

Dove Real Beauty Advertising Campaign (2004 – present day)



Body of Work

(Can be used for Independent Oral Presentation or HL Essay)

Contextual Information / Timeline

The Campaign for Real Beauty launched in September 2004 with a much talked-about ad campaign featuring normal women whose appearances are outside the stereotypical standards of beauty. The ads portrayed plus-sized women, older women, and asked viewers to judge the women's looks (oversized or outstanding? and wrinkled or wonderful?) inviting them to cast their votes at campaignforrealbeauty.com (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty).

Dove kicked off the second and most iconic phase of the Campaign for Real Beauty in June 2005, with advertising featuring six real women with real bodies, curves, and skin "imperfections." The phase of the campaign was created to debunk the stereotype that only thin is beautiful and it drove thousands of women to their website to have a discussion on beauty issues (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).

In September 2006, a news and media debate erupted when Spain banned overly thin models from its fashion runways, a debate that spoke to the heart of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty mission. In response, Dove produced a compelling short film, *Evolution*, depicting the transformation of a real woman into a Photoshopped model and promoting awareness of how unrealistic perceptions of beauty really are and how they are created (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).

As part of the campaign, the Dove Self-Esteem Fund was established. Its goal was to target girls and young women who develop low self-esteem from hang-ups about their looks, and consequently fail to reach their full potential in life. It was also created to act as an agent of change to inspire and educate girls and women about a wider definition of beauty. This same year, the brand released a commercial called *Little Girls* during the Super Bowl, reaching an estimated 89 million viewers (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).

Continuing its ongoing commitment to widen the narrow definition of beauty, Dove launched the third phase of the Campaign for Real Beauty in February 2007. “The Dove global study, *Beauty Comes of Age*” revealed that 91% of women ages 50–64 believe it is time for society to change its views about women and aging. The campaign celebrated the essence of women 50+—wrinkles, age spots, grey hair and all.” It was illustrated through a communications campaign created with internationally renowned photographer Annie Leibovitz (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).

When the Campaign for Real Beauty focused on the idea that girls are bombarded with unrealistic, unattainable images and images of beauty that impact their self-esteem, the brand consulted the entertainment industry to show that what girls see in movies and magazines represents an unrealistic standard of beauty. Thus, an online film dramatizing the barrage of beauty images girls face was created (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).

“In 2010, Dove set out a bold new vision for the brand with the Dove Movement for Self-Esteem. The Dove Movement for Self-Esteem provides women everywhere with opportunities to mentor the next generation and celebrate real beauty. There are many ways to become involved. Dove invites women everywhere to join the brand in making its vision a reality. Together with experts and key partners (in the U.S., Dove supports the work of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., Girls Inc., and Boys & Girls Clubs of America) (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).” Dove has created self-esteem boosting, educational programs and activities that encourage, inspire and motivate girls around the world. “Dove has reached over 7 million girls so far with these programs, and set a global goal of reaching 15 million girls by 2015” (Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).

In 2011, Dove released the findings of its largest global study to date on women’s relationship with beauty—*The Real Truth About Beauty: Revisited*. “The study revealed that only 4% of women around the world consider themselves beautiful, and that anxiety

about looks begins at an early age. In a study of over 1,200 10-to-17-year-olds, a majority of girls, 72%, said they felt tremendous pressure to be beautiful. The study also found that only 11% of girls around the world feel comfortable using the word beautiful to describe their looks, showing that there is a universal increase in beauty pressure and a decrease in girls' confidence as they grow older” (The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014). Though Dove efforts have moved the needle in a positive direction, they believe “there is more to be done” (The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, 2014).



