More than soap: How Dove is redifining beauty through advertisements

By SOPHIE MURRAY
Associate Arts & Life Editor

The products we use and the brands we stay loyal to are chosen for a reason. We love the price, how the products feel and the experience. But how often do we actually take the time to learn the background behind the brands we support?

Many companies are more than just the items they sell. They represent values, messages and impacts that reach far beyond the shelf.

The brand that sticks out to me? Dove. Yes, I am writing an article about a soap brand, but what they're really about goes far beyond the body care aisle.

The company has built a reputation that consistently promotes self-confidence, body positivity and the idea of real beauty across all of its campaigns.

I have been a Dove lover for a while. I use its products every day: bar soap, body wash, shampoo, conditioner and deodorant. Even my loofa is Dove.

Like many of us who fall into the same product routine, there is really no thought behind the brand's messaging. Why even find out if the products are working for us?

One day in my storytelling class, a Dove advertisement was shown as an example of what a good ad looks like: great storytelling, emotional impact and a valuable message.

That advertisement got me thinking. I had always loved Dove because of the quality of its products, but now I was realizing they stood for something bigger. The positive messaging convinced me this is a brand everyone should stand behind, not just buy from.

Yes, there are other brands out there with positive messaging and uplifting campaigns, but body care companies that truly support women of every shape, size and color are still surprisingly hard to find in the beauty industry.

The beauty standard that many brands rely on is rooted in fixing flaws. Covering imperfections, smoothing skin, shrinking bodies. The message behind brands is often subtle but clear: you need our products to make yourself more beautiful.

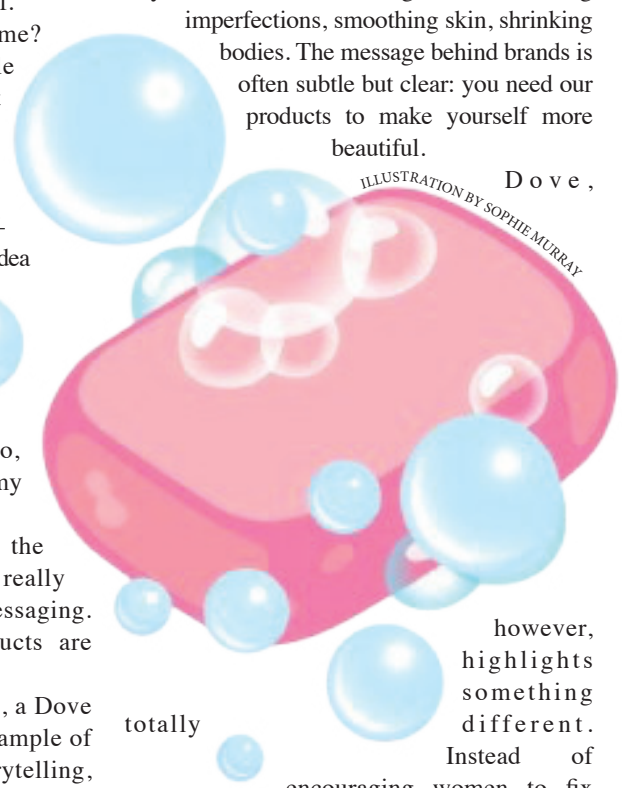
ILLUSTRATION BY SOPHIE MURRAY

Dove, however, highlights something totally different. Instead of encouraging women to fix themselves with its products, Dove encourages them to see themselves differently in the first place.

The advertisement my class watched that day was Dove's "Real Beauty Sketches" campaign. In the advertisement, real women were asked to describe themselves to an FBI forensics artist who drew a portrait of them based solely on their words.

Later, a stranger was asked to describe the same woman and the artist created a second portrait.

The difference between the two drawings was drastic. The womens self-descriptions were often far more critical, while the strangers' descriptions revealed softer, kinder and more accurate representations of themselves.

The campaign delivered a powerful message: women tend to see themselves through the lens of insecurity, while others see their beauty more clearly.

"It proved exactly what we suspected: that you're more beautiful than you think," Dove stated on its website. "So to help inspire the millions of women around the world who don't see their own beauty, we created a film showing the women's reactions to their portraits, and the impact of their refreshed view of themselves."

What is most striking about the advertisement is that you would never know Dove created it until the end of the video.

And that's what sets them apart. Dove's ads are not just meant to showcase its products but to shine light on what it means to be a woman in a world filled with unrealistic expectations.

Just as impactful, a lot of its ads target young girls as well.

In the Super Bowl LX, they created an advertisement titled "The Game is Ours." It opens with a girl looking in the mirror alongside the message: "One in two girls who quit sports are criticized for their body type."

From there, the ad shifts into a montage of girls joyfully playing sports — basketball, swimming, football — with the declaration "But our joy is louder." The campaign isn't just about sports; it's about encouraging girls to focus on what their bodies can do rather than how they look.

