

# Dove and axe campaigns controversy



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Unilever: Axe / Dove Controversy**

Unilever is a leading multinational corporation which was formed by Anglo-Dutch cooperation in 1930 as a result of merging the Soap maker Lever brother and Dutch company Margarine Unie. The merger resulted to a large export of palm oil product which promoted the growth of the company. The Company has expanded since then opening branches all over the world. It has so many outlets in the world and has a large share of the world consumer product market with several brands in the catalog. The company also owns foods and beverage brands, cleaning brands and other personal care brands. The company has a large work force of more than 180, 000 people in the world with revenue of more than US\$58 billion. The company was established from Rotterdam and London companies which also act as the mother companies for all other branches in the world. (Unilever, 2008b)

Recently the company has been engulfed in one of the most heated controversies in the history of business world arising from its advertisement. The company has been engaged in various criticisms before but the recent one seems to have attracted the attention of unlikely quarters from politicians to the human rights activists. It has become a subject to social conversation all over the world due to its mode of advertisement. There have been many blogs in the internet that have been used against the company and its advertisement strategy especially the recent one Axe/dove advertisement which has attracted most criticism even before they make their impact on the market.

The market of the two brands Axe and Dove have attracted the advocacy groups who have been campaigning for the need to have commercial-free childhood advertisements. The campaign has in form of writing several letters to the company in order to force it to withdraw the advertisement from the market.

What is in the controversy about these products?

The dove product advertisement has been used as a marketing strategy that is said to be promoting real beauty. In the advertisement there is a dove that is promising the girls a good care if they use the products. In this regard no one can understand how a dove can promise the girl a good care. The company has however described the advertisement as showing the need to have real beauty rather than acting as an advisement to encourage girls to use the products and has therefore started a campaign that is aimed at funning projects for girl child.

But this is contradicted by another advertisement of its products Axe deodorant which has been described as having an effect of ‘ epitomizing the sexist and degrading making that has been undermining girls’. This has been shone to be a potential harm to the health development of grid as contradicted to the other advertisement of the Dove which promotes health self-image for all women. (Newman, 2007)

The company has been on the defense saying that the Dove brand is meant to show women the need of feel beautiful always which has been expressed by wide way in the today’s stereotyping of beauty and it is meant to inspire women to be taking car of them. For this reason the company has created <https://assignbuster.com/dove-and-axe-campaigns-controversy/>

Dove Self-Esteem Fund that is meant to educate and act as inspiration to girls. On the other hand the Axe campaign shows 'the mating game' and expressed the desire of men to get noticed by women. (High, 2007)

The above advertisement has been caused a lot of criticisms for the company not only from the civil activists but also from political arena. It has been described as the higher hypocrisy in marketing and there have been threat of taking of civil action by not allowing the Dove Fund to take seminars to school unless the Axe advertisement is changed. Let us analyze the effect of the advertisement and the impact they may have on the company and its businesses.

#### SWOT analysis of the advertisement

Being a large multinational company, there are several advantages that the company can enjoy amid such a criticism of the advertisement. At the same time there are some weakness in the controversy that may make the company lose its credibility in the market and therefore loss of sales. Let us look closely at the SWOT analyze of ht advertisement and their implications.

#### Strengths

Unilever is a large multinational company that has been in the market for along time now. In this regard, the company has been able to establish its operation in all the markets and therefore it has a world wide appeal. Due to the fact that is has been able to operate in many countries, the controversy may not cause any effect on it sales. This is due to the fact that the company is known for famous brands that have been satisfying the

needs of the consumers. Therefore there may not be many customers who will be affected by the controversy and who are likely to change their preference of its brands due to the controversy. Therefore the current controversy may not affect its international market though it may affect some of the regions where this campaign is concentrated. Those who are involved in the criticism may not be able to reach all the regions of the world. With such wide of brands in the market, the company sales may not be affected even if it withdraws just one brand in the market. (Pandya, 2001)

The company has been able to cut a niche in the market and therefore no any amount of criticism that may destroy its images. There has been a new trend in the market where the value of a product is not evaluated by the level of criticism on the level of support that the products receive but by the level of individual satisfaction on the brand. For this reason a lot of people may not be looking at the controversy that has been created around the brands but they would rather focus on the effect fullness for the brands.

Since there has not been any criticism about the product to the consumers, there is likelihood that it will not have effect on the marketing of the product. All the consumers of the brands have not presented any complain to the company about the effectfulnes of the brand and therefore they are likely to ignore any call not to use the brand. There could have been a negative effect on the marketing of the brand if there have been reported physical effects on the users. But the controversy is surrounding the advertisements and therefore it is not likely to have any effect on the marketing. In most cases the marketing of a product is affected by the effects of the particular product to the consumers. If the criticism is based on the health effect of the brands,

<https://assignbuster.com/dove-and-axe-campaigns-controversy/>

it may have raised serious concerns about the marketing of the product but the controversy is centered about ‘hypocrisy’ which does not attract the attention for the uses of the products.