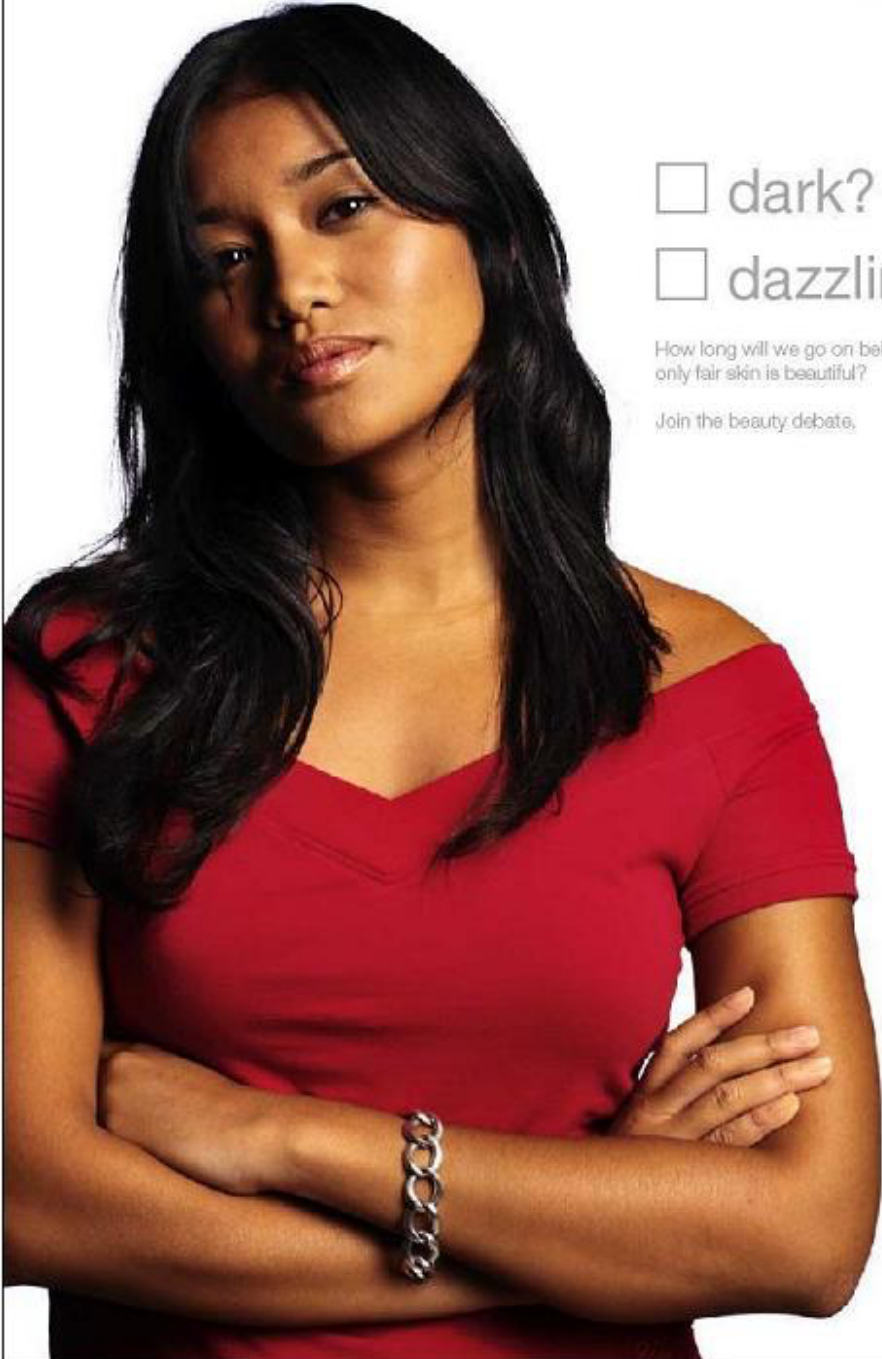
let's face it, firming the thighs
of a size 8 supermodel
wouldn't have been much of
a challenge.

That's why Dove asked women like
Linda de Maeyer to test Dove's
new Firming Range for three weeks,
with its nourishing and effective
combination of moisturizers and
enriched extracts. Then we asked
Linda if she'd be happy to show
the unretouched, unaltered
results on camera. Here's how she
responded to the challenge.



new Dove
Firming Range
Get Cream - Body Wash - Lotion

campaignforrealbeauty.com  Dove



dark?

dazzling?

How long will we go on believing that
only fair skin is beautiful?

Join the beauty debate.



curvy thighs, bigger bums,
rounder stomachs.
What better way to
test our firming range?

