

DOLLARSHAVECLUB.COM - a case study on how can the brand
tone of voice enable a startup to become a viral sensation

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N

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Abstract

Nowadays every marketer worldwide craves for its campaign, product or company to go viral, but only one a million times we find examples that truly becomes viral, in the infectious-disease sense of the word. Understanding what sets these rare events apart from all the other failed attempts is essential.

For this case study, the focus will be on the importance of setting the right brand tone of voice for your audience, right before you launch a campaign, product or company - focusing on the story of Dollar Shave Club (DSC).

This pedagogical case study will dissect the strategy behind DSC's communication and its viral video "Our Blades Are F***ing Great" that uplifted the startup's unveiling back in 2012.

The author will try to make connections between what they have done so far and the most updated literature in subjects like: Marketing Communication, Viral Marketing, Online Video Sharing, Provocative and Humorous Content and Brand Tone of Voice.

It's important to remark that as some of these themes are relatively recent and there is not much literature, it will be needed the use of industry data and news to feed the state-of-the-art in this matters, always with the best interest of the marketing academy in mind.

Keywords: Viral Marketing, Provocative Content, Humour, Tone of Voice.

JEL classification system:

M13 New Firms – Startups;

M31 Marketing.

Resumo

Hoje em dia todos os *marketeers* no mundo anseiam que a sua campanha, produto ou empresa se torne viral, mas apenas num caso num milhão encontramos exemplos que se tornam verdadeiramente virais, no sentido infeccioso da palavra. Entender o que separa estes raros exemplos de todas as outras tentativas fracassadas é essencial.

Para este estudo de caso, o enfoque estará sobre a importância de ajustar o tom certo de voz da marca ao seu público, nos momentos que antecedem o lançamento de uma campanha, produto ou empresa – tendo como exemplo a história do Dollar Shave Club (DSC).

Este estudo de caso pedagógica vai dissecar a estratégia por trás de comunicação do DSC e seu vídeo viral “Our Blades Are F***ing Great” que catapultou o lançamento da *startup* em 2012.

O autor vai tentar fazer conexões entre o que eles fizeram até agora e a literatura mais atualizada em assuntos como: Comunicação de Marketing, Marketing Viral, compartilhamento de vídeo on-line, conteúdo provocante e cómico e tom de voz da marca.

É importante ressaltar que, como alguns desses temas são relativamente recentes e não há muita literatura, será necessário o uso de dados da indústria e notícias para alimentar o *state-of-the-art* nestas matérias, sempre com o melhor interesse da academia de Marketing em mente.

Palavras-chave: Marketing Viral, Conteúdo Provocatório, Humor, Tom de Voz.

Sistema de classificação JEL:

M13 New Firms – Startups;

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1. CASE STUDY

Back in 2010, Michael Dubin and Mark Levine would never imagine that going to that mutual friend's party would change their lives as it did. And they haven't just changed their lives, they also changed the lives of millions of men that now shop for razors in a simpler and smarter way. The starting point for this business idea was simple: **Shaving is a hassle, razors run out fast and they are too expensive.** Even the buying experience is a pain, as Michael describes it: "You have to drive there. You have to park your car. You have to locate the "razor fortress". It's locked. So you have to find the guy with the key. He's always doing something else and he doesn't want to be helpful..." – it almost feels like they don't want you to buy their razors, they make you feel like a criminal and charge you big bucks for it (i.e.: a single Gillette Fusion razor costs about \$4.50).

Michael and Mark knew that they had to create a solution for guys like them, guys that are fed up of paying a tons of money that ends up in the pocket of some tennis or football player. An idea came to their minds and they decided to bootstrap it from Michael's apartment, as a way to validate the concept before seeking out investment. This approach allowed them to gradually develop a cutting edge business model and a genius marketing strategy to go along with it. In 2012, it was time for the launch and **with a huge viral boom the Dollar Shave Club (DSC) was born.** Their clever solution was not only brilliant but it was also properly communicated – as if it were two men talking to each other, sharing a "bro-to-bro" advice on how to save money when buying razor blades. This tone of voice has proven to be key on the level of engagement that their target has been exhibiting at all of DSC's touchpoints since its launch.

To this date, **DSC has battled against the industry giants and indicated that this "David" fears no "Goliaths".** Although it has currently 2 million active users, DSC still hasn't turned a profit, despite bringing \$64 million in revenue on 2014 and a projected \$140 million this year. They have a solid market position, as their razor blades represent today about 10% of the razors sold on the USA. Their unique approach to the razor's business has forced Gillette to create its own Shave Club, evidencing how influential they have been to men's grooming market. And after three years on the market Dollar Shave Club is just getting started: so buckle up!

1.1 An incisive cut through the men's razor market

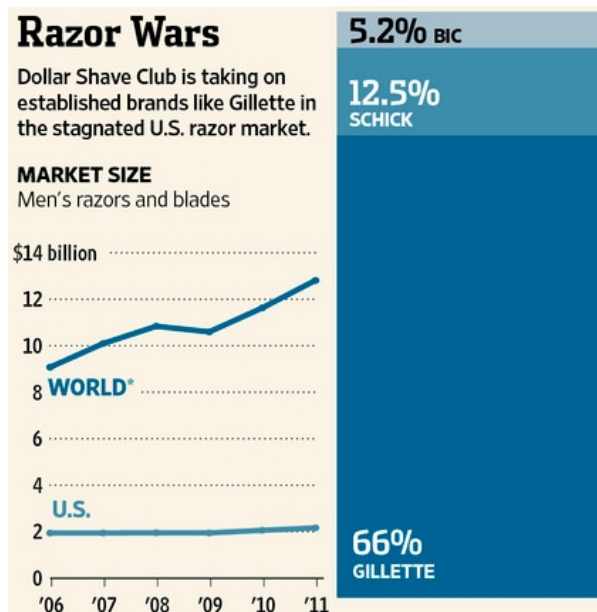


Figure 1 - Global market Size and Share of the 3 top brands | Source: Euromonitor International

2012, forecasts for next years indicate that it will lose its dominance in men's grooming market for the first time ever.

The USA razor blade's market is dominated by P&G's Gillette and Energizer's Shick. By 2012, this industry was evaluated in \$13 billion. The vogue for stubble, the relative non-hairiness of Asian men, growing acceptance of the unshaven look in the workplace and, most importantly, the ever increasing cost of shaving have all been damaging to men's razor market. As a result, the market has been going through a rough time, despite the healthy growth of 6% in

In the summer of 2013, P&G stated, in their report, that Gillette's razor sales have been dropping in developed markets. This followed a previous announcement made by Energizer, in which they informed that sales of Schick's razors had fallen 10% also in 2013. So we must question: if the "Goliaths" are struggling who is scoring in this market?

According to Euromonitor International (2013), private labels have achieved further penetration in both North America and Western Europe as consumers continue to seek value for money. In the US alone, private label grew to account for a 3.6% share of the category in 2012, up 24% since 2008. Similarly, in Western Europe, private label holds nearly 9% of the category, a whopping 40% increase in share since 2008. With large German retailers such as Aldi and LIDL strengthening their positions in Southern Europe, private label is on the rise not only in men's razor blades but across most beauty and personal care categories, as its stated by the Euromonitor International report.

But it's not just the private labels that are on the rise, most recently The Wall Street Journal pointed out a curious trend on the men's razor blade market: from 2013 through half of 2015 the online men's razor blade market doubled its size, amounting to \$141 million through March 2015, as it can be seen on the figure below. Even as further validation, Gillette entered and is now trying to compete on value; a big shift for a centenary business that has long pulled in premium prices but now, operating on this fast paced online market, it's forced to change its approach from the what has applied on retail (Appendix I).



Figure 2 - Smooth Sales | Source: WSJ / Slice Intelligence

The shift in shopping habits has caught offline market leader Gillette off balance, as it had to rush it way into the online market thus creating Gillette Shave Club. Why a club? Well, this new market started with a club; a men's club, a million dollar idea that thunder shocked the near to dead men's razor blades market and was a true game changer for the whole men's grooming market as it offered a better way for less...

1.2 DOLLARSHAVECLUB.COM - The Million Dollar Idea

It all started in September 2010, when Michael Dubin, a digital marketing expert, met Mark Levine, a wholesale manager, at a party of a common friend. After a talk about the hassle of buying razor blades and their absurd retail price, Mark challenged Michael to help him sell 250,000 twin blade razors.



Figure 3 - Michael Dubin: Founder & CEO of Dollar Shave Club | Source: Dollar Shave Club

He agreed and immediately warned

Mark that he didn't plan on selling them the traditional way; he had the intent of shaking things up on that dull and stagnated market. In January 2011, they started thinking about a business model and a marketing strategy to enter the razor market, in a way the customer wouldn't get frustrated with the price and the purchase experience: e-commerce was the answer. This would allow customers to order razor blades from the comfort of their home at a much lower price than they would find at any retailer. Three months later, they invested around \$35,000 of their life's savings to launch Dollar Shave Club (DSC). Running all the operations from Michael's apartment, they finally launched the first beta version of the website (www.dollarshaveclub.com) in July 2011. From that moment on, they started an online subscription model in which, from \$1 to \$9 a month, a pack of razor blades' cartridges would be delivered to the client's door on a monthly basis, positioning DSC as a cost-effective and convenient alternative to retail chains. The first task was to raise awareness for their company, so in the first 6 months they try to connect with bloggers in order to spread the word. This led them to obtain their first 1000 members, without spending any dollar in marketing. At the same time, Michael began to pack cartridges in order to build stock, as a clear sign that they were aiming for more. As a clear sign of ambition, DSC started looking out for investors who could boost their business by funding the company and allowing them to grow at a higher pace. This way, DSC joined Science Inc., an American technology incubator based in Santa Monica, which provided them the stability they needed to successfully launch the final version of their website and prepare a striking entry to market that would catch everyone by surprise.

1.2.1 Houston, we have a viral lift-off

In October 2011, Michael asked his friend Lucia Aniello, to produce a video that would convey the company's value proposition in a straight to the point, distinctive and humorous way. With only \$4,500, Michael was able to combine his copywriter expertise with the director skills of Lucia in a 94 seconds video, shot in their headquarters. During the clip, Michael exhibits great humour skills, acquired from his experience in improvisational comedy, and goes straight to the pain that most men feel. It was clear as water: this was a solution that men couldn't just simply overlook.



Figure 4 - "Our Blades Are F***ing Great" Video | Source: Dollar Shave Club

Having the video ready for launch, they still needed more investment in the company to assure an adequate answer to the anticipated increase in demand for their products. So, in March 2012, DSC was able to raise more than \$1 million in a seed round of venture capital from companies like: Leiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, Forerunner Ventures, Andreessen Horowitz, Shasta Ventures, Felicis Ventures, White Star Capital, and others. Being aware that this move would bring a lot of PR and media attention for Dollar Shave Club, the team decided to set everything up for the video launch to be synced with the release of the first news regarding their newly conquered investment. Thus on March 6th, DSC finally released their video "Our Blades Are F***ing Great" on Youtube at 6am with a Google AdWords campaign to boost the traffic to their website. At 6:30 am, due to the traffic overload, Dollar Shave Club website went down but the video went on virally spreading. With the website being offline, some Youtube users even asked when it was planned to be launched, as they were so eager to join the club and thought that the website wasn't released yet. A few

hours later, the website was up again and they immediately got 5.000 new member's subscriptions only on that day. After only 48 hours, Dollar Shave Club had already racked up 12.000 members and 25.000 in a two weeks' time, fuelled by the video's success – 3 million views and 32.000 likes on that same time spectrum.



Figure 5 - "Our Blades Are F***ing Great" Video | Source: Dollar Shave Club

Their first video became a benchmark when it comes to viral content and it went on to be awarded with several awards:

- **“Best Out-of-Nowhere Video Campaign”** prize at the AdAge Viral Video Awards;
- **“Webby Award”** in the Fashion & Beauty category;
- **“People’s Choice Webby Award”** in the Consumer Packaged Goods category;
- **“Digiday’s Best Video Ad Campaign of the year”**.

