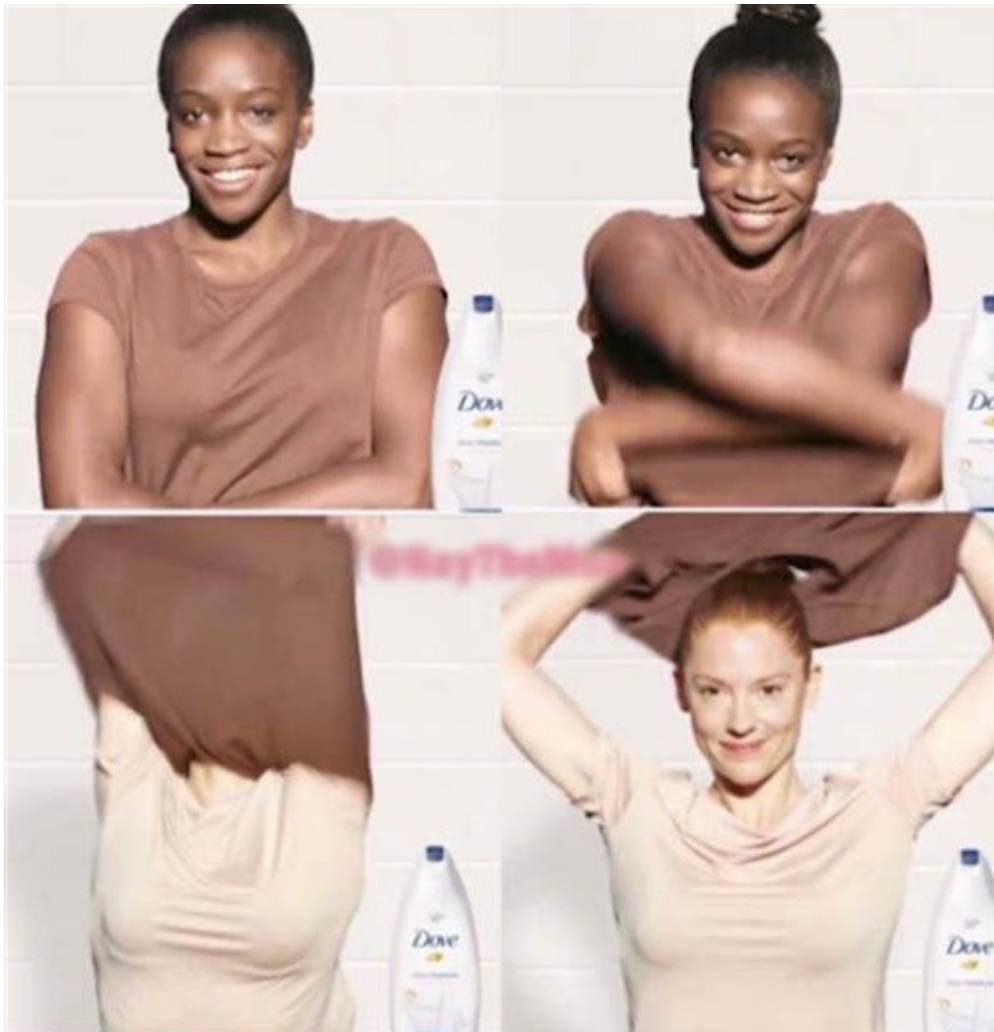


# 'White like me' advert grounds Dove

By [Jeremy Maggs](#)

10 Oct 2017

Many in the local advertising community on Monday were aghast at global beauty brand Dove's huge public relations gaffe in posting an online advertisement showing a black woman removing her top to reveal a white woman in the next frame.



But one leading brand expert said Dove will recover provided it keeps its nose clean in the coming months.

While the parent company, the giant multinational Unilever has apologised, there were growing calls around the world and in South Africa to boycott the product.

In the full video clip, a black woman removes her t-shirt to reveal a white woman, who then lifts her own top to reveal an Asian woman.



Dove apologises for 'racist' whitewashing ad, social media won't accept

Jessica Tennant 9 Oct 2017



A statement from Dove said: "The short video was intended to convey that Dove body wash is for every woman and be a celebration of diversity, but we got it wrong."

Leading local brand expert Jeremy Sampson from Brand Finance said Dove would have learnt a salutary lesson from the incident. "We live in a highly sensitive and highly charged world right now and no more is that emblematic than in the social media space. It's imperative for brands these days to think hard about campaigns; realise what the consequences could be or a hard won reputation could be impugned very quickly."

Sampson said while some said the outcry might have shades of the Mother Grundy syndrome, that is, simply the world in which we live — brands have to know and learn that.

Sampson said for years Dove has been a leading proponent of female empowerment and as a result has built up huge brand equity. He does not think that this particular issue will destroy the brand.

"Provided it keeps its nose clean, and sticks to the apology it should recover in a matter of months."

“ *An image we recently posted on Facebook missed the mark in representing women of color thoughtfully. We deeply regret the offense it caused.— Dove (@Dove) [October 7, 2017](#)* ”

Sampson cited the short-term insurance company Outsurance that courted a similar controversy four months ago when it posted a Father's Day video showing predominantly white men engaged in acts of kindness. The brand faced a similar racist backlash and the company was forced to apologise saying the ad was an unintentional oversight. That crisis has not had an undue negative impact on Outsurance, according to Sampson.

One leading agency strategic director said: "This is yet another lesson for brands that are often forced to act quickly to meet speed-of-market demand for information to slow down and consider consequences. So many brands are in a hurry to trend online that they don't think of the damage they might cause."

A copywriter at another agency said: "Truth be told, it's not a particularly good ad from a creative perspective and from a brand that is well known for great ideas that resonate with its target market."

This is not the first time Dove has been in advertising hot water. In 2011 an ad, showed three women side by side in front of a before-and-after image of cracked and smooth skin. It caused a huge fuss because the woman positioned on the "before" side was black while the "after" woman was white.

Dove said at the time all three were supposed to demonstrate the "after" product benefit. Then two years ago Dove was called out for labelling different skin colours on its bottles of self-tan lotion. It described the lotion as "fair to normal skin" and "normal to dark skin".

Social media users suggested Dove was saying dark skin was not normal.

**Source:** Business Day

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