There's not much past to testing
a new firming lotion on some right?
supermodel thighs, is there?
That's why Dove's Firming range
was tested on ordinary women with
real issues to fix - not just, curly
thighs to firm. After using Dove's
rehydrating and effective combination
of ingredients at all essential
stages, we asked if they'd do it
over all too ravenous. What better
way to show how they felt about the
unprecedented results?



new Dove
Firming Range
Body Cream - Body Wash - Lotion



wrinkled?

wonderful?

Will society ever accept 'old' can be beautiful? Join the beauty debate.

campaignforrealbeauty.co.uk



Dove

We see beauty all around us.

At Dove®, we want to help free ourselves and the next generation from beauty stereotypes. It's this message that's at the heart of our Campaign for Real Beauty and Self-Esteem Fund, and it's why we continue to create thought-provoking ads, confidence-building programs and messages that embrace all definitions of beauty.

We've reached almost 2 million lives through the Dove Self-Esteem Fund so far. Our goal is to reach 5 million by 2010. Won't you help us?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN >](#)

[LEARN ABOUT THE DOVE SELF-ESTEEM FUND >](#)





None of these
women are
hair models.
After all, neither
are you.



Dove believes all women have beautiful hair when it's deeply cared for. No matter what length, style, cut, color or texture, you can discover the beauty in your own hair with the deep care in Dove Shampoos and Conditioners. Learn more at www.campaignforrealbeauty.com



Appendix 1

Adapted from source:

<https://www.vox.com/2014/4/25/5652462/how-dove-went-from-a-soap-to-a-brand-feminists-love-to-hate>

How did Dove go from a soap to a brand that makes you love your body? It's not exactly that Dove suddenly cared about women crafting healthy body images. Rather, that new branding was part of a corporation-wide growth strategy to give brands distinct identities, rather than having them simply stand for products,

Thirty years ago, Dove's ads were more conventional — that is, they emphasized their product and what it did. To this day, anyone who watched TV in the 1980s can recite that Dove is “one-quarter moisturizing cream.”

In 2000, Dove parent company Unilever crafted a strategy plan called the "Path to Growth," in which it cut down 1,600 brands to 400. A few of the lucky surviving labels were selected to be what are called "Masterbrands" — brands that were "mandated to serve as umbrella identities over a range of product forms." Dove was one of them.

Dove would now make the jump from being just a soap to being a brand that covered all sorts of products: shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, and so on. No longer could Dove simply advertise itself as the best moisturizing soap on the market. And instead of trying to craft a complicated brand image that simultaneously made the company appear to be the best at hair care, skin care, and controlling body odour, Unilever decided to take a different tack.

Unilever decided, instead, that Dove should stand for a point of view.

All that was left to do was figure out what, exactly, Dove's point of view would be. Dove's global brand director, Silvia Lagnado, found it when her research found that women worldwide were discontent with the way "young, white, blonde, and thin" were constantly equated with beauty. After consulting with leading experts in psychiatry and women's views of beauty, Dove honed its message and found a new niche: advertising to "real women." Soon,

unconventionally pretty ladies were all over the advertising, telling the world about the very real tragedy of women not believing they were beautiful.

Dove has ridden the *Campaign for Real Beauty* wave for around a decade now, but there are signs that people are growing disenchanted. The company's 2013 "Real Beauty Sketches" ad was one advertisement that drew consumer backlash.

The problem with Dove's message that women need to have more confidence in their looks, critics say, is that it still upholds the idea that women's beauty is of utmost importance, albeit in a warm and fuzzy way. In the sketches ad, others have argued, it's clear that the (mostly white and slender) women subjects equate beauty with being even more slender, not to mention younger.

Some also pointed out that Unilever is selling "real beauty" even while it sells products like Slim-Fast and Axe, a line whose identity is in part built on the idea that body spray is irresistible to well-endowed, bikini-clad women.

Dove, of course, isn't the only company that has taken criticism for selling products by using a woman-friendly message. Pantene's "Labels Against Women" ad suffered criticism from consumers who saw it as manipulative. And Goldieblox, a toy company that says it sells "engineering toys for girls," likewise raised questions about the ethics of selling feminism.

