

DOVE:
**A PURPOSE-DRIVEN BRAND
IN A CRISIS OF SINCERITY**

*The Struggle to Navigate Rising
Expectations of Corporate Responsibility*



Dove's 2017 "T-Shirt Ad"



So I'm scrolling through Facebook and this is the #dove ad that comes up.... ok so what am I looking at....

👍 506 💬 1K ➡ 9.4K

About Dove and Unilever



Dove



Unilever

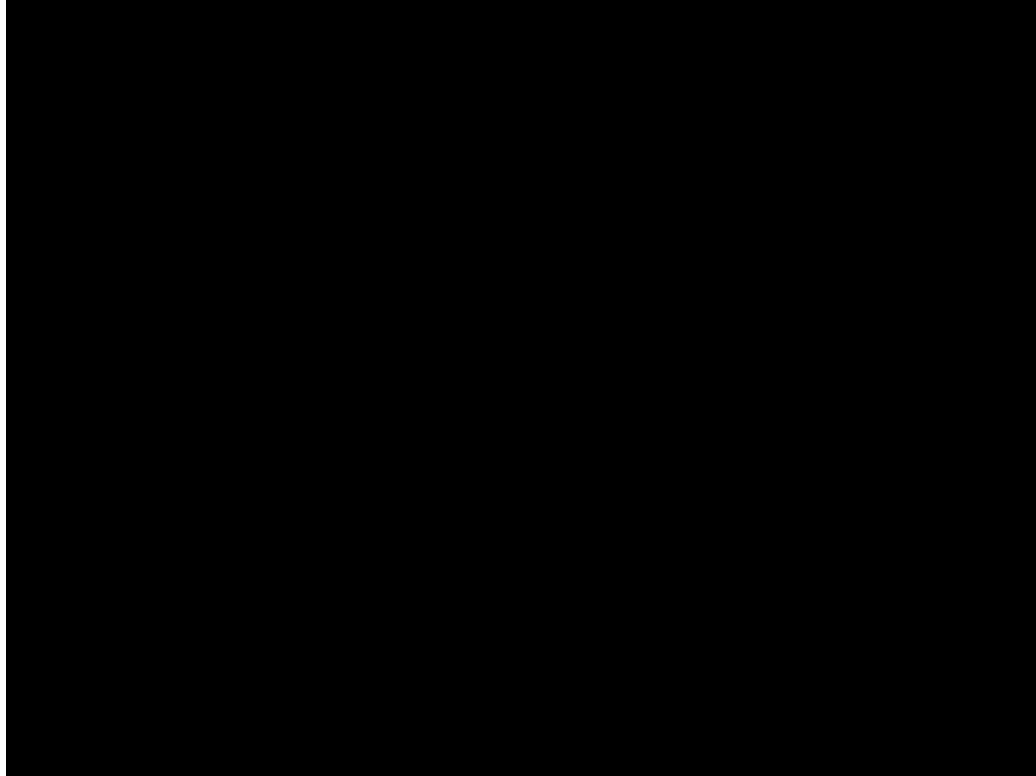
Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty



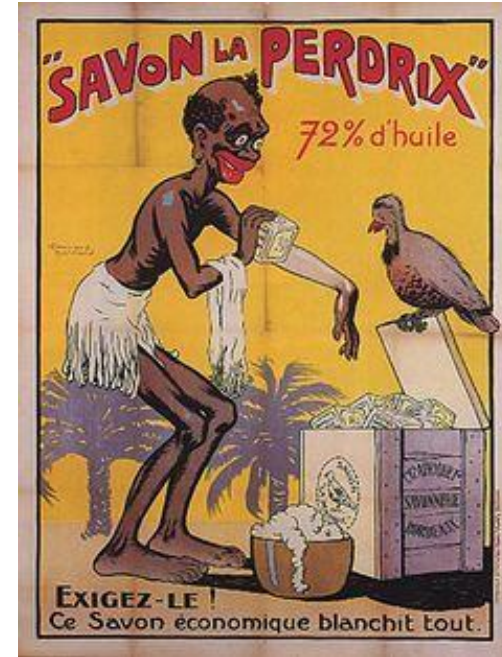
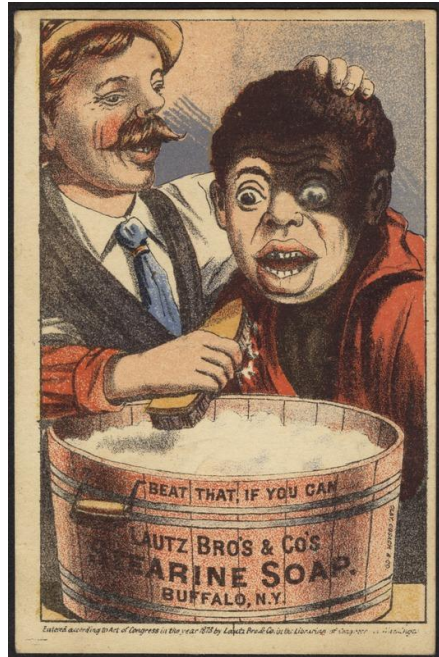
- Award-winning campaign that began in 2004
- Goal of boosting sales and connecting with women at an emotional level
- Initiatives include The Dove Self-Esteem Project, artistic exhibitions, and more



Dove's Iconic "Evolution" Ad (2006)



The Soap Industry's Troubling Past



Corporate Character





“To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society,” - Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock

- CSR and corporate activism are rising in importance
- Sustainability ingrained in Unilever’s values
- Real Beauty and CSR are central to Dove’s identity



Dove's Reputation



- “Most trustworthy brand” for Millennial and Gen-Z populations
- Rated highly for “Has a purpose I believe in”
- Fell out of YouGov’s Top 10 Best-Perceived Brands by Women

Ybrands 2018 Top 10 Most Trustworthy Brands



Previous Incidents



“Okay Dove... One racist ad makes you suspect. Two racist ads make you kind guilty” - Keith Boykin, CNN political correspondent

2011



Dove VisibleCare body wash ad

2014



Product labeled for “normal to dark skin”

Dove's 2017 "T-Shirt Ad"