So far this had been the dream launch for any start-up: to go viral in your first video and to attract a numerous user base in a small amount of time. So what would be the next logical step after taking over the USA and having achieved a global status in terms of virality?

1.2.2 Howdy Canada! G'day Australia!



Figure 6 - Canada and Australia: the next destinations for DSC | Source: The author

With Dollar Shave Club having more than 200.000 members by August 2012, it was time to embrace new challenges and reach other international markets. In November 2012, DSC entered the Canadian market by allowing customers to join the membership in the Canadian Web Address (<http://ca.dollarshaveclub.com/>). Their product offer was exactly the same with prices ranging from 3.5 to 9.5 Canadian dollars a month (shipping included).

In the following month, Dollar Shave Club also got into the Australian Market, letting all Australians to subscribe any of the razor blade plans in the Australian Web Address (<http://au.dollarshaveclub.com/>). Once again, the offer was precisely the same with the subscription plans going from 4 to 10 Australian dollars a month (shipping included).

This internationalization strategy was very successful allowing DSC to gather even more members and allowing them to grow at a higher pace. However, in order to successfully go abroad and be able to fulfil every order they had, they needed to increase both human and financial capital. To solve this question, in early November, DSC raised \$9.8 million in a Series A round of venture capital which was led by Venrock. Simultaneously, they an intense recruitment that represented an increase of the headcount on their warehouse based in Santa Monica, California. This ensured the team that their operation would be ready for a strong presence in three different countries and for everything that was still yet to come.

1.2.3 A new dawn. A new day.



Figure 7 - "Our Blades Are F***ing Great" Video | Source: Dollar Shave Club

With the DSC's business going at cruising speed, it was time to shake things just a little bit. In April 2013, Dollar Shave Club decided to expand their product portfolio. After sending samples to their members for a couple of months and having a very positive feedback, DSC decided that they could improve the whole shaving experience by introducing their shaving cream: Dr. Carver's Shave Butter. Michael claimed that he was expecting between 2.5 to 5% of all members to give it a shot in the first month but was pleasantly surprised to see that slightly more than 10% of their customers started ordering regularly this product. In the quest for owning the bathroom, it was time to diversify. Dollar Shave Club conducted a study to 1000 men aged between 18 and 45, where 51% of the respondents said they had already used wipes, although only 16% use them in place of toilet paper. Based on this information, in June 2013, they decided to come up with butt wipes for men: One Wipe Charlies. 15 months after the release of their first video "Our blades are f***ing great", Michael realized it was time to go viral again in order to advertise their latest product. Therefore, on June 4th, DSC released their video: "Let's talk about #2" to introduce their gentlemen butt wipes. As a result of their successful business model and internationalization, by July 2013, Dollar Shave Club had achieved the 300.000 members' milestone. By October, having in mind the desire to expand their portfolio with more men's grooming and skincare products, Dollar Shave Club has raised \$12 million in a Series B investment round led by Venrock, Comcast Ventures, New World Investors and Battery Ventures, as they see this funding as crucial step to

satisfy the grooming needs of their base of 330.000 members that seemed to be still rising at a good pace.

1.2.4 But how did DSC manage to get so “f***ing” viral?



Figure 8 - "Our Blades Are F***ing Great" Video | Source: Dollar Shave Club

Nowadays, the pursuit for viral content is the main focus of many companies' communication worldwide. But not all content can go viral and even content that is created with that purpose sometimes fail badly. Dollar Shave Club's viral video is one of the most successful case studies of 2012. For \$4.500 they racked up nearly 12 million views on YouTube and immediately signed up 12.000 people for their razor delivery service. They're the envy of many marketers that should figure out what can they take from DSC's launch video ad "Our Blades Are F***ing Great", filmed in DSC's warehouse where they pack and ship their products to their members. First of all, we need to be aware that production of this kind of video would cost about \$50.000. The reason why Michael paid only \$4.500 is that his old friend from acting school days, Lucia Aniello, owns a production company so she did him a big favour. An interesting thing is that Michael already knew a few things about making good brand videos. According to his profile on LinkedIn Michael has worked for the Feed Company where he learned how to drive qualified, socially influential publishers, bloggers and viewers to branded online videos. So putting his skills to good use, he made this daring video of 90 seconds in which he included everything that was required. The message was loud and clear: "For a dollar a month, we send high

quality razors straight to your door.” No need to waste a consumer’s time. Tell them what you’re offering and why it’s better or different than your competitor. This straight to the point approach captured every man’s attention. Other key success factor for this video was the proper use of humour. The video’s tagline says it all: “Are the blades any good? No. Our Blades Are F***ing Great”. A bear, a curse word and a machete all played crucial parts in this video ad for this newly born start-up. Just because your company offers accounting software doesn’t mean you can’t use kittens, babies, or donkeys to tell a valuable story. Last but definitely not least, DSC showed a better way – have you priced razor blade replacement cartridges lately? They’re not cheap, they have needless “space-age” technology and you have to remember to regularly buy them. There is a better way, right? Of course there is: DollarShaveClub.com. In the end of the video you will be thrilled with their smart business model and enthusiastic about the idea of joining the club. This feeling is a part of the success that they had with the video by signing 12.000 members in the first 48 hours.



Figure 9 - "Let's Talk About #2" Video | Source: Dollar Shave Club

For their 3rd product, the One Wipe Charlies, they also released another video entitled “Let’s Talk About #2”. This video was far from the success that they achieved in the first one. And that is comprehensible because there was never going to be anything like the first one, where they launched a new business that no one had ever heard of and did it in a fun way. Those elements of surprise and of novelty are something that DSC will never have again, but they still have other pretty tricks up their sleeves.

1.3 Marketing Mix

1.3.1 Product Portfolio

As their core business, razor blades are the most important product in DSC's portfolio. With a quite small range of products and very low cost monthly fees, they are allowing their customers to choose but without having to think too much about it.

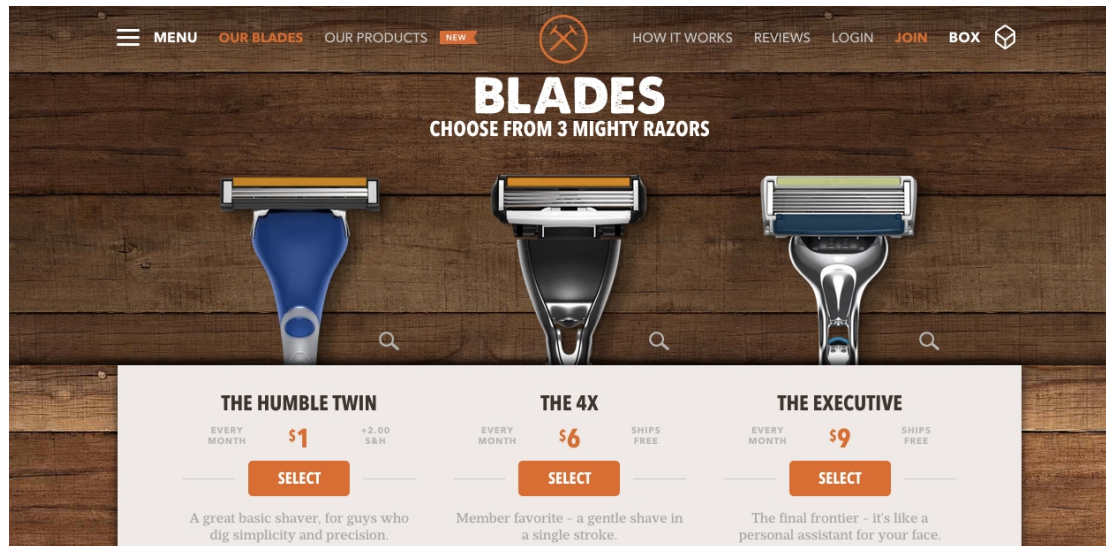


Figure 10 - DSC's razors blade line | Source: Dollar Shave Club's website

- The humble twin comes with 5 cartridges per month and is a great basic shaver for guys who want simplicity and precision. The cartridges have two stainless steel blades and it costs \$1 per month.
- The 4x also known as “The Lover’s blade” is described as a last razor you’ll ever need because it provides you a gentle shave in one single stroke. For \$6 a month you will get 4 cartridges with 4 stainless steel blades. And it is also known as the lover’s blade because you can also share it with your girlfriend.
- The executive is the final frontier. DSC compares it to a personal assistant but for your face. With 6 stainless blades and a special trimmer edge built-in is the razor that every boss demands. You’ll receive 4 cartridges and it will cost you \$9 per month.

All of these razor blades are produced in South Korea by a company called Dorco that also sells them directly through their own website. But this doesn't pose a threat, as DSC is selling shaving as a service: you pay to not have to think of buying blades anymore, they are simply sent to your door every month and that's the real value in it.



Figure 11 - Dr. Carver's Shave Butter |
Source: Dollar Shave Club

The second product launched in DSC's portfolio was Dr. Carver's Shave Butter. It was the logic step to take to complete the DSC shaving experience. This complementary good to razors was suggested to all the members that already had signed for razors monthly plans. Bear in mind that this is not shave cream, its shave butter. Picture a hot knife cutting through butter; this is how smooth Dr. Carver's Shave Butter will make your shaving be. The price for adding this 6oz package of shave butter to your monthly plan is \$8. With the success DSC was having they decided to take a step further on owning the whole men's bathroom. So, it was time to talk about number 2 and start shipping their third product.

The One Wipe Charlies are butt wipes for gentlemen. Why this product? Because ordinary men don't know what is the civilized way to wipe their bottoms. Forget about toilet paper or like Michael Dubin said in the video: "Accept no substitute". It's time to lose the primitive side of your nature and experience the one true clean.



Figure 12 - One Wipe Charlies | Source: Dollar Shave Club

For \$4 a month you get 40 flushable and biodegradable butt wipes in one single package with a gentle peppermint scent. Experience the life changing new way to solve the problem, clean yourself like a gentleman. For all the range of products, customers can upgrade or downgrade their plan at any moment.

1.3.2 Price

According to Kotler (2012), the price the company charges should fall somewhere between one that is too high to produce any demand and one that is too low to produce a profit. Kotler (2012) suggests three possible pricing strategies: customer value-based pricing, cost-based pricing and competition-based pricing.



Figure 13 - Price comparison between DSC's 4X and Gillette's Fusion | Source: Dollar Shave Club

Customer value-based pricing was DSC's strategy for setting their price in the 4X and the Executive blades monthly subscriptions plans (\$6 and \$9 respectively). They understood the customers' pain of overpaying for razors and offered a service where they could be spared from that. For their entry-level subscription plan of one dollar per month they had a cost-based pricing strategy and it had the intent to honour their company's name by selling the best product they could for the lowest price possible.

1.3.3 Place

In marketing theory, place relates to how the product is physically distributed and sold. In an e-commerce business, like Dollar Shave Club, it relates to the way your website attracts customers, sells products and fulfils orders. Dollar Shave Club has a simple and intuitive website, that goes hand-in-hand with their business model and tone of voice.

