

Dove's *No Digital Distortion Mark* Campaign: An Integrated Marketing Communication Case Study

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Unilever is a personal care brand that launched Dove in 1957 in the U.S., promising women a moisturizing formula, building a strong identity centered on self-confidence, and highlighting real beauty (Unilever, 2023). Dove expanded to 55 countries between 1991 and 1994, such as Brazil, China, South Africa, etc. Dove developed its product line to include deodorants, body washes, and lotions between 1995 and 2000. The *No Digital Distortion* movement was launched on June 26, 2018, so women around the world can view themselves through a natural lens, without image distortions. Committed to being authentic, the movement's purpose steers away from unrealistic beauty standards that pressure perfection, which may cause mental health issues because of AI filter usage. In April 2021, the *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign was introduced, showcasing real women in real time with no digital AI alterations. This essay will analyze Dove's success using the *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign as an example and focus on strategies for communicating with key publics, developing consistent messages, and utilizing integrated media channels to promote authenticity and real beauty. Lastly, I will provide feedback on areas of improvement based on personal experience as a buyer to strengthen Dove's objectives.

Dove's key publics include women, young girls, and parents. Launching *Real Beauty* in 2004, Dove's communication strategy is cohesive messaging through various campaigns, such as the *Self-Esteem Project*, the *No Digital Distortion Mark*, *Turn Your Back*, and partnerships with singers like Lizzo. Weidman (2020) exclaims that Dove has maintained success by adapting to new media environments.

There are several objectives for Dove's *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign. Some objectives include, but are not limited to, the following. Dove consistently practices transparency by labeling unedited images for ads. Dove empowers younger audiences, such as Gen Z, by

demonstrating healthy examples of self-identity, bringing awareness to mental health issues and body comparisons. Another priority of the brand is helping consumers practice media literacy by recognizing how digital tools impact self-perception and insecurities. Dove also utilizes storytelling elements in PR to stand out on social media platforms and against competitors.

Primary target audience members are Gen Z women ages 13 to 24. This group is inclined to spend the most time on TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and being exposed to various filters. In society, they may face unrealistic beauty standards and pressures to conform, affecting their confidence. Dove's research through the *Self-Esteem Project* indicates that about 80% of young women have used a filter by age 13, altering their natural appearance. Parents and educators are the secondary target audience because they are more likely to be concerned about the impact filters have on their loved ones.

The main idea of Dove's *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign is to "portray women as they are in real life." Their featured images of diverse women showcase their natural bodies. Dove's message strategy caters to pathos, persuading consumers to continue buying their products by evoking strong emotional responses and values. Various emotions can be inspired due to unrelieved societal pressures and manipulated results. Considering the Communication Process Model, Dove has to be strategic as the sender to ensure its core message is not misinterpreted. Dove made a promise before the launch of their campaign to never promote unattainable beauty standards.

Dove has served as a community advocate, participating on social media channels and combating challenges posed by AI distortion filters, which are a major threat to women's and young girls' self-esteem. Audience members decode the message through their interpretation and emotional, visual, and ethical cues. In continuation to spread their message across platforms like

TikTok, Dove competed against the viral “Bold Glamour” filter in March 2023. This is a great example of a cultural cue because Dove, as a brand, is practicing social responsibility in a digital world. This led to ongoing discourse about digital beauty trends (Bermingham, 2023). Dove’s partnership with Lizzo motivated younger audience members, the recipients of the message, to reject beauty filters (DeGennaro, 2023).

Dove's *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign is a great example of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) because it uses multiple channels to convey core messages: authenticity, confidence, and mental health awareness. Owned media like Dove.com and the *Self-Esteem Project* reflect how the brand is in control of the website and distribution of tools (Dove, 2018; Dove, 2024). Shared media, such as Dove’s TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube channels, among others, strengthen its voice through virality and influencer partnerships. This form of media also helps reach younger audience members, encouraging participation. Dove’s response to TikTok’s “Bold Glamour” filter is an example of earned media because it created global attention due to being AI-driven (Campaigns of the World, 2024).

Dove was one of the first brands to respond, which helped position itself in the cultural conversation about mental health and beauty standards. Paid media would be any campaign content (videos) and advertisements that support Dove’s messages. All channels work together to reinforce Dove’s objectives. Advertising, public relations, social media, influencer partnerships, and user engagement unite a consistent brand identity: real beauty. IMC advances Dove's reputation as a versatile brand that prioritizes its consumers and produces high-quality skin and haircare products.

From an Integrated Marketing Communications perspective, Dove’s *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign illustrates the brand’s ability to be authentic across various channels

and media. The *Real Beauty* platform strengthens Dove's credibility and determination to provide women and young girls with great skincare and strong synergy, such as educational resources (owned media). By catering to primary and secondary audiences, Dove has strategically increased its visibility through earned and paid media. As an inspiring PR professional, I recommend the following for the campaign's limitations to further improve the brand's success. Dove could benefit from implementing more diverse cultures and models for future campaigns. Women from different backgrounds and regions, sharing their testimonies, will extend the connection with consumers. Regarding social media trends, I would focus on partnerships with influencers who value and are immersed in the skincare industry. Having crisis communication plans available, tailored to combat misinterpretations or perceptions, will also strengthen IMC objectives. This could look like addressing misinformation about any skincare product, such as the safety of the ingredients. Lastly, to promote productive discussion, I highly recommend utilizing and relying on trending social media platforms, participating in the comment sections regularly, and answering questions. Concluding, Dove's *No Digital Distortion Mark* campaign is a great example of a brand combating AI usage, addressing mental health and self-esteem concerns for its consumers, and maintaining clear, consistent messages across multiple channels in a digital world.

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