Timeline of 2017 T-Shirt Ad



Oct. 6, 2017

Dove posts ad to Facebook page

Blake shares ad to her personal page

Ad goes viral

Oct. 8, 2017

The Independent UK runs op-ed
criticizing Dove

The New York Times publishes article
covering incident

Oct. 10, 2017

Lola Ogunyemi, the Nigerian
model featured in ad, defends
Dove in The Guardian

Oct. 7, 2017

#BoycottDove re-emerges on Twitter

Dove pulls ad and tweets partial apology

Oct. 9, 2017

Dove publishes statement on
Facebook elaborating on original
partial apology

Social Media Response



44.55 % OF MENTIONS HAD NEGATIVE SENTIMENT



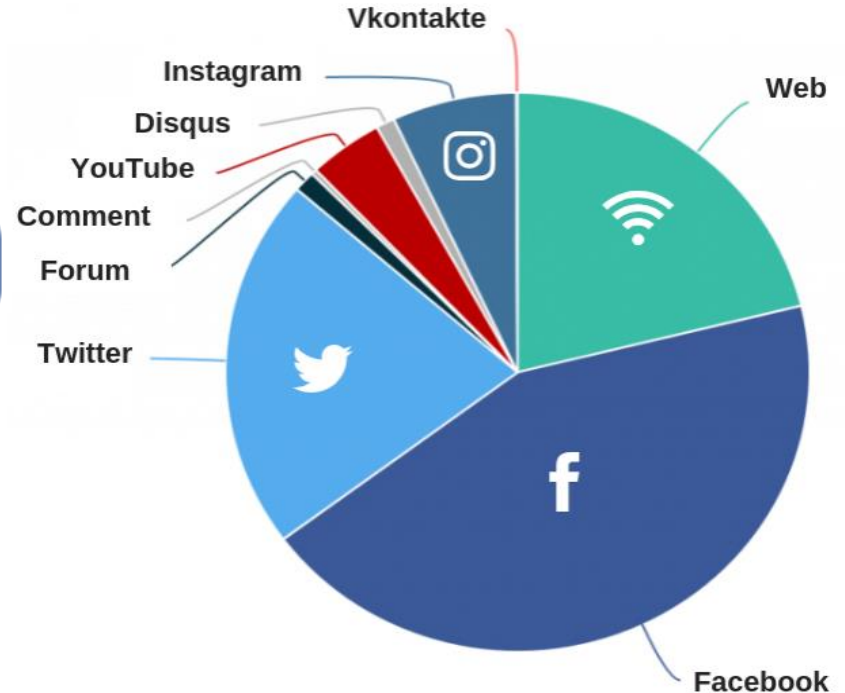
MORE THAN 40% OF POSTS DISCUSSING THE AD MENTIONED DOVE ALONG WITH A VARIANT OF THE WORD "RACIST"



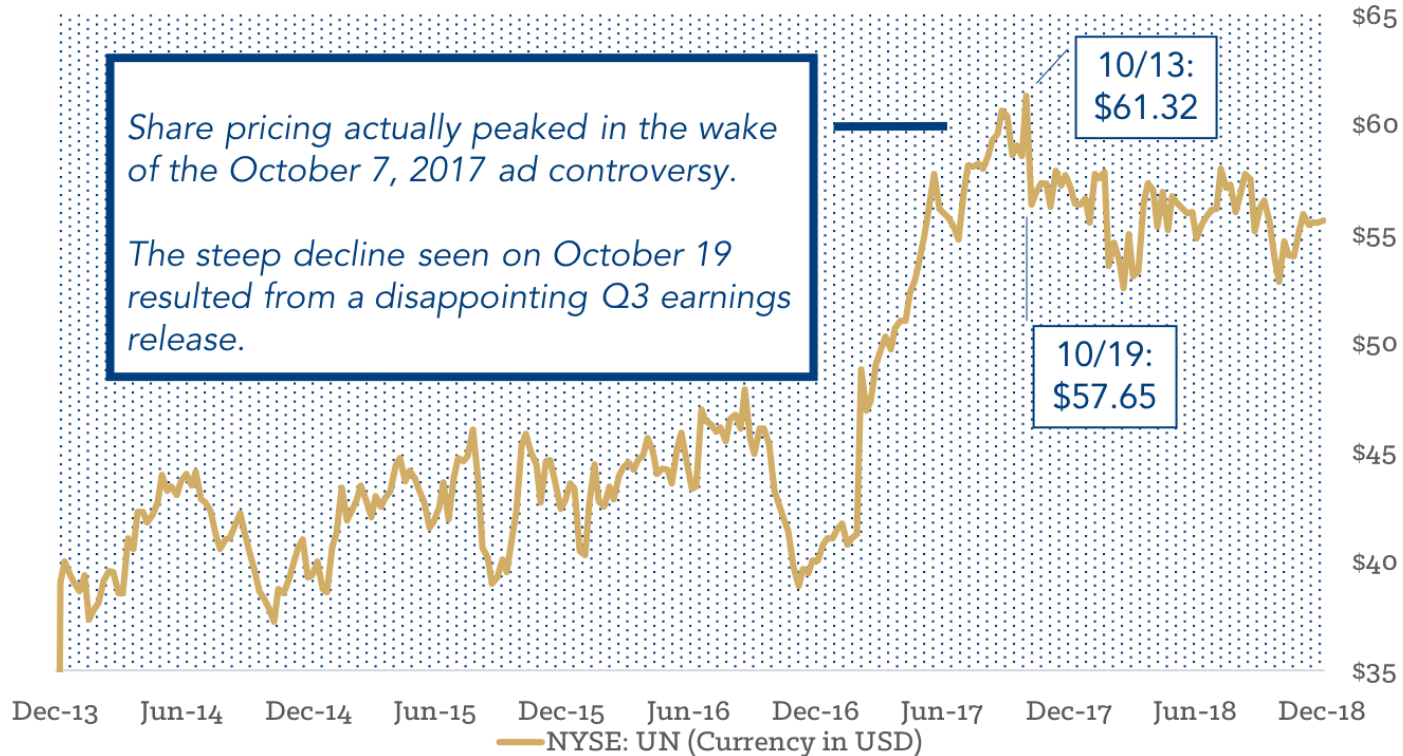
30,000 POSTS DISCUSSED THE AD BETWEEN OCTOBER 6 – OCTOBER 13 (SHARES NOT INCLUDED)



