that most women cannot ever achieve”. This information told marketers that Dove should be as honest, natural and authentic as ever.

To test out how the public would respond to its expanded story of a brand fighting against industry standards to sponsor the beauty of real women, The Campaign kicked-off with billboards displaying real, natural women. On the ad, consumers were asked to vote on whether they thought these more ordinary women were “outsized or outstanding”, “fat or fabulous”. Dove saw a liability when more people were voting against them, but victory when overall people voted that these women were beautiful. These initial ads gave the public refreshed associations about Dove, and started relating the brand as attainable, natural and real. The Dove Two Dozen also became spokes models, as they were relatable and admirable public figures who could support and push the brand.

Dove tapped into something that was even bigger than their brand: the reality that false advertising was causing women to live with low self-esteem. By filming the “True Colors” ad, Dove had found a way to tug on the emotions of consumers who understood how hard it is to live up to supermodel standards. This ad played once during the Superbowl and got an incredible response. The ad was not the norm of what the thousands of people watching the Superbowl would be used to, they would be caught off guard. It was so powerful that Dove did not show it again; the media stepped in by itself and provided full coverage of Dove’s new story. Controversy was sparked and the public became aware of the challenges women face daily because of the beauty industry. Dove embraced this viral publicity and gained influence from it.

The short film, “Evolution” provided consumers with more insight about how fake the beauty industry is. Although it did not show on television, Dove took advantage of Web 2.0 as a channel to get around three million viewers to receive their message. The film contributed to the strength of The Campaign by rebelling against what culture was accustomed to.

As the brand gained the imagery of a community of real women, customers had a new preference toward the brand. There was a more emotional connection and understanding between the brand and consumer. Women used Dove because they believed they were natural, and the product was a way for them to express that.

Constantly engaging consumers, Dove decided to launch “Real Ads by Real Women”. Not only did this give Dove the ability to see how the customers actually perceived their product, they empowered women to be themselves and show what it was like to be a real woman, further enhancing Doves’ mission. This positively impacted brand equity in every way. Women felt like they were expressing their real beauty and sharing their story with fellow real women, they were co-creating with Dove to rebel against the norm.

Furthermore, Dove organized the Dove Self-Esteem Fund to engage its consumers more and help to increase the self-esteem of young women. Partnering with the Girl Scouts of the USA brought even more credibility to the campaign. Dove had become an organization that practiced its mission to

fight for real beauty in everything they did. The company's personality, that of a real, authentic, beautiful woman, was prominent.

Dove did not fully control the brand during The Campaign. By allowing real women and the media to participate in the fight against the fallacies of the beauty industry, they gained credible support while guiding the brand where they wanted it to go. The Dove Self-Esteem Fund involved more women who wanted to be proactive about changing the misconception of what beauty is, and young women all around the US who were supported by these women.

A Unified Brand Story

Dove had all the ingredients for a strong brand story. Marketing sent a constant, unified message that the brands' core values were to deliver a quality product while representing everyday natural, real women. Standing for authenticity, Dove was unique not only because of the quality and value of its product, but for the way it rebelled against the perfectionist driven beauty industry.

Dove created a mission that promised to "make more women feel beautiful everyday". The product featured value and functionality it had the benefits of a relationship with real women and valued the identity and beauty of natural women. Narrated by real women used as spokes models, Dove gained authority with consumers who could relate to these models. Dove had the power to attract these women to believe in their brand.

These unforgettable characters continued to grace ads and lead the brand story with an integrated message. The Dove brand was their supporter as they worked for the goal of promoting real beauty. Understanding that they were competing in the beauty industry where every other brand was promising their customers attractiveness, exemplified by "young, white, blond and thin" models, Dove took a major risk by standing for the opposite. This conflict sparked debate in the media as Dove continued to symbolize natural beauty against false supermodel promises. Popular culture and tools such as Photoshop became the adversary.

Dove was counter cultural, suddenly the rebel archetype. The brand had become iconic by leading culture rather than taking the easy route of following it. Instead of representing "what is", fake beauty, Dove pushed for "what could be", real beauty at any age or any size.

The marketing communication was cohesive. Consumers were not given the opportunity to be confused about Dove's message. The Campaign was unmistakably represented and prominent in any available channel.

"Let's Change Their Minds"

Dove wanted to "change the way society views beauty" and they succeeded. The Dove brand is now a lifestyle. Not only does Dove sell a product, it has been anthropomorphized as a natural woman. The Campaign for Real Beauty has brought on change and a meaning that popular culture is ready for and has embraced. Dove should continue to reinforce their story, delivering quality products and innovative ways to share their fight with consumers.

The Campaign for Real Beauty has evolved and strengthened Dove's central message. Dove's associations remain as honest, natural and authentic. What began as a functional product that suggested natural beauty has now become a symbol for natural beauty and a weapon against fake beauty. This change is for the better as more women have felt more empowered to fight against the fallacies of the beauty industry.

Controversy that has grown from The Campaign must be monitored and be used to the company's advantage. Dove should continue to exercise the debate of natural versus perceived beauty. This is the only way that real beauty can conquer, and Dove is the spokesperson of real beauty. Licensing

the public to take part in this discussion will fortify Dove's story, give insight to its effectiveness and add to its credibility and power.

Although viral and potentially destructive videos have surfaced about Dove's intentions, this should not stop the campaign. YouTube parodies have shed light on the fact that Unilever owns the brand Axe as well, which "objectifies women", while this message is contrary to the one Dove is putting out. Just because the two brands are owned by the same parent company, does not mean they are required to have the same messages, brand story or associations. Dove is a brand of its' own with beliefs that are honest. If that has lead to profits, all the better. Higher profits will give Dove the opportunity to send their story to a broader audience, therefore spreading the knowledge that real beauty and self-esteem are important issues.

It is important that Dove and especially its brand managers are aware of the viral activity. It is advisable that they continue to fight for natural beauty, sending unified messages and staying authentic. The public will form their opinions about the brand either way, eventually discovering that Dove's mission is an important one. Possibly addressing the issue in a statement through public relations would be a good route. This way, the concerns of the consumers are resolved and Dove can reassure them that they are honest, rather than shying from the media. In turn, the strength of the brand's message will increase.

Through sustained marketing support, an important mission and a functional, quality product Dove earned the title of a Masterbrand. The Campaign for Real Beauty has started a debate and has served as a voice for a large percentage of women. The brand will continue to grow its strength and eventually real beauty will triumph over the beauty industry. If Unilever continues to invest in The Campaign, it will see positive returns financially and will be able to fix the misconception that beauty is unattainable.

Ideas for Continuous Marketing Communication

- Similar continuation of print, billboard and television ads
- Creation of Dove Self-Esteem Conference
 - Include woman speakers, leaders and activities
- Organization of smaller regional groups (such as Girl Scouts) who built the self-esteem of young women
- Dove Concert Series
 - Featuring artists who share the same values as Dove
 - Kelly Clarkson, Jennifer Hudson, Jessica Simpson
- Broadening the Dove Two Dozen to other public figures
- Continue to use ads made by “real women”
- Product Placement in shows who cover Dove’s message
 - One Tree Hill: Brooke Davis’ “Zero is Not a Size” Campaign
- Real Model contests
- Development of a “Miss Dove” natural beauty pageant
- Include polls on the website
 - Engages women
 - Discovers their opinions
- Short films about the Dove’s Self-Esteem Fund
- Fashion Show featuring real women
- Real, live mannequins in malls and crowded areas