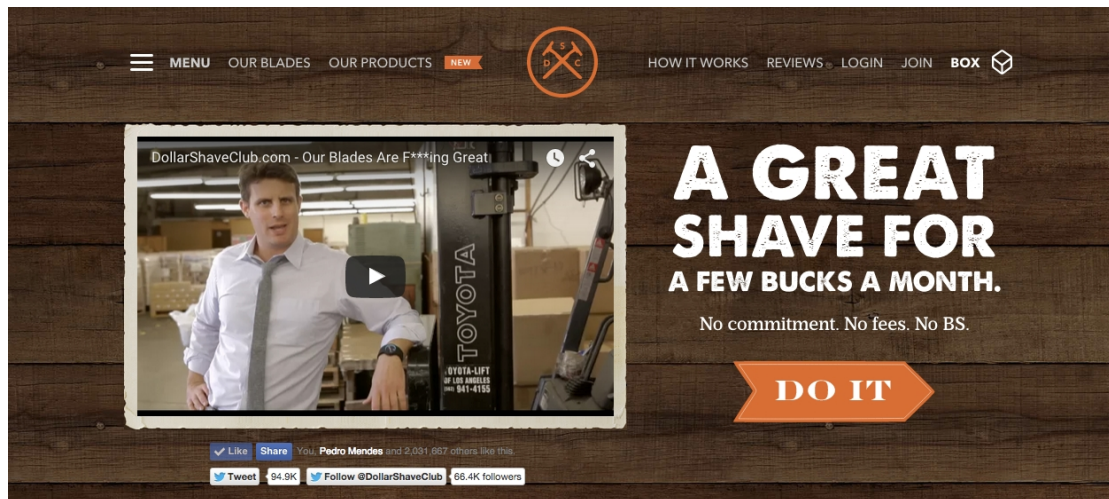


Figure 14 - Overall look of DSC's Website | Source: Dollar Shave Club

The first thing you will remark from the DSC's homepage is the viral video embedded in a wooden background and a very persuasive call to action – “A great shave for a few bucks a month. No commitment. No fees. No BS.” – that will get you to “Our Blades” page where you can start setting up your monthly plan.

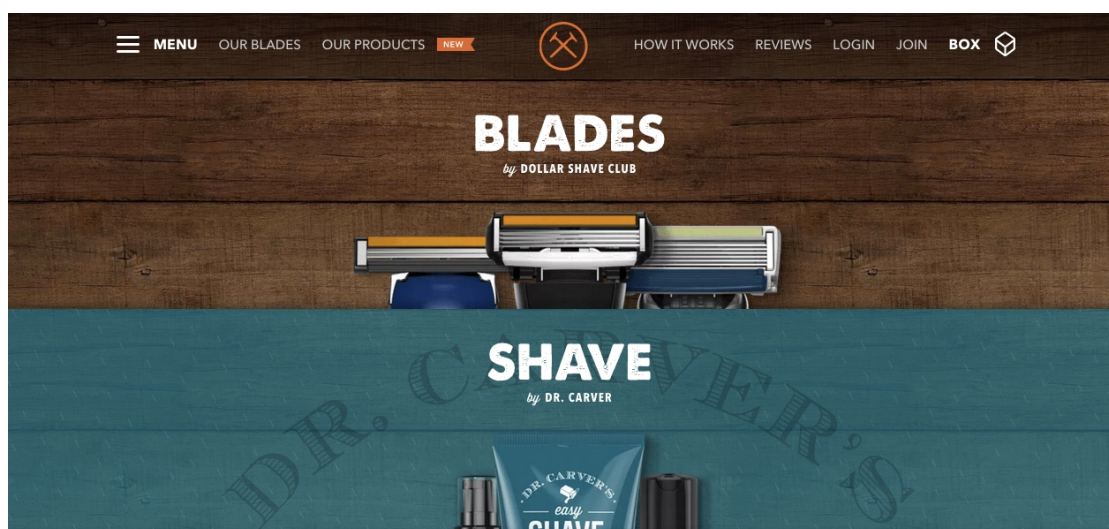


Figure 15 - “Our Products” page | Source: Dollar Shave Club

If you are looking for something else than the blades, you have to go to “Our Products” page where you can add the Shave Butter and the One Wipe Charlies to further enrich your DSC box. Yes, a box. Dollar Shave Club proudly shows off their box packaging on their website. The box starts “empty and sad” before you fill it in their products and sign a monthly plan. This box will arrive to your door every month with fresh razors and other men grooming products of your choosing (Appendix II).



Figure 16 - “Our Products” page | Source: Dollar Shave Club

The whole website experience is complemented by a live chat feature that allow your most life changing decisions to be solved in less than a minute. No doubts will go unattended and no question is too dumb – DSC’s team is there to enlighten you. Regarding its supply chain, DSC has close distribution channel with its suppliers and intermediaries to keep prices low for customers, which along with its short delivery time adds even further more value to the service they offer.



Figure 17 - DSC's Supply Chain | Source: The author

1.3.4 Promotion

In an e-commerce business such as Dollar Shave Club, promotion plays a key part in successfully transmitting the product advantages and the brand values. Since DSC has no physical points of sale, they must provide the client all this information in a clear, direct and remarkable communication. The way to achieve these attributes in communication is to identify the right way to connect with your target audience. By connecting with your audience, you will have the opportunity to speak directly to their hearts and thus have a chance of converting them into evangelists of your brand. This is accomplished by creating a consistent tone of voice that is coherent with your brand values.

On a first stage, when DSC only had the beta version of their Website, Michael was focusing his attention to PR, trying to convince bloggers to write about his business but failed to showed them the reason that made DSC so special. When the final version of the website was released, DSC's attention moved into Google AdWords as well as their viral video: "Our Blades Are F***ing Great". This launch video ad conveyed their brand values perfectly: it was a bold, man-to-man and transparent advice – the kind of advice that men are willing to accept without feeling emasculated. This is how they discovered DSC's tone of voice embedded in the character "Mike", the humorous founder that had enough with the razor blades giants and decided to create a better solution.

Has the message was "loud and clear", as explained previously, this generated a lot of traction to their website through the organic virality of the ad and by the Google AdWords campaign that they set up. The video went on to be shared by a large number of people on their social media profiles, which allowed DSC to cease the investment in promotion for a couple as there was a continuous increase in the number of members subscribed to their razor plans.

After this viral aftershock by April 2013, they started investing in paid above-the-line promotion with some radio spots. In June, DSC released another video to advertise their latest product: One Wipe Charlies that, as we stated before, didn't have as much success as the first one. In that same month, DSC decided to create a Father's Day campaign with the purpose of using the sons' influence over their digital illiterate dads to present them their solution. The campaign consisted on having local radio spots, Facebook Ads, a segment in some TV programs, to introduce their new gift

card feature on their website, and also they gave away some “Dadisms” e-cards with witty jokes in their blog (Appendix III).

After some success in paid media, DSC turned their attention into TV. They started airing a 60” version of their Youtube Video in channels like: ESPN, Spike TV, and Comedy Central. This step was justified as a way of start competing on par with huge competitors like Gillette or Schick by raising their notoriety levels among the US population. As a way of connecting with their sport lover targets, DSC also signed a contract with 4 NFL players to promote One Wipe Charlies in billboards spread all across the USA (Appendix IV).

Proving DSC’s disruptive positioning, they also joined a very peculiar guerrilla marketing form of promotion called Beardvertising. This form of promotion, invented by Whit Hiler, consists of having several hairy men travelling across the country with billboards clipped to their beards (Appendix V).

But the genuine brand’s tone of voice is found on its packaging. This is where they thriven at embodying the spirit of “Mike”, the character from their video ads. The smart cultural references, the wise puns: it’s all there in each razor blade cartridges card packaging (Appendix VI).



Figure 18 - DSC’s Razor Blades Cartridges Packaging | Source: Dollar Shave Club

This way of connecting with their target is what sets DSC apart from other players in the market. Both “Goliaths” (i.e. Gillette, Shick, BIC, etc.) and “Davids” (i.e. Harry’s, ShaveMOB, etc.) don’t have anything as close to this strong brand presence and irreverent brand tone of voice that speaks to men’s heart. The only brand comparable to DSC is P&G’s Old Spice, but for the moment they are not on the same fight...

1.4 Competitors

Even though Dollar Shave Club has a unique positioning, as result from their bold brand's tone of voice, they aren't exempted from competition. As the new kid on the block, playing as the Old Spice of the razor blades industry, they have drawn attention from different origins. Currently, they have two main battlefronts: On one hand, the "Goliaths" that have lead the market for more than a century and set the rules for the industry; on the other hand, the "Davids" that came to challenge the status quo in this saturated market and followed the footsteps of Dollar Shave Club with slight differences in terms of brand positioning and brand values.

According to Kotler (2012), a company can divide their competitors into different levels of competition. The figure below shows us how can we adapt Kotler's vision to the specific context of Dollar Shave Club.

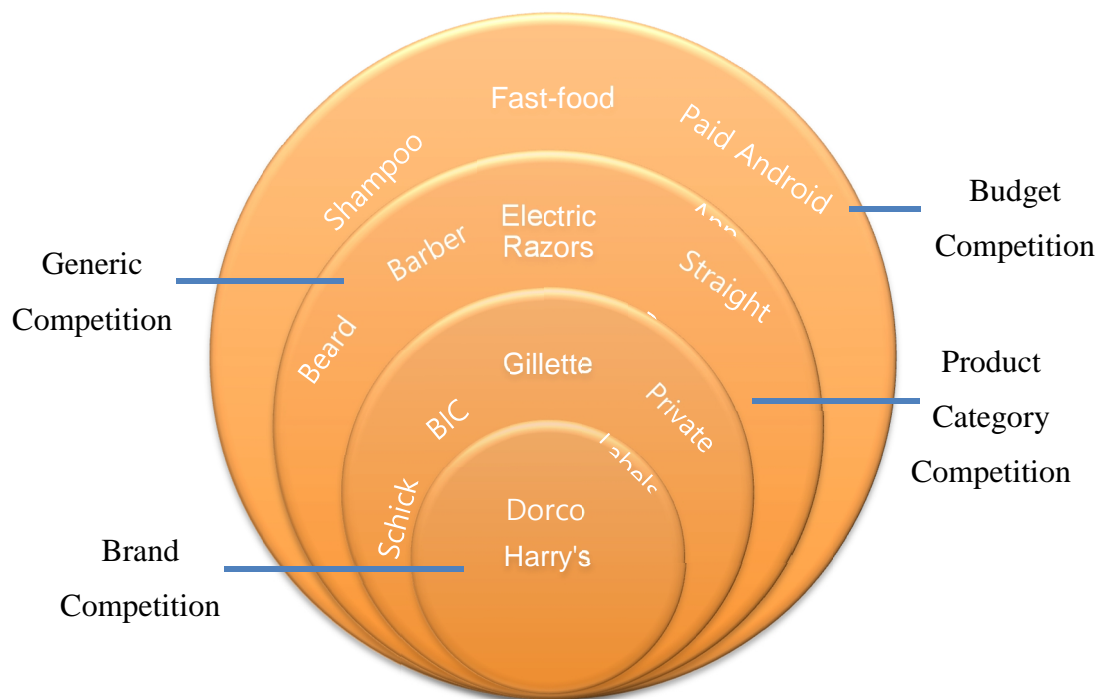


Figure 19 - DSC's Levels of Competition | Source: The Author

The first level of competition, as seen in the picture, is the Brand Competition. There we find DSC's direct competitors: Harry's, ShaveMOB and Dorco. Harry's appeared in the market in October 2011 with a premium positioning, blades designed in their Germany factory, that are sold in a set or through a subscription model – they were founded 1 month after DSC (Appendix VII). ShaveMOB is the most copycat of all of competitors, as they tried to replicate the coolness that DSC swags around and its

business model fully. The only thing that differentiates ShaveMOB from DSC and Harry's is the fact that they have a line for women (Appendix VIII). Lastly, Dorco is a south korean razor blades producer that supplies DSC and sells the same blades directly in their website, where they offer just a regular e-commerce experience without any added value or brand experience (Appendix IX).