Another strength that the company has on the position of the brand is in the target consumers. The company is targeting the young people who are likely to be influenced most by the advertisement. The specific target of ‘the mating game’ is one of the most influential things that are likely to attract many young people to the product. It should be understood that these young people do not understand the effects of what you can argue all day on ethics in advertisement. They are simply attracted to what they can relate with and what makes them feel like others. Therefore they are not likely to change their perception about the product based on the criticism on the advertisement. (Georges, 1999)

Most of those who are involved in the criticism are not within age bracket of the target customers of the products. Most of those who are involved in the criticism of the product are not young and even if they coordinate comparing to send letters to the company not many young people are likely to send their letters. Therefore the strength that the company has on this advertisement is that the target customers are not the one who are involved in the criticism and are not likely to change their perception of the products. This is not likely to have a negative effect on marketing of both brands to the target customers. (Unilever, 2007a)

It has also been observed that not all people are in crisis of the campaign. Some have described it as a genius market strategic that is likely to lead to

high sales for the product. Therefore the company is likely to get positive support from those who do not see it in negative view.

### Weaknesses

At the same time that there are some weaknesses that are linked to the criticism that the company has been receiving. There is a likelihood that the conflict will affect the image of the product in the market.

The strength of the brand in the market depends on the positive notes that it receives from the market. Positive notes are likely to affect the perception for the brand in the market by all consumers. It has been shown that bad perception on products is likely to have a negative impact on the sales. Therefore the more positive comment that a product receives from the market, the more positive impact it is likely to get from the market.

In this regard, the criticism is likely to have negative impacts on the perception of the company in the market. In this sense the customers are likely to change their perception about the products of the company in the market. The company has been enjoying a good perception in the market based on the quality of products that it has been offering to the consumer. However this is changing with time as the consumer becomes more aware of their rights. One of the characteristics of modern consumers is that they have become more powerful in the market and are likely to have an impact on the way a company makes its sales. Therefore the current criticism of the company may impose a consumer led campaign that is likely to tarnish the name of the company. In this regard, the company is likely to lose a lot in case the consumers change their perception. (Golin, 2007)

<https://assignbuster.com/dove-and-axe-campaigns-controversy/>

There is also a likelihood that the current controversy is likely to affect the sales of the product due to the influence the civil activists may have on the company. Most of those who are criticizing the company are parents who have a lot of influence on their children. As such they are likely to influence their children depending on the comments that they make about the products. In this regard they are likely to influence their children not to buy the products with the fact that most of them especially the females are unlikely to buy it. In this regard the brands are unlikely to acquire new customers. The survival of brand in the market depends on the way it attracts, and retains new consumers. With such criticism, the brands are not likely to attract new customers which may have an effect of reducing the overall consumption of the brand. (McManis, 2007)

The criticism on the brand may extend it on other brands on the company. Once the costumers changes there perception about the company, they are likely to change their overall perception of the products of the company. In this sense the company may start recording low sales even on other brands. The increased use of information technology and the posting of the comments about the products in the internet are likely to attract the attention of more people which is likely to have damage on the reputation of the product in the market. In this regard there is likelihood of having a worldwide customer changed perception on the brands which is likely to affect their sales all over the world. The ‘onslaught’ videos that have been released on the crisis are likely to affect the operation of the company.

Already there is a threat by civil groups that they will stop the Dove-Fund from holding seminars in schools and other area whether the company

<https://assignbuster.com/dove-and-axe-campaigns-controversy/>



targets the young people. This is likely to have a negative effect on the programs of the company and in a way may lead to disruption of its normal flow of programs or a failure of the whole program all together.

### Opportunity

There are a lot of opportunities that the company can still exploit in order to market its brand in the market. Already the company has clarified on the intention of the advertisements as being to encourage beauty and give women a reason to be more beautiful and the other being to show mating game and the desire for men to be also clean and attracted to women. In this regard the company has an opportunity to prove its critics wrong by appealing more to the target customer who may be affected by the controversy.

The company has already started the Dove-Fund which is taking care of the education for girl. This is one of the opportunities which the company can use in order to clear the air about its products and the criticism that it is getting from the activists. This is because under the program the company would be making a direct appeal to the consumer rather than the activists. The company should also start the same fund for men in order to embrace the youth. Through close interaction with the youth, the company is likely to presence the brands in the market and helps them to defy criticism of the brands. (Gillete, 2007)

There is also an opportunity of the company to change the name of the brand or to change the whole advertising strategy before the brand has devastating effect in the market. In this regard the company can the name of <https://assignbuster.com/dove-and-axe-campaigns-controversy/>

the brand in the market or change the advertising strategies if it sees that the brands are likely to cause negative effects in the market. This will give the company a time to preserve the brands in the market and also preserve the name of the company in face of the rising criticism.

The company can also produce another advertisement which contradicts the first ones and which gives a positive message as claimed by the activists. This would be in line with contradicting the issues that have been raised by the activists and to showing the genuineness of the company rather than the hypocrisy as has been expressed by the activists. This will help to save the company from the onslaught by the activists.

### Threats

There are many threats the company may be facing as a result of the advertisements. First it is to be understood that this is not the first criticism of the company and it has been criticized on other areas of being unethical in business. For example the company has been criticized of buying palm oil from dealers who have been destructing forest cover.

Therefore there is a threat of the current conflict attracting the attention of the consumer on all other conflicts that have been there about the company. This is likely to have a damaging effect on the name of the company especially at this time when the concept of ethics in business has taken root in consumers. (Moore, 2008)

There is a threat of the company making losses on the brand and withdrawing them from the market which may affect the operation of the company not only in the domestic market but also in the international market.