Has Dove overplayed the real beauty hand? Decide for yourself by studying the print, billboard and television ads in this Body of Work.

Appendix 2

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/09/sorry-dove-personal-care-product-choose-beautiful-campaign>

Sorry Dove, empowerment isn't a personal care product

The Choose Beautiful campaign's promise to boost your self-esteem is cynical – it just wants you to choose Dove



'Dove has mastered the art of passing off somewhat passive-aggressive and patronising advertising as super-empowering, ultra PR-able social commentary.'

Photograph: Sarah Lee for the Guardian

Thu 9 Apr 2015 09.31 EDT

“Do you think you’re beautiful?” I ask my girlfriend, as we’re about to eat dinner. “Or do you think you’re just, like, kinda average really?” There ensues a silence that is above-average in awkwardness as she glares at me. I decide it’s probably wise to clarify the question. “Look,” I say, pushing two plates towards her. “Beauty is a choice – and the power of this choice is in your hands. Pick plate one if you think you’re beautiful. Pick

plate two if you think you're average. Hashtag ChooseBeautiful." Long story short, she yelled at me until the food got cold.

The moral of this story is that you shouldn't try to conduct dubious self-esteem experiments at home; you should leave them to multinational corporations. More specifically, you should leave them to Dove, which has mastered the art of passing off somewhat passive-aggressive and patronising advertising as super-empowering, ultra PR-able social commentary. The personal care brand has just released a film called Choose Beautiful, in which it sets out to "prove that beauty is a choice – and the power of this choice is in your hands". Yeah, sorry, I didn't make that sentence up. Dove, to its credit, set about proving its hypothesis via a more sophisticated mechanism than dinner plates; it used doors. The brand put signs saying "beautiful" and "average" above adjacent entrances to public buildings in five different cities. Then they turned on their cameras and recorded what happened next.

What happened next was that the vast majority of women they filmed walked through the door marked "average", conveniently validating a survey by Dove that shows 96% of women rate themselves as average-looking. I can't give you any anecdotal data about how many men think they're beautiful, unfortunately, because there weren't any men in the video. I don't know what Dove did with all the men who wanted to get into the building but, let's be honest, the methodology of the experiment isn't really the point. The point is you watch the film, feel sort of sad about how hegemonic ideals of beauty impact women's self-esteem, feel sort of warm and fuzzy about Dove, and tweet about all these feelings you're having with the hashtag #ChooseBeautiful. And then, because this is an advertisement, the ultimate point is that you feel empowered to buy more Dove products next time you're at the shops. After all, beauty is a choice – and the power of this choice is sometimes conveniently located in the body-wash section at Boots.

This isn't the first time that Dove has tried to flog its products through social-media-friendly pseudo-science. Indeed, it has conducted a number of similar, and wildly successful, experiments over the last few years, and has pretty much perfected a formula of calculated social experiment + statistics + sad background music + earnest message

about beauty ideals. And it appears to be a very profitable formula. Dove's videos don't just get millions of views, they apparently sell a lot of product. Unilever's website notes: "Part of the success of our Dove Self-Esteem Project has been an increased willingness among consumers to spread the brand's positive message and to purchase Dove's products." In 2014, Dove was ranked by Kantar as the world's eighth most valuable personal-care brand, with an estimated value of \$4.8bn.

Choose Beautiful looks set to continue to prove the profitability of Dove's proprietary brand of empowerment. The video was launched on Tuesday and has already had about 2m views on YouTube. It has also had gushing write-ups from the media. Indeed, the word "empowerment" has been bandied around so much in relation to the advert that I can't help feeling that someone needs to make an advert explaining what it actually means. In the meantime, here's my own public service announcement: advertisements aren't empowering.

Ads can be entertaining, they can be thought-provoking, they can be inspiring. But, please, let's not call them empowering. They come with an agenda and that agenda is to sell you a product. So, sorry to break it to everyone, but your Deep Moisture Nourishing Body Wash doesn't really care about you or your self-esteem. And your cucumber and green tea deodorant doesn't give a damn about nurturing your confidence. Ultimately the aim of campaigns like this is not for you to choose beautiful, it's for you to choose Dove.