What makes campaigns like this so powerful is that Dove is reaching girls in times when insecurity can easily take over. So much of the beauty industry teaches women at a young age to criticize their bodies, compare themselves and believe that confidence is something they have to earn by looking a certain way.

Dove flips that message around. Instead of telling girls they need to change, Dove reminds them that they deserve to feel comfortable in their skin just the way they are. That kind of advertising doesn't just sell soap; it challenges the way society talks about beauty and gives young women permission to see themselves with more kindness.

So yes, this article is about Dove, a brand known for selling soaps and body care products. But it is not about what they're selling, it's about the messaging they've built over the years. The way they encourage girls and women to see themselves with more kindness and confidence.

Dove is setting the benchmark for other brands too, pushing the message that companies can be profitable while also being socially conscious, inclusive and empowering, making its impact go far beyond the body care aisle.

I watched the Turning Point USA half-time show, so you don't have to

By LILLIAN CURTIN
Opinion Editor

Well, apparently, I'm a glutton for punishment.

I decided to watch Turning Point USA's "All-American Halftime Show," just out of curiosity. Now I know why curiosity killed the cat, because this show killed my soul.

I love country music, so I will say that if I were judging it on vocals or stage presence alone, it would've been fine. But it had so much hatred embedded in it that it made it impossible to enjoy the show.

It was a jumpscare when Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth popped up with a message from "The Department of War," looking performative as hell, tossing around a football.

When the show started, you could hear the "audience." Yet, a few seconds in, the audience's cheer abruptly cuts out. Now, I'm not saying they for sure added it themselves, but I wouldn't be surprised if they did, especially after singer and headliner Kid Rock later admitted that the show was pre-recorded.

Singer Brantley Gilbert started off the show with a guitar solo of the National Anthem. It sounded great, but it didn't blow me away and give me the chills that Apple Music's Halftime Show national anthem did.

As I said, I love country music, and that does admittedly include the very cringey "rah beer, rah my horses." As a Catholic, I even find that I love the country gospel music. Sorry not sorry.

However, this was just too much. It felt like I was in a South Park episode. It was just so cringey and gave such a pretentious "I'm better than you because I drink beer and crap stars and stripes 'Merica!" vibe.

There's nothing wrong with being proud of your country. I love feeling patriotic. But this was shoving it down your throat as a form of competition. I love my country every day and don't need to compete with others to show it.

Gilbert then performed one of my favorite country songs "Dirt Road Anthem," a song originally sung by Jason Aldean. It was a great performance vocally.

Next to perform was singer Gabby Barrett, who is super talented. "I Hope," was a staple for me as a teenager in high school. Funny enough, both Barrett and singer Charlie Puth, who sang the "Star Spangled Banner" before the Super Bowl collaborated on the song together.

She went on to perform "One of the Good Ones," another one of my favorites. I know a lot of people were sure that the show was lip-synced, but I honestly don't think that Barrett, at least, lip-synced. I do wish she had sung "Footprints on the Moon," as that's what I consider her best song.

As much as I liked her performance in general, it just felt bland. She was just standing and singing, not really performing.

Country singer Lee Brice had a bit more stage presence, but he did in fact seem like he was lip-syncing at least the first song, "Drinking Class."

When he was done glorifying alcoholism, he name-dropped the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk and then started performing a new song called "Country Nowadays," which started with the lines, "I just want to catch my fish, drive my truck, drink my beer/ And not wake up to all this stuff I don't want to hear."

The irony of saying that, when you are in the most privileged group in this country, is absolutely mind-boggling. It seemed very out of touch. Most people can't escape what they "don't want to hear." Because while he's hearing it, other people are living it.

He then proceeds to sing, "It ain't easy being country/ In this country nowadays/ The direction the finger's pointing/ When everything goes up in flames/ Saying I'm some right-wing devil."

The victim complex and lack of self-awareness and accountability have to be genuinely so crazy for you to think that the reason you're being hated on is because of your accent or region.

Of course, the show was closed out by none other than washed-up singer Kid Rock. You know, the one who sang, "Young ladies, young ladies/ I like 'em underage, see/ Some say that's statutory/ But I say it's mandatory."

They could've found another headliner, perhaps one less pedophilic. It would've really helped their case. But instead, because Kid Rock has been such a huge name on the MAGA front, they chose him.

The show closed out with Kid Rock singing Cody Johnson's "Til you can't," with an ending dedication to Kirk.

After the performance, there was a tribute to Kirk in a montage. The montage included Kirk preaching about loving God and saying that after your relationship with God, getting married and having children should be your priorities in life.


ILLUSTRATION BY LILLIAN CURTIN

While I could see enjoying the performance for the music, it was just way too much propaganda.