Mentions Per Source



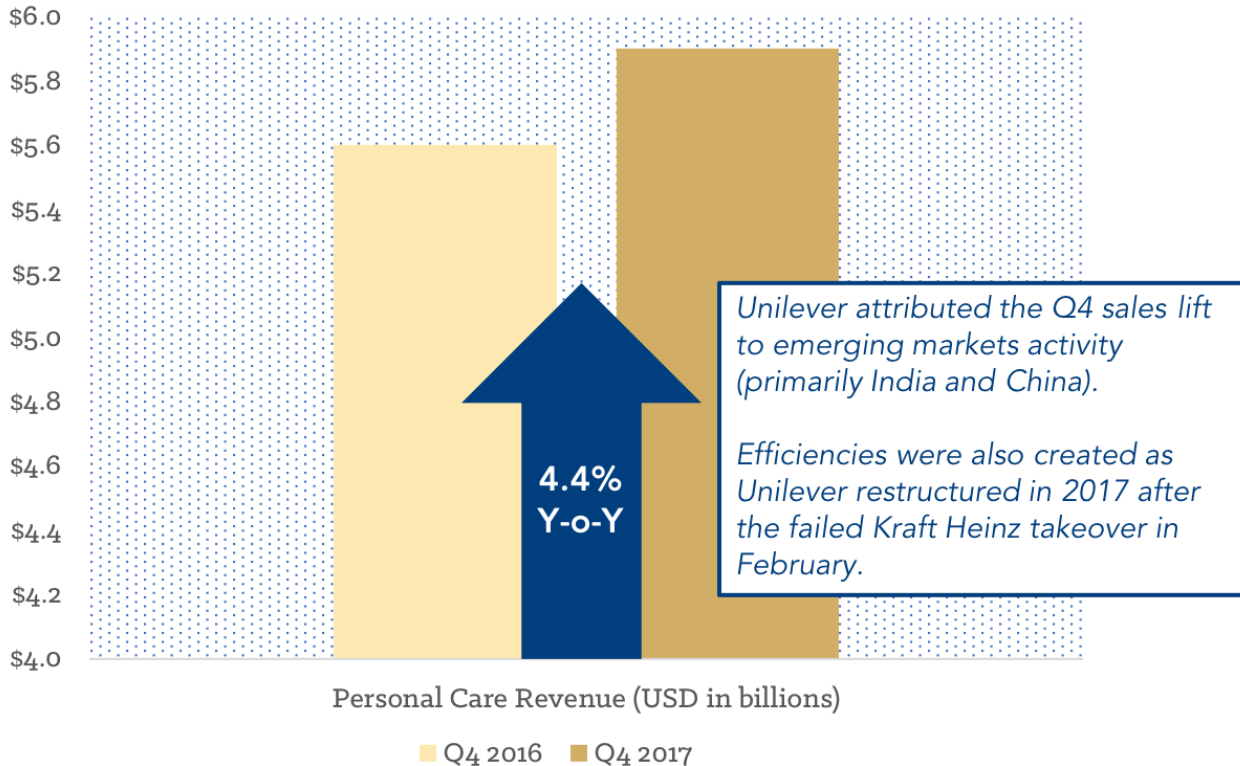
Financial Implications - Unilever Stock



Financial Implications - Sales Growth



Unilever Q4 2017 Sales Growth













“Consumer of Color Dollar”



