

Describe an advertising campaign that has caught your attention and explain why

An advertising campaign that has caught my attention, which has appeared over a range of media, is the Dove “Campaign for Real Beauty” marketing campaign which has been running for just over three years in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada. The “Campaign for Real Beauty” was launched by Dove, the personal care brand in 2004 by Ogilvy & Mather and Edelman Public Relations Worldwide with the principle aim to celebrate the physical variation embodied by all women and to inspire them to have the confidence to be comfortable with themselves. The launched advertisements all featured “normal” women of all different ages, shapes and sizes, all depicting the fact that you do not have to have the characteristics of a supermodel to feel beautiful. There has been a range of media used to advertise this important message across the media industry, including print media (namely in women’s fashion magazines), television adverts and also a short film entitled “Evolution” which showed the process of excessive editing and “photo-shopping” a model endures during a photo shoot, proving that the “perfection” we see and strive for in everyday life is actually, in fact, false. All of the advertisements from the campaign have caught the attention of the public and the media, especially because the increase of pressure on young women to look like the “perfect” celebrities and supermodel that the media praise and idolise is an incredibly important issue in the Western world at the moment. Before Dove released the “Campaign for Real Beauty” campaign, there was little or no support in the encouragement of celebrating womanly figures. The campaign became a huge hit with women across the world, as they now had inspiration to embrace themselves instead of striving to be the impossibly thin supermodels that were depicted across the media daily.

The values and ideology of this campaign are quite clear – to encourage women to celebrate and embrace their bodies. As a consumer and audience, we are continuously bombarded with images of celebrities and supermodel (nearly all from Hollywood) whom we see looking glamorous, thin and content with their lives. Over the past couple of years the public have become almost unhealthily obsessed with this lifestyle, and many women try to emulate these celebrity looks, showing that the media has contributed to this increased obsession to be thin. The Dove “Campaign for Real Beauty” has, from the start, had the vision to diminish this obsession, and has succeeded; sales of the Dove products rose by a staggering 700% after the campaign was launched in 2004. This incredibly positive feedback from the audience that the Dove institution received gave the message to the institution that what the public needed was a realistic and encouraging role model in the beauty industry that encouraged women to be positive and confident with their looks. This is the reason why the campaign is still running for Dove after almost three years, and why they have now branched into a sub-sector of the “Campaign for Real Beauty”, with new products supporting older women and illustrating that Dove is “pro-age”.

However, the “Campaign for Real Beauty” has received many backlashes, as recent Canadian public opinion polls show that 67% of viewers find the campaign illicit, with 8 out of 10 males in the 28-45 age group finding the television ads “offensive”. The campaign also frequently draws the wrong impression from those online, and in October 2005, the FCC reported several thousand complaints from viewers, however no action has ever been made to ban or forbid the advertisements on television or print media that appears in magazines and newspapers. Despite these criticisms, many groups continue to endorse the campaign, and media experts on the whole consider the campaign to be hugely successful.

When flicking through a woman’s magazine, coming across an advert for the Dove campaign happens frequently; often a double page spread. Also, looking online it is not difficult to find images of the print media that appears in these magazines, and I have found three that I particularly think embody a strong representation of the values of the campaign. The first image shows a striking woman who has the average body of a typical woman: voluptuous and curvy. However, in the modelling industry, this body type would be considered as “plus size” and wouldn’t be seen as thin enough to model. The audience are asked their own opinion of “what do you think?” and are given two choices – “oversized?” or “outstanding?” – the two opinions of the modelling industry and the real world. Ironically, she is adopting quite a model-esque pose with both hands resting on her hips, her chest slightly forward, and a “flirtatious” look on her face.

The second image is of five women, all representing “real women” and their bodies. Every woman in the image is facially and physically happy, depicting strong emotions of happiness, despite the fact that they are wearing only underwear in front of others – which is typically known as a very daunting experience for any woman. This happiness also represents confidence in themselves, and encourages those that see the image to emulate this feeling of confidence – the idea is that if they can do it, so can you. The text on the far right of the image also suggests that the Dove products should only be used on “real curves” (i.e. real women), as it is only “tested on real curves”.

The third and final image is of four women, quite similar to the second image, where all four have a natural and fresh expression, again illustrating that they are completely comfortable and confident with their bodies; in fact so much so they are in natural poses that we would usually believe to be unflattering for our body shape. However this naturalism helps the audience to relate to these women, which in turn makes the gap between the confident women they see in the image and themselves a lot smaller.

All of the three images contain the Dove logo and name to give some brand recognition to the audience, however only two feature images of the actual product, and even then the image is not the focus of the advertisement. What appears to be the focus of the advertisement are in fact the women in the image, which suggests that the Dove brand realise how much of an important issue they have raised and want to continue to keep it in the lime light and in the media for as long as possible.

In conclusion, the Dove “Campaign for Real Beauty” has been a media favourite for many years mainly because of their controversial take on what Dove believe to be beautiful and whom they believe their products are for. This campaign has broken the mould in the beauty industry and helped many women with self esteem issues to not only make themselves feel confident in their own skin, but also pass on this confidence to other women.