On the next level, we can find DSC's competitors based on the product category. Despite being DSC's indirect competitors, all of them have a stronger position in the men's razor blades market. We have identified 4 main players in this level of competition and Euromonitor International (2013) gives us its key figures:

- **Gillette:** Pioneer and leader of this market for over a century, having a global market share of 66% by 2011 (17,50\$ for Fusion cartridges);
- **Schick:** Gillette biggest rival and current vice leader of the razors market with a global market share of 12,5% by 2011 (12,03\$ for Hydro cartridges);
- **BIC:** Market leader in disposable razors and 3rd highest seller in the razors market with a global market share of 5,2% by 2011 (8,16\$ for Hybrid cartridges);
- **Private Labels:** The popularity of supermarket's own brands is rising due the economic crisis, amounting a 3,6% US market share in 2012.

On the third level, we are able to find products/services that exactly fulfil the customers need (i.e. shave/trim their beard) such as: electric razors, beard trimmers, straight razors or even the good old barber shop. These alternatives range from 20\$ to 100\$. The forth level is where we find other products and services that are in DSC's price range, representing an opportunity cost of spending the equal amount of money in something else.



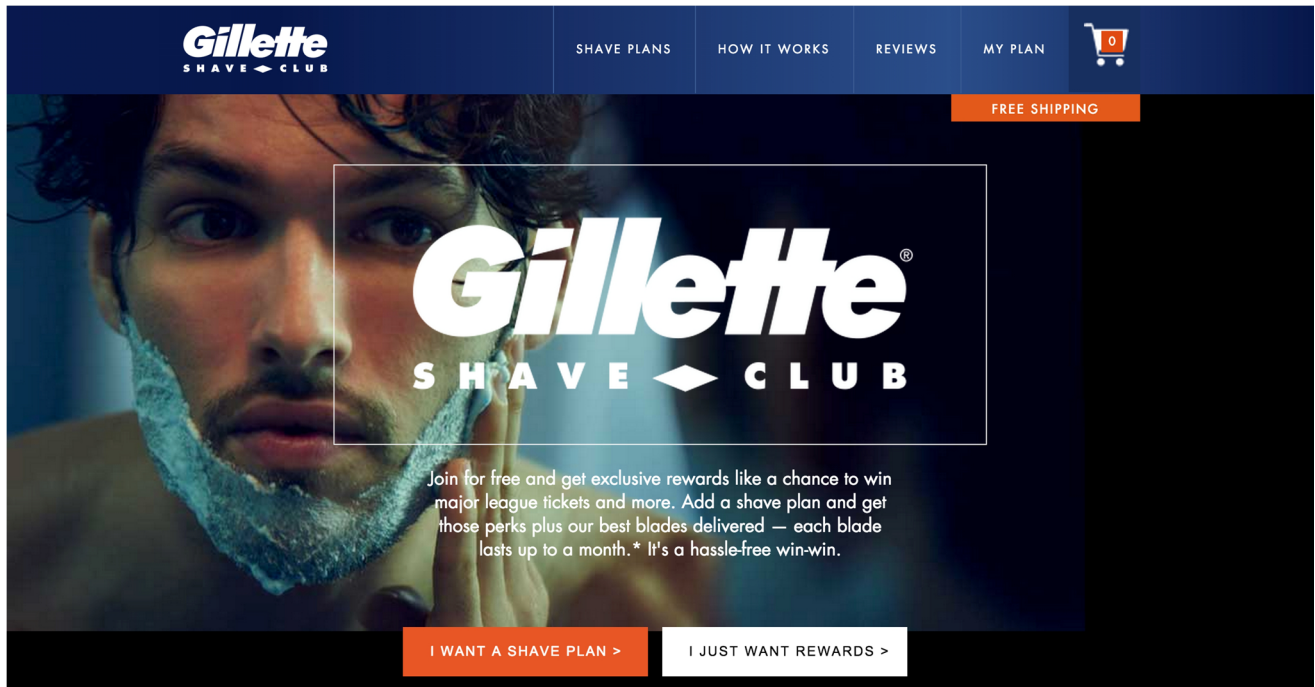
Figure 20 - DSC's Generic Competition | Source: Retrieved from Google and adapted by the author

1.5 Case Study Questions

1. Given the information on DSC and the men's razor blades market, develop a dynamic SWOT analysis for the company.
2. How do you define DSC segmentation, target and positioning?
 - a. Position DSC in a Perceptual Map against Gillette and Schick.
3. Reflect about DSC current positioning and strategy. Where should it go next? Give practical examples, using the Ansoff Matrix to explain your rationale.
4. DSC entered a broader market with the launch of butt wipes for men. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new product in DSC portfolio.
5. Can DSC be considered a tribal brand? Justify your answers in three main points.

1.6 Appendixes

Appendix I – Gillette Shave Club – Source: Gillette Shave Club



The banner features a close-up of a man's face with shaving foam on his chin. The Gillette Shave Club logo is prominently displayed in the center. Navigation links for 'SHAVE PLANS', 'HOW IT WORKS', 'REVIEWS', and 'MY PLAN' are in the top right, along with a shopping cart icon. A 'FREE SHIPPING' badge is also present. Two call-to-action buttons are at the bottom: 'I WANT A SHAVE PLAN >' and 'I JUST WANT REWARDS >'.

Gillette
SHAVE CLUB

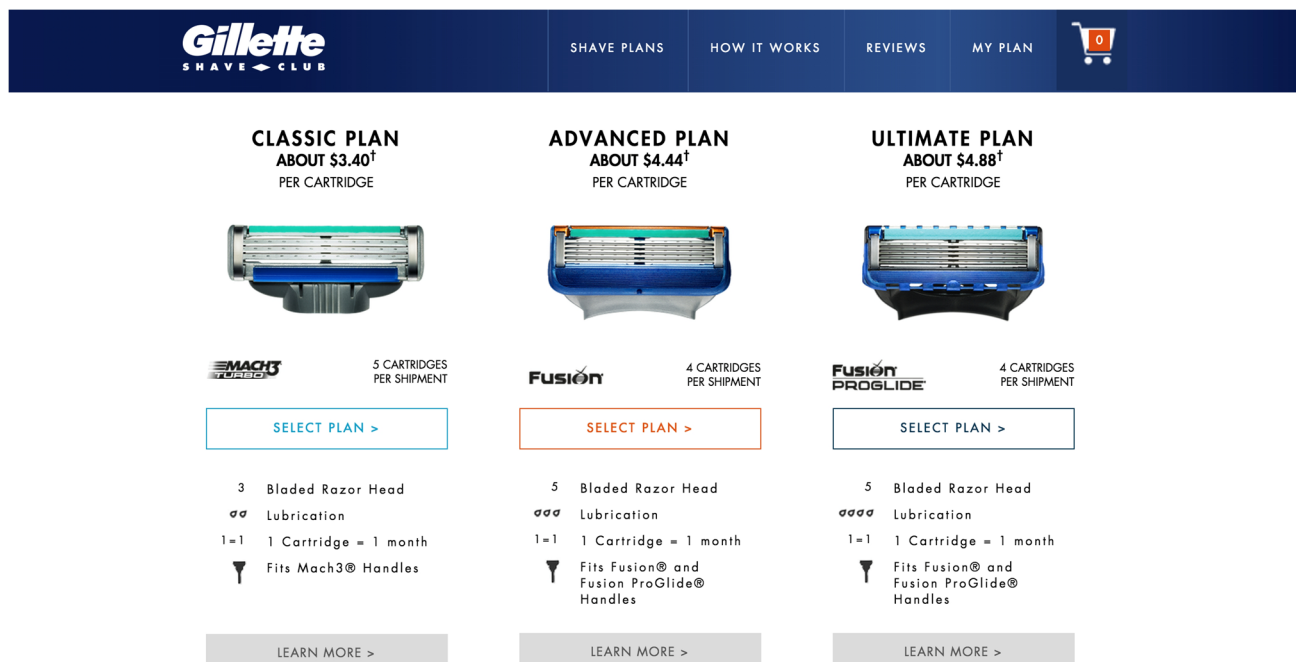
SHAVE PLANS HOW IT WORKS REVIEWS MY PLAN




FREE SHIPPING

Gillette
SHAVE CLUB

Join for free and get exclusive rewards like a chance to win major league tickets and more. Add a shave plan and get those perks plus our best blades delivered — each blade lasts up to a month.* It's a hassle-free win-win.

I WANT A SHAVE PLAN > I JUST WANT REWARDS >



CLASSIC PLAN ABOUT \$3.40 [†] PER CARTRIDGE		ADVANCED PLAN ABOUT \$4.44 [†] PER CARTRIDGE		ULTIMATE PLAN ABOUT \$4.88 [†] PER CARTRIDGE	
	MACH3 5 CARTRIDGES PER SHIPMENT		FUSION 4 CARTRIDGES PER SHIPMENT		FUSION PROGLIDE 4 CARTRIDGES PER SHIPMENT
SELECT PLAN >		SELECT PLAN >		SELECT PLAN >	
3 Bladed Razor Head σσ Lubrication 1=1 1 Cartridge = 1 month ⚡ Fits Mach3® Handles		5 Bladed Razor Head σσσ Lubrication 1=1 1 Cartridge = 1 month ⚡ Fits Fusion® and Fusion ProGlide® Handles		5 Bladed Razor Head σσσσ Lubrication 1=1 1 Cartridge = 1 month ⚡ Fits Fusion® and Fusion ProGlide® Handles	
LEARN MORE >		LEARN MORE >		LEARN MORE >	

Appendix II – Dollar Shave Club Packaging – Source: User reviews retrieved from Google