THE POWER OF THE MULTICULTURAL CONSUMER DOLLAR



Categories where Consumers of Color exert outsized influence on total spend

CATEGORY	SPEND BY CONSUMERS OF COLOR	TOTAL SPEND	% OF TOTAL SPEND ATTRIBUTABLE TO CONSUMERS OF COLOR
 DRY VEGETABLE & GRAINS	\$472.3M	\$941.2M	 50.18%
 BABY FOOD	\$817M	\$1.9B	 42.76%
 PERSONAL SOAP & BATH NEEDS	\$1.3B	\$3.04B	 41.64%
 FRESHENERS & DEODORIZERS	\$774.1M	\$2.02B	 38.29%
 SHELF-STABLE JUICES & DRINKS	\$2.3B	\$6.2B	 37.51%

Nielsen’s Consumer of Color dollar includes spending by African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and respondents identifying as “Other”

Looking Ahead



- The failsafe of a “trust bank” is a false assumption
- Consumer tolerance likely to wane
- External socio-political factors important to consider
- Corporate communicators must consider past, present, and future
- Proactive listening and two-way communication needed

Applying the Page Principles



Page Principle #1: Prove it With Action



“Public perception of an enterprise is determined 90 percent by what it does and 10 percent by what it says.”

- **Organizations must align what they say with what they do**
- **Be transparent with consumers**



Page Principle #2: Listen to Stakeholders



“To serve the enterprise well, understand what the public wants and needs and advocate for engagement with all stakeholders...”

- **Backlash is inevitable, but companies are still responsible for listening**
- **Listen to and engage with underrepresented communities**





Prove it With Action

- Install mechanisms to understand how communications will be received by varied audiences.
- Make company leadership more visible and accessible.



Listen to Stakeholders

- Develop a two-way feedback system.
- Ensure that social listening creates actionable insights.
- Leaders must seek out diverse perspectives and incorporate them into their decision-making process.
- Always reassess, revisit strategy, and innovate approaches.

Discussion Questions



Living an Authentic Mission



Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty aims to strike a balance between purpose and profits for the company. Is it possible for Real Beauty to be an authentic campaign for social change if it is ultimately driven by the need to increase sales?

Living an Authentic Mission



What factors contribute to authenticity?

Does Dove embody them?

If not, can you think of a company that does?

Living an Authentic Mission



Considering this is the third incident for Dove, does authenticity matter?

Listening to Stakeholder Concerns



Do you think that Dove responded appropriately in each instance and demonstrated that it was actively listening to consumers concerns?

If yes, please explain why. If no, please suggest strategies for improvement.

Listening to Stakeholder Concerns



With social media, everyone's a critic and it is unrealistic for companies to be concerned with every online detractor. How do organizations discern what they should take seriously and when to respond?

Listening to Stakeholder Concerns



Given the growing importance of corporate activism and heightened socio-political tensions in the U.S., and worldwide, how did a brand like Dove “miss the mark” so drastically?

Navigating Consumer Expectations



Is it possible for multinational corporations like Dove-Unilever to pursue corporate activism and social responsibility and have such efforts perceived by the public as genuine?

Navigating Consumer Expectations



Despite its best intentions to promote Real Beauty with the 2017 T-shirt ad, Dove offended many consumers. If you were the CCO of an organization, is it better to take a stance on a social cause even if you risk making a mistake, like Dove?

Or is standing on the sidelines just as risky?

Navigating Consumer Expectations



Is the value consumers place on social value and corporate responsibility a meaningful shift or is it just another trend?

Does a company's CSR activities and brand purpose influence your purchasing habits?