Appendix III – Dollar Shave Club Father's Day e-card – *Source: DSC's Facebook*

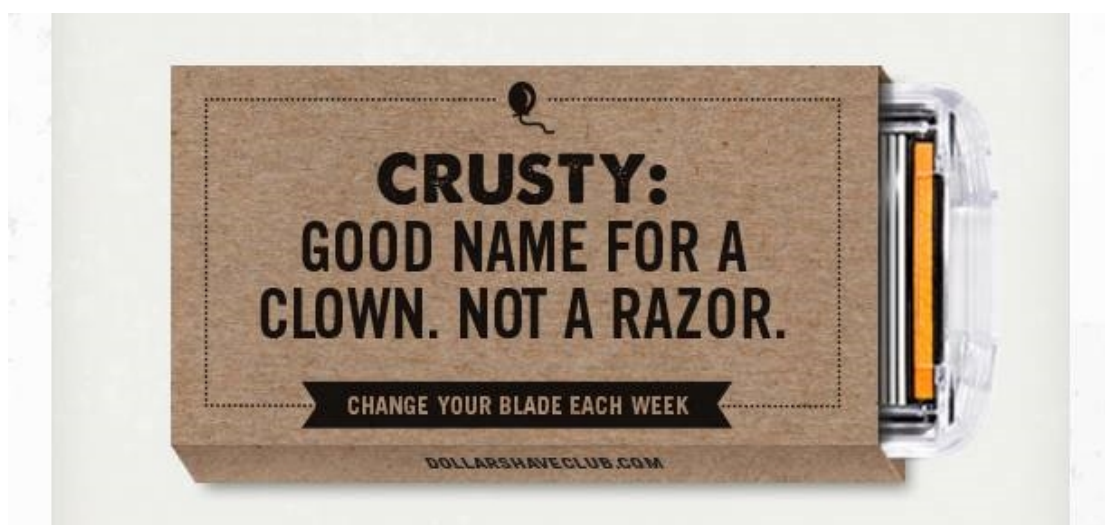


Appendix IV – Dollar Shave Club Billboard – *Source: AdAge*

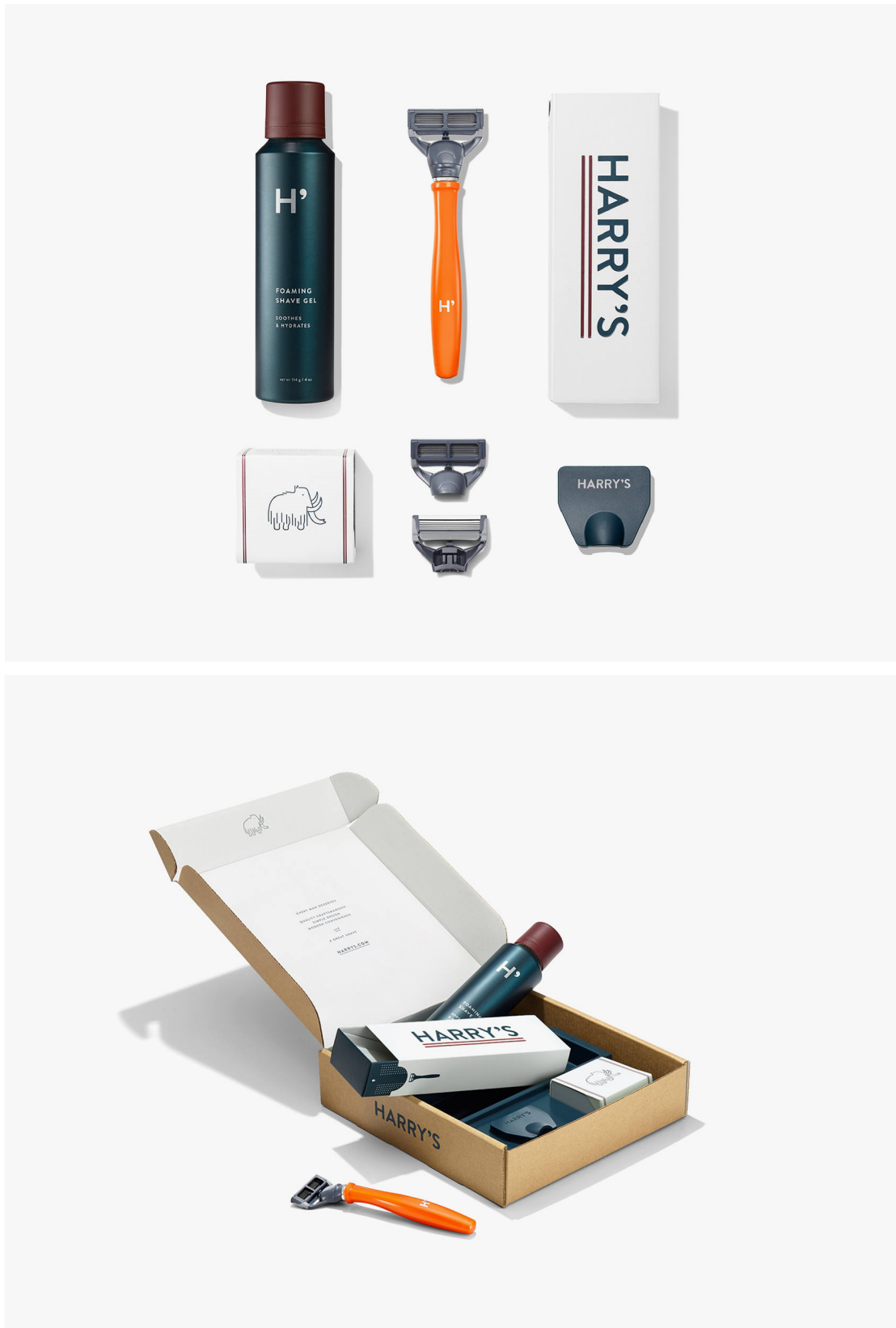


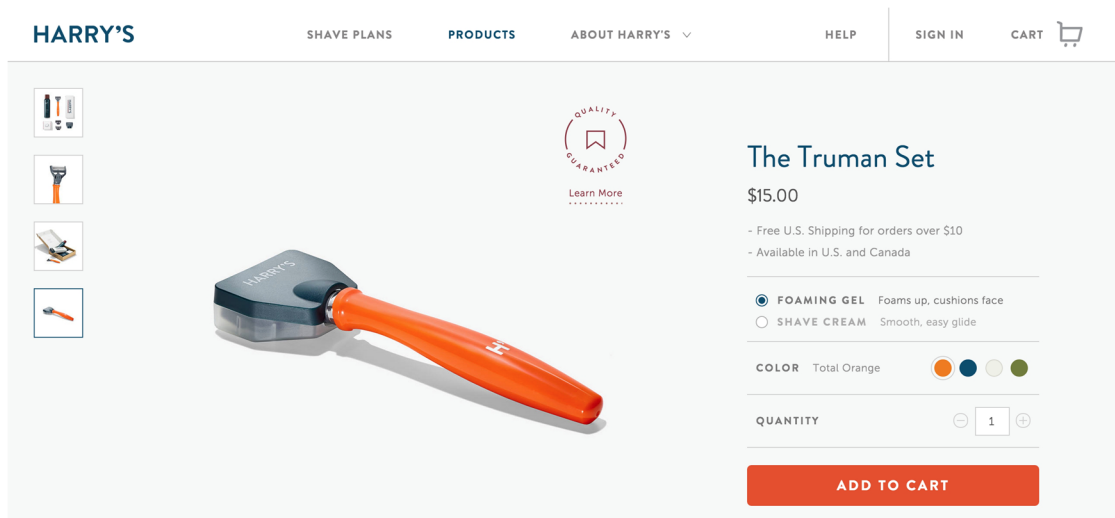
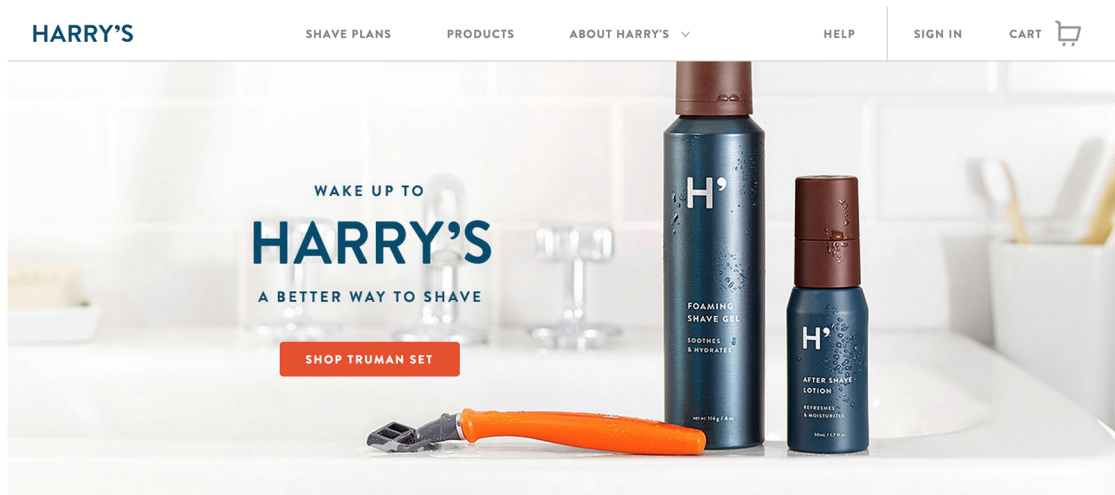






Appendix VII – Harry's offer, website and NYC store – Source: Harry's Website





Appendix VIII – ShaveMOB’s offer and website – Source: ShaveMOB’s Website

[Login](#)
[View Cart](#)

Low Impact Packaging.
Free Shipping On All Orders
in the Contiguous United States.

[HOME](#)
[MEN'S SHAVING](#)
[WOMEN'S SHAVING](#)
[OUR BLADES](#)
[REVIEWS](#)
[INCITE THE MOB](#)

SAVE UP TO 70%
AND GET A GREAT SHAVE

FLEXIBLE, EASY PACKAGES

NO MEMBERSHIP
AND NO RECURRING FEES

MEN'S MOB

LADIES' MOB

OUR BLADES

Low Impact Packaging.
Free Shipping On All Orders
in the Contiguous United States.

[HOME](#)
[MEN'S SHAVING](#)
[WOMEN'S SHAVING](#)
[OUR BLADES](#)
[REVIEWS](#)
[INCITE THE MOB](#)

1 CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE

2 CONFIRM YOUR ORDER

3 SAVE MONEY

THE BABY FACE
3 BLADE RAZOR

AS LOW AS
\$0.92
/CARTRIDGE

The small and mighty 3 blade razor is all the simple man needs.
[MORE DETAILS](#)

THE AVERAGE JOE
4 BLADE RAZOR

AS LOW AS
\$1.12
/CARTRIDGE

The 4 blade razor gets the job done right.
[MORE DETAILS](#)

THE CAVEMAN
6 BLADE RAZOR

AS LOW AS
\$1.33
/CARTRIDGE

The tough-as-nails 6 blade razor that will leave you smoother than a baby's bottom!
[MORE DETAILS](#)

2 MONTH* SUPPLY
1 HANDLE + 4 CARTRIDGES

\$10.99 [GET IT](#)

6 MONTH* SUPPLY
1 HANDLE + 12 CARTRIDGES

SAVE BIG **\$17.99** [GET IT](#)

12 MONTH* SUPPLY
1 HANDLE + 24 CARTRIDGES

SAVE BIGGER **\$29.99** [GET IT](#)

YOU WILL LOVE OUR BLADES MADE FROM HIGH GRADE STAINLESS STEEL UTILIZING TOP NOTCH PRECISION AND WORKMANSHIP

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

SHAVEMOB RAZORS PROVIDE THE QUALITY, EXPERIENCE, AND SATISFACTION YOU'VE COME TO EXPECT, YET WON'T LEAVE YOU WITH STICKER SHOCK.

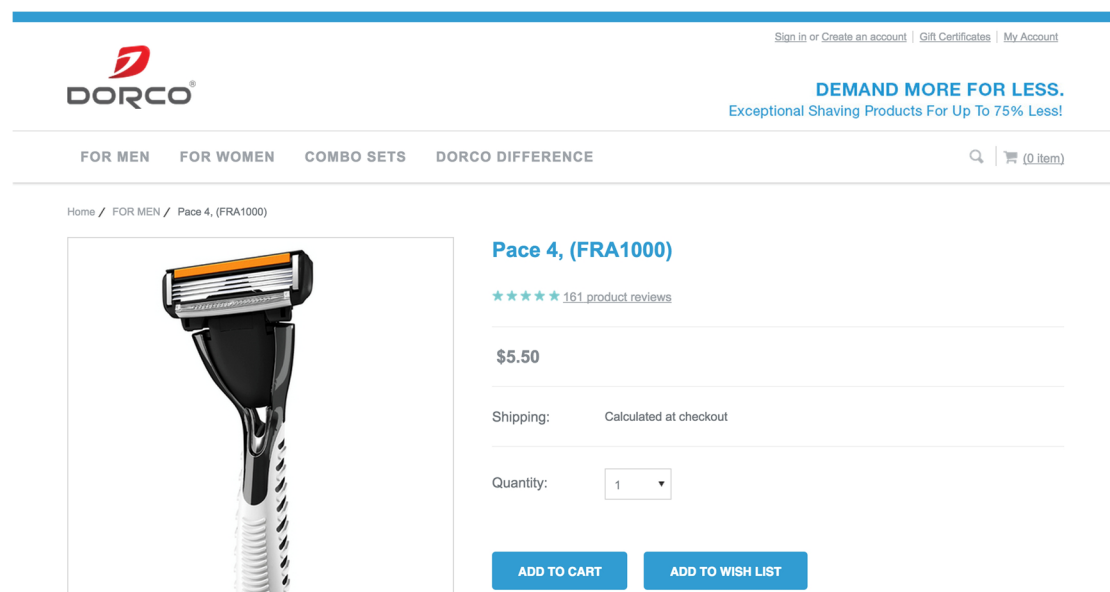
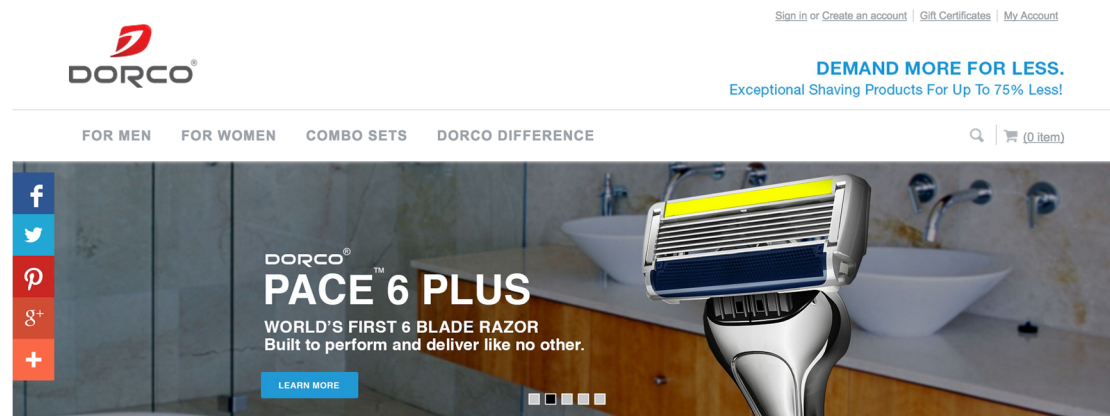
#SHAVESMARTER

[READ OUR FAVORITE REVIEWS](#)

SHAVING WAS SMOOTH, PLEASANT, AND MADE FOR A VERY CONTOURED AND CLEAN SHAVING EXPERIENCE. YOU GET THE SAME QUALITY BLADES AT SHAVEMOB BUT PAY ONLY HALF.

KRISHNA

29

Appendix IX – Dorco’s offer and website – *Source: Dorco’s Website*

2. PEDAGOGICAL NOTES

2.1 Case's Target Audience

The DSC case study is intended for undergraduate and master students taking a course on Operational, International or Strategic Marketing or other Management related courses. It also might be suited for professionals working in Marketing, Advertising or other creativity driven areas.

2.2 Educational Objectives

The main purpose of the Case Study is to create consciousness for the importance of setting the right brand's tone of voice since the embryonic stage of a project, start-up or campaign. It also provides some interesting insights on how to successfully launch an e-commerce start-up, as it presents a success story from recent years.

2.3 Literature Review

As a way of capitalising the learning from Dollar Shave Club's launch, further research on the main academic themes is needed. From marketing communications foundations to more specific subjects such as brand's tone of voice, this literature review will revisit the main concepts and provide a fresh perspective on the state-of-the-art of each matter.

2.3.1 Marketing Communications

Modern marketing calls for more than developing a good product, pricing it attractively, and making it accessible. Companies must also communicate with their present and potential stakeholders and the general public (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Thus, marketing communications is concerned with the methods, processes, meanings, perceptions and actions associated with the ways in which organisations (and their brands) engage with their target audiences. Engagement refers to the use of communication tools, media and messages in order to captivate an audience, often achieved through a blend of intellectual and emotional engagement or stimulation (Fill, 2009). Marketing communications allow companies to link their brands to other people, places, events, brands, experiences, feelings, and things. They can contribute to brand equity by establishing the brand in memory and creating a brand image as well as drive sales and even affect shareholder value (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Taking into account the importance of all stakeholders in the process, marketing communications should not be used just to reach audiences external to the organisation. Good communications with internal stakeholders, such as employees, are also vital if, in the long term, successful favourable images, perceptions and attitudes are to be established (Fill, 2009). According to Kotler & Keller (2012), when done right, marketing communications can have a huge payoff. However, this payoff only occurs if we choose the adequate mix for each brand or situation in question, as marketing isn't an exact science. According to Kotler & Keller (2012), the marketing communications mix consists of eight major modes of communication:

- Advertising — Any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor via print media (newspapers and magazines), broadcast media (radio and television), network media (telephone, cable, satellite, wireless), electronic media (audiotape, videotape, videodisk, CD-ROM, Web page), and display media (billboards, signs, posters);
- Sales promotion — A variety of short-term incentives to encourage trial or purchase of a product or service including consumer promotions (such as samples, coupons, and premiums), trade promotions (such as advertising and

display allowances), and business and sales force promotions (contests for sales reps);

- Events and experiences — Company-sponsored activities and programs designed to create daily or special brand-related interactions with consumers, including sports, arts, entertainment, and cause events as well as less formal activities;
- Public relations and publicity — A variety of programs directed internally to employees of the company or externally to consumers, other firms, the government, and media to promote or protect a company's image or its individual product communications;
- Direct marketing — Use of mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, or Internet to communicate directly with or solicit response or dialogue from specific customers and prospects;
- Interactive marketing — Online activities and programs designed to engage customers or prospects and directly or indirectly raise awareness, improve image, or elicit sales of products and services;
- Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) — People-to-people oral, written, or electronic communications that relate to the merits or experiences of purchasing or using products or services;
- Personal selling — Face-to-face interaction with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making presentations, answering questions, and procuring orders.

These elements of traditional marketing are being taken to an online ambiance, being word-of-mouth marketing one of the best examples. Groeger & Buttle (2014) state that WOMM campaigns are an increasingly popular component of the marketing communications mix. One form of WOMM that is really being bet on is viral marketing. These viral marketing campaigns are spread throughout all online social networks, which create a massive WOMM effect. The reach of these efforts gets out of proportions compared to what traditional WOMM efforts would result in.

2.3.2 Viral Marketing

In 1996, Jeffrey Rayport's article was the first moment in which the term Viral Marketing (as V-Marketing to avoid such a harsh term that was deeply connected with infectious diseases) was used. In that article, Rayport (1996) stated that when it comes to getting a message out with little time, minimal budgets, and maximum effect, nothing on earth beats a virus – thus think of a virus as the ultimate marketing program. At the time, every marketer was desperately searching for a new approach to marketing in the post-mass-market economy – the answer was to have a viral approach as a subspecies of WOMM. Since that first moment in 1996 the concept of viral marketing has been updated to “the process of getting customers to pass along a company's marketing message to friends, family and colleagues. (Laudon and Traver, 2001). Its goal is to use consumer-to-consumer (C2C) communications to spread brands' communications taking advantage of a faster and more cost efficient acceptance (Krishnamurthy, 2001). According to Grifoni, D'Andrea & Ferri (2013), the marketing message to become viral will reach the target of potential consumers by transforming them in active agents that involve other people by sharing the message. So the essence of behaving like a virus didn't changed: like a virus, information about a particular topic is spread in such a way that a huge network is created rapidly (Dobele, Toleman, and Beverland, 2005). The process of Viral Marketing is explained simply, a consumer invites other consumers to visualize the viral message and also the products/services it illustrates; if consumers accept, they will perform the same action of the initial consumer by spreading the message to others consumers (Grifone, D'Andrea & Ferri, 2013). Nevertheless, besides considerable benefits, viral marketing campaigns cannot be considered risk-free, since they can generate negative buzz (MindComet, 2006). Possibly the main risk is the lack of marketers' control concerning the spread of the message and also the content of such transmission that can become counterproductive and generate unfavourable word-of-mouth and negative attitudes toward the brand or the product (Dobele et al., 2005). Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) consider that three conditions must be fulfilled in order to make a marketing campaign go viral. The first critical requirement involves carefully selecting targets that will spread the message. Therefore, it is important to identify those consumers that are interested in what the company has to say and that will

spontaneously pass it to others that will find it interesting as well. The second critical element consists on getting the right message, through emotional connections and by capturing the imagination of the recipient in a unique and unforgettable way (Dobele et al., 2007). The last element is the environment, which needs to take into account that messengers do not forward information they consider “everybody” knows, since they want to be noticeable. So marketers should focus on creating messages that lead to high reproduction rates rather than concentrating only in sending them to as many seeds as possible (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). Woerndl et al. (2005), also identified, based on literature understanding, what they considered to be the five critical factors that influence the success of viral marketing campaigns. The first factor referred is the overall structure of the campaigns. They propose that it has not only to stimulate viral activity but also to address legal and ethical issues in order to not jeopardizing the company image. The second critical element regards the characteristics of the product or service being marketed. Whether some products/services may be natural candidates for viral marketing campaigns, others may not. Another critical factor is the content of the message. In order to make receivers voluntarily become active message transmitters, overall, the message has to capture their imagination, entertain and even intrigue then, as also referred by the previous authors. The fourth factor is related to the characteristics of the diffusion – if the message reaches the right audience, the speed it is transmitted and if spreads spontaneously and exponentially among the audience. Finally, the fifth critical element is the peer-to-peer information conduit what is related to the type of channels available to message transmitters and the ones used to transmit the message, as well as technologies employed by transmitter to pass along the message and also the technologies employed by receivers to get it. However, according to Dobele, Toleman and Beverland (2005), successful viral marketing also depends on “consumers perceiving value in transmitting the message to others without feeling used in the process”, they must feel that what they are sharing will improve or reinforce the perception that others have of them as opinion leaders in their network. Its also important to understand that viral stories and trends must be spotted early for it to have value, both in conferring status on the people who first shared them and in providing monetization opportunity for the networks on which they are shared (Broxton, Interian, Vaver, & Wattenhofer, 2011). Viral marketing goal is twofold; it aims not only to encourage message-forwarding

behaviour, but also, as traditional advertising, to boost brands' consumption (Dobele et al. 2007). James Kydd, Brand Director for Virgin Mobile, states: "Viral marketing is best used not as a one-off tactical end in itself, but as an integrated strategic part of the overall marketing mix. It is a means to an end whereby it not only generates buzz, but also provides on-going, quantifiable brand benefits, such as increased awareness, peer-to-peer endorsement and ultimately more sales." (MindComet 2006). Nonetheless, the clear understanding of how to efficiently incorporate viral marketing into a business model is still unknown, what represents a struggle for marketing executives (McKinsey & Company, 2011).

2.3.3 Online Video Sharing

According to Berger and Milkman (2012) sharing online content has become an integral part of modern life. Specifically regarding video sharing, before the boom of the Internet, videos were only distributed by very large media organizations through TV directly to consumers, who had little or no say on what would or could become popular (Broxton et al., 2011). Thanks to the emergence of online video sharing sites (i.e. YouTube) and social networks (i.e. Facebook) the status quo has changed and consumers now have the power. We can make short videos grow popular through our network of influence, videos that don't have the quality or the possibility of being broadcasted by the very large media organizations mentioned previously. Statistics report that online video users are expected to double to 1.5 billion in 2016 and globally online video traffic will be 55 per cent of all consumer Internet traffic in 2016 (Cisco, 2013). The sheer volume of available videos makes it harder for users to decide what to watch, as they are flooded with tons of videos in all the different online media. As a result, people have come to rely on their social networks to provide viewing choices. They are more likely to watch videos that are distributed from person to person across social networking sites, blogs, emails and instant messaging – the videos that become popular through such sharing have become known as viral videos (Broxton et al., 2011). Aware of the strength and potential of this form of information, brands and advertising agencies are progressively incorporating viral online video into their strategies. Online video sharing can be regarded as a powerful and new form of communication with great potential to virally

spread to large audiences, can influence purchasing attitudes towards a brand, when connected emotionally. It's also important to bear in mind that the Y consumers are the major drivers of social media and viral messages (Berthon et al., 2011) being online video sharing one of the most relevant examples of their influence. The sharing and re-sharing of videos on social sites, blogs, e-mail, and other means has given rise to the phenomenon of viral videos—videos that become popular through Internet sharing (Broxton et al., 2011).

2.3.4 Provocative Content and Humorous Content

Commonly related with the viral videos that are shared online is the type of content that they convey – generally is either provocative or humorous. A strong communication of a viral nature can be more important than the product itself. Kirby (2004) states that there is no need to have a product with a 'wow' factor in order to generate buzz. Instead, the viral campaign's communication agent – often video-based advertisement content – is the element that needs a 'wow' factor. The focus is on campaigns that consumers want to interact with. Therefore, viral marketers seem to believe that devices of provocative nature are what motivate consumers to share the content online (Golan 2006). While traditionally, larger brands have demonstrated to be more reserved and risk averse to the possibility of negative reactions (MindComet 2006) it has been verified that, in order to induce consumers to pass-along, viral online video advertisings tend to rely on the use of increasingly raw content and appeals related to humour, sexuality, nudity and violence (Golan 2006). From hilarious to raunchy to controversial good content and concepts can often make or break a viral campaign. The general rule of thumb is that the content must be compelling; it must evoke a response on an emotional level from the person viewing it (MindComet 2006). Two key factors have been suggested to contribute to the extent a message is considered provocative; the degree to which it surprises the viewer and the perception that it somehow transgresses societal norms (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda 2003). Commercials' memorability is of significant importance to advertisers. Therefore, it would be interesting to assess provocative features' capability to enhance brand recall and purchase intention in order to assure that it does not draw attention to itself and away from the brand. The widespread use of

incongruent information in advertisements has proved to be very efficient in increasing not only attention but also the extent to which the ad is processed (Kellaris 2007). Although still raising a number of controversial issues among marketers and researchers, the use of humorous content in advertising in order to increase ads' efficacy is undoubtedly pervasive. Humour advocates claim that it generates attention, increases memorability, helps overcoming sales resistance and enhance message's persuasiveness but also engage and involve the audience (Kellaris 2007). Brown, Bhadury and Pope (2010), taking into account Dahl et al. (2003) study, which proposes provocative advertising to positively affect brands' memorability, suggest provocativeness to reverse this negative effect. In their paper, they demonstrate how attention-getting properties of provocative features, which simultaneously surprise viewers in an unexpected manner, combined with humorous appeals can increase memorability in the long term and elicit greater involvement with the ad.

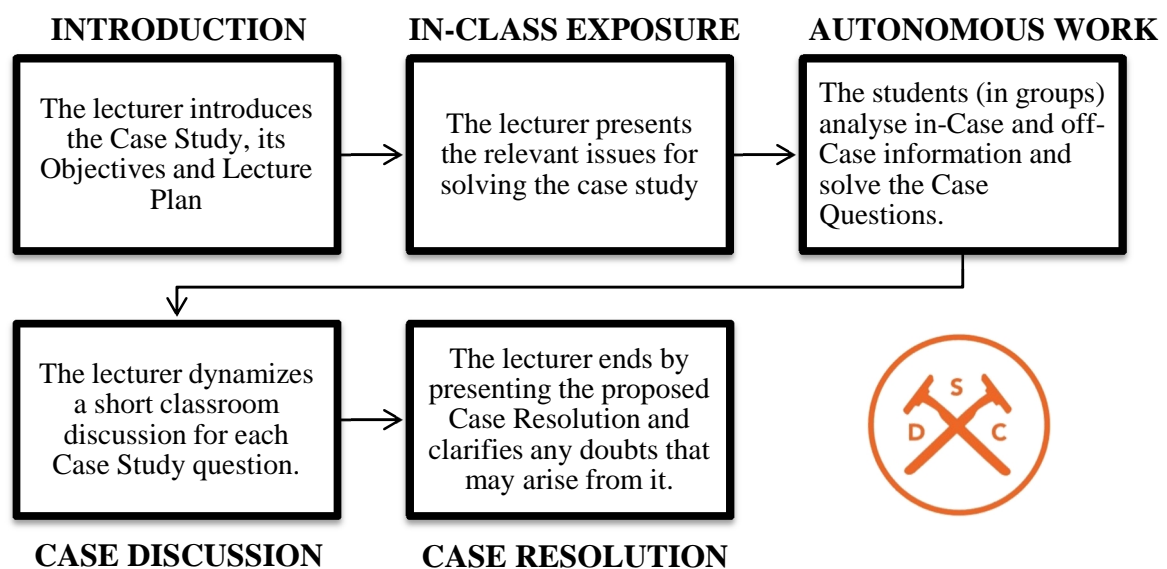
2.3.5 Brand Tone of Voice

More than the type of content that you share with the audience it's essential to know what is your brand's tone of voice. Listening to the audience and finding what they respond to will allow you to initiate the conversation using the brand's tone of voice. Gray (2013) defines tone of voice as how you express the brand personality through writing style and creative approach to communication. This fuels the audiences' expectations of their relationship with the brand. When a person reads a company's content, it understands it on two levels. The facts tell the analytical side of your brain what the company does, while the tone tells the creative side what they'd be like to deal with (Acrolinx 2015). Therefore, brand tone of voice must be considered a strategic asset — it is how the brand creates an emotional connection to build a specific relationship with its audiences. It is central in your brand experience, coming to life in all forms of communication and shaping the very storytelling of the brand (Gray 2013). Brands evolve over time, but if they're clearly defined from the start, the evolution is gradual and natural. (Vogelgesang 2011). Gray (2013) states that the brand's personality should truly align with your organization's culture and be rooted in the brand purpose of existence. It's impossible to be authentic if you're trying to be everything to everyone or changing course with every market trend.

But authenticity alone isn't enough. The brand's tone of voice needs to hit a balance between what is credible for the business and what's relevant to its audiences (Gray 2013). Vogelgesang (2011) also noted that the brand's voice must shine also on its packaging because it's the core of our business. It's also important because many customers never encounter any other elements of our brand and others customers that have already contacted with other elements of the brand will be craving for consistency on the brand's tone of voice. And it cannot just live in advertising and marketing communications. It must be understood and brought to life through your entire organization. It must be woven through every experience, for your customers and employees (Gray 2013).

2.4 Lecture Plan

This case study is projected to be analysed and solved during the course of several classes of Marketing. The lecturer will have the mission of inflaming the Dollar Shave Club's spirit on the audience, following the lecture plan process which is described on the flowchart below.



To introduce the case, the lecturer should also exhibit DSC's launch video "Our Blades Are F***ing Great", an outstanding viral hit that came from its headquarters.

For autonomous work, the lecturer should encourage students to:

- Read the case study carefully and at least a couple of times;
- Browse the internet to collect further information (on reliable sources) regarding the company or the environmental context to enhance the quality of the analysis;
- Be creative and think of reasoned paths for DSC's future;
- Brainstorm and discuss different points of view between the group's members to generate numerous solutions for each case question.

The expected duration of this lecture can be found on the table below, but it should be only considered as a reference for the planning of the lecture.

Lecture Moments	Duration
Introduction	30 min
In-Class Exposure	30 min
Autonomous Work	120 min
Case Discussion	90 min
Case Resolution	45 min

2.5 Animation Questions

- Do you buy razor blades? How often?
- What's your opinion on its price? Is it fair?
- Would you consider buying blades online?
- Have you heard about Dollar Shave Club?

2.6 Resolution Proposal

1. Given the information on DSC and the men's razor blades market, develop a dynamic SWOT analysis for the company.

<h3>Strengths</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The DSC's razors combine quality and affordability in the same product;2. The virality of their first video has given them a lot of online popularity and loyalty from their members;3. Their online approach (based on Youtube videos and social media) is less expensive than traditional mass marketing efforts and it allows them to reach more people all around the world;4. The use of an online point of sale allows lowering operating costs. Their website is very intuitive and user-friendly. The subscription process only has 4 steps and a live chat for any doubts. You can upgrade, downgrade or cancel your membership at any time.	<h3>Weaknesses</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. High dependency on the trade agreements with China and South Korea. If something went wrong, DSC would be without a supplier and out of business;2. DSC doesn't accept Paypal, which is widely regarded as one of the safest online payment methods;3. Primarily focused on the male audience, as Dollar Shave Club does not currently offer any product for the female segment;4. The lack of offline presence may lead elder men to not acknowledge the existence of their value proposition.
<h3>Opportunities</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The demand for e-commerce is increasing as people prefer to buy things from the comfort of their homes;2. The global financial crisis has made the consumers more sensible about prices and consequently, looking to buy cheaper products or with better value for money;3. The women's razor blades market as they are also faced with a shaving necessity;4. Nowadays, men are using grooming products more regularly as they are starting to care more about the way they look.	<h3>Threats</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The existence of strong and well established companies in the men's razor industry for centuries makes the battle for market share look impossible to new entrants;2. Private labels have achieved further penetration in both North America and Western Europe;3. Electric shaving is being seen as a better option to wet shaving;4. Men are shaving less as the stubbly and unshaven look is seen as the norm, and due to this fact the industry has been affected.

SO Strategy

(S1xO4) - The increasing use of grooming products by men may be an opportunity for DSC to apply their “Value for Money” proposition (quality & affordability) in a whole new bathroom line of products;

(S2xO3) - Using their ability to launch viral videos and gather strong popularity among consumers may reveal to be a wise solution to approach the women’s razor blades market.

WO Strategy

(W2xO1) - Diversifying the methods of payment and subsequently accepting Paypal, could be a way to attract an increasing number of e-shoppers;

(W4xO2) - An increasing bet on traditional media reinforcing the low price of their “Double Twin” razor as well as the evident value for money of “The Executive” razor may be a way to attract elder men into any of Dollar Shave Club subscription plans.

ST Strategy

(S2xT1) - The use of viral videos may be a way to achieve significant loyalty from fans and fight the strong and well established companies in the men’s razor industry;

(S4xT2) - Using a very intuitive and user-friendly online point of sale may be not only a way to cut down costs but also to fight the growth of razors’ private labels (known for their dullness and simplicity) in some parts of the world.

WT Strategy

(W3xT3) - With the increasing popularity of electric shaving in contrast to the decreasing prevalence of wet shaving, may present itself as an opportunity for DSC to explore other targets, such as the female segment, by releasing.

2. How do you define DSC segmentation, target and positioning?

a. Position DSC in a Perceptual Map against Gillette and Schick.

SEGMENTATION	CRITERIA	TARGET
Demographic	Age	From 18 to 40 years old Generations X and Y
	Gender	Male
	Income	Low and medium incomes
Geographic	Region	U.S.A., Canada or Australia
	Urban	Metropolitan and urban areas with a higher density of population
Psychographic	Lifestyle	Men that value their time and energy to do the things they love. They can be found in online social communities, where they socialize and exchange information and opinions. They also like good quality products in general but that don't like to shop and pay high prices, so they are not willing to spend money without a good reason
	Personality	Modern, digital native, critical and sure of what he needs. Likes to share information and to be always updated
	Motives	A man that is always trying to improve his life and that is not afraid to experience new things. He knows what he wants and what to do to achieve it
	Attributes	Likes to have the power of information in his hands and to make good choices. Doesn't want to make much effort in getting what he needs
Behavioural	Benefit Expectations	Enjoys taking care of himself and to look good. He intends to have good and reliable razor blades at a fair and cheaper price and without the trouble of having to go to a shopping mall to get it
	Brand Loyalty	He likes to experiment, but he knows what he wants and what his best for him, remaining with the brand that most fulfil his needs
	Volume Usage	Men that only need one good razor blade per week
	End Use	Uses razor blades in all kind of occasions independent of the seasons. A man that likes to have a clean and good look
	Price Sensitivity	A man who wants to save money

IDENTIFICATION	DIFFERENTIATION
Dollar Shave Club is a player in the men's razor market, being the first player on the online segment.	Dollar Shave Club positions its products in a "more for less" category. Consumers pay a fair price for what they really need.

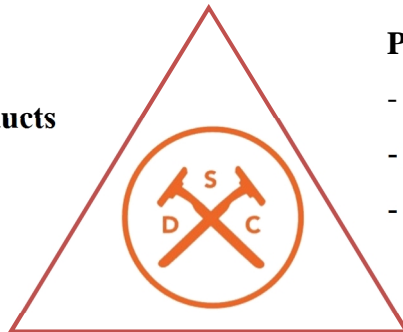
GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF POSITIONING

Consumers' Expectations

- Reliable and Quality Products
- Save Time and Money
- To look good

Positioning of competing products

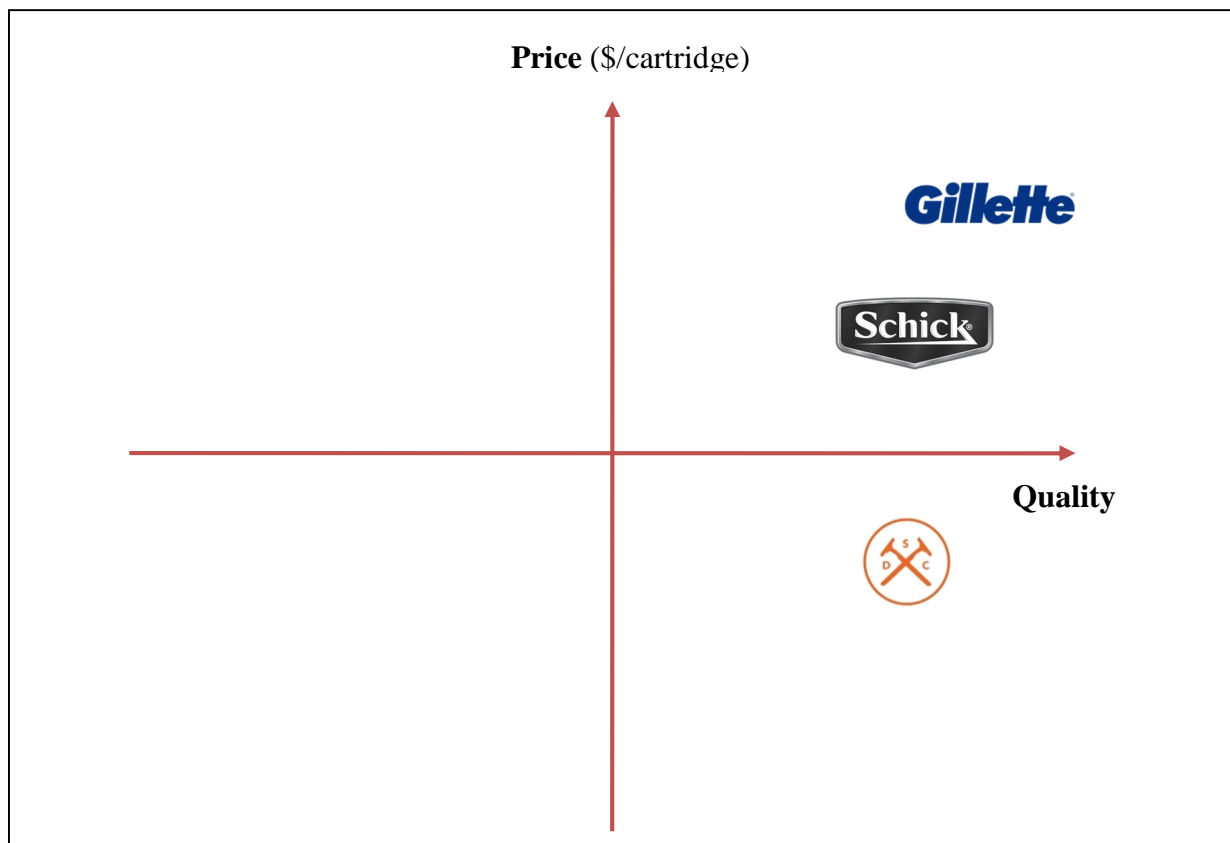
- Higher prices
- Global brands
- Mass media promotion



Potential trumps of the product

- Cheap and fair prices
- Delivery each month to your door
- Close relationship with the cli

CONCEPTUAL MAP



Conceptual Map Justification

PRODUCT	PRICE JUSTIFICATION	QUALITY JUSTIFICATION
Gillette Fusion	17,50\$	Leader of the market for over a century, Gillette has a huge grooming and skin care products portfolio for men. They are costumers focused and constantly breaking new ground in shaving technology through science.
Schick Hydro	12,03\$	Schick focuses on providing a truly liberating shave, one that is no longer a chore, but a more pleasurable, effortless skincare experience for both men and women. They are developing products that go beyond just removing hair to actually caring for the customers' skin - they razors are virtually irritation-free, for a relaxed and refreshed experience.
DSC 4X blade	6\$	Dollar Shave Club couldn't be simpler and better: reliable and high quality razor blades, send directly to the customers house every month. No more over-paying for fancy brand name shave tech. No more forgetting to buy your blades.

Source: Gillette Shave Club, Amazon.com & Dollar Shave Club.

**3. Reflect about DSC current positioning and strategy. Where should it go next?
Give practical examples, using the Ansoff Matrix do justify your choice.**

On the case study there were only presented the small range of razors, the shave butter and the butt wipes. They are shipped for the USA, Canada and Australia. So far they have succeeded both in diversifying their portfolio and developing new markets, so the question remains: Where to take it from here?



Using the Ansoff Matrix, we have identified 3 possible future options: 2 Market Development strategies and 1 Product Development strategy. There isn't any solution for a Diversification strategy, the riskier strategy in an Ansoff Matrix, as they should be focused on small baby steps for the moment.

Option A - Dollar Shave Club for Ladies – Market Development

As their copycat competitor ShaveMOB offers razors for women, DSC could also offer their high quality razors to ladies. There's a market for it and they also suffer from being over charged when buying them. This is the same pain they found for men, only a different gender. It seems the logical step to take.

Option B – Internationalization: Euro Shave Club – Market Development

Do the fellows in Europe also get robbed when buying razors? Yes, they do! Despite having a competitor on that territory (Razwar.com), DSC would easily succeed in that new market by benefiting from their biggest online reputation and brand awareness.

Option C – Product Portfolio Expansion – Product Development

As DSC's CEO points out: they aim to own the bathroom. The way to achieve that is by expanding their small product portfolio with more men grooming products. This way, DSC could become a lifestyle brand for men who care about their looks but that don't want to spend tons of money.

All of these 3 options presented above were created merely with the information from the case study but by the end of 2015, DSC has already launched a new line of products: The Boogie's.

The Boogie's is a hair styling line for men that clearly sets the tone for what is the next objectives for DSC: a complete and undisputed takeover of men's bathroom, by offering simple and fairly priced solutions for men to look as good as they can. As it was pointed in Option C, there's a clear opportunity to become a reference lifestyle brand for men and completely rule all of men grooming market.

Using its tone of voice, DSC can help decode what products do and which are the most appropriate for each man – something that is impossible for men to figure out in the usual retail experience or even in other online experiences where they are flooded with information but every products looks the same. Also regarding their mission to inform men they are distributing a monthly magazine, about ten pages in length, to all of Dollar Shave Club members called "The Bathroom Minutes" – whereas they indicate some editorial potential for the future.

4. DSC entered a broader market with the launch of butt wipes for men. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new product in DSC portfolio.



Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With a significantly portion of their customers trying One Wipe Charlies, it will definitely result in a growth of DSC's sales/revenues; - Investing in a new product will result in an increase of DSC's levels of awareness; - Introducing One Wipe Charlies may result in the retention of new customers; - The launch of this product will help Dollar Shave Club understand if they really can bet on other “bathroom products” that are not related with shaving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching a product that doesn't belong to DSC's core business may result in a failure; - Butt wipes are a non-essential good; - Toilet paper is significantly cheaper; - Possible loss of the focus with shaving related products; - Butt wipes' popularity is still yet to be proved.

5. Can DSC be considered as a tribal brand? Justify your answers in three main points.

Yes, DSC can be considered as a tribal brand. A tribal brand can be defined as a brand that is able to gather a network of people who are linked by a shared belief. Not only are those people consumers, as they are also believers and promoters of the brand.

Having this definition in mind, it is possible to make a correlation with Dollar Shave Club and understand its phenomenon. It started by a simple idea: “Shaving should be simple.” to become a successful business model. In order to promote the main idea of the business, DSC launched their first ad which became viral and generated buzz all around the internet. People became more aware about this new concept, believing that DSC’s idea could really work in their daily life. Once people try DSC’s products and get the insight about the brand, it is very likely that they will engage with the brand and become evangelists of Dollar Shave Club, passing the message through word of mouth, sharing it with their network like family members, friends and public. As a Club, DSC represents the perfect example of a digital tribal brand of the XXI century. The key element that justifies Dollar Shave Club as a tribal brand is the fact that it is voluntarily formed through individual identification with a brand by costumers. The main factors that may sustain this concept:

- **Perceived brand authenticity** – Costumers got the insight about the main message “Shaving should be simple.”. Men realized that they do not really need such advanced tools only to shave themselves in their daily life;
- **Positive experience in interacting with the brand** – There is an active interaction between the DSC and its consumers, improved by social media, that started from the right tone of voice to start the talk with their first video;
- **Collective sense of belonging within a group** – As referred before, costumers feel the main message of the brand, thinking that the DSC really perceived what is missing in the market and what men really seek: cheaper blades with quality, with the advantage of having the product delivered at home without ever having to remember to buy them again.

2.7 Case Resolution Slides



DOLLARSHAVECLUB.COM

Case Study Resolution



1. Given the information on DSC and men's razor market, develop a Dynamic SWOT analysis for the company.



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The DSC's razors combine quality and affordability in the same product; 2. The virality of their first video has given them a lot of online popularity and loyalty from their members; 3. Their online approach (based on Youtube videos and social media) is less expensive than traditional mass marketing efforts and it allows them to reach more people all around the world; 4. The use of an online point of sale allows lowering operating costs. Their website is very intuitive and user-friendly. The subscription process only has 4 steps and a live chat for any doubts. You can upgrade, downgrade or cancel your membership at anytime. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High dependency on the trade agreements with China and South Korea. If something went wrong, DSC would be without a supplier and out of business; 2. DSC doesn't accept Paypal, which is widely regarded as one of the safest online payment methods; 3. Primarily focused on the male audience, as Dollar Shave Club does not currently offer any product for the female segment; 4. The lack of offline presence may lead elder men to not acknowledge the existence of their value proposition.

Opportunities

1. The demand for e-commerce is increasing as people prefer to buy things from the comfort of their homes;
2. The global financial crisis has made the consumers more sensible about prices and consequently, looking to buy cheaper products or with better value for money;
3. The women's razor blades market as they are also faced with a shaving necessity;
4. Nowadays, men are using grooming products more regularly as they are starting to care more about the way they look.

Threats

1. The existence of strong and well established companies in the men's razor industry for centuries makes the battle for market share look impossible to new entrants;
2. Private labels have achieved further penetration in both North America and Western Europe;
3. Electric shaving is being seen as a better option to wet shaving;
4. Men are shaving less as the stubbly and unshaven look is seen as the norm, and due to this fact the industry has been affected.

Dynamic SWOT Analysis

Strengths & Opportunities

(S1xO4) - The increasing use of grooming products by men may be an opportunity for DSC to apply their "Value for Money" proposition (quality & affordability) in a whole new bathroom line of products;

(S2xO3) - Using their ability to launch viral videos and gather strong popularity among consumers may reveal to be a wise solution to approach the women's razor blades market.

Strengths & Threats

(S2xT1) - The use of viral videos may be a way to achieve significant loyalty from fans and fight the strong and well established companies in the men's razor industry;

(S4xT2) - Using a very intuitive and user-friendly online point of sale may be not only a way to cut down costs but also to fight the growth of razors' private labels (known for their dullness and simplicity) in some parts of the world.

Dynamic SWOT Analysis

Weaknesses & Opportunities

(W2xO1) - Diversifying the methods of payment and subsequently accepting Paypal, could be a way to attract an increasing number of e-shoppers

(W4xO2) - An increasing bet on traditional media reinforcing the low price of their "Double Twin" razor as well as the evident value for money of "The Executive" razor may be a way to attract elder men into any of Dollar Shave Club subscription plans

Weaknesses & Threats

(W3xT3) - With the increasing popularity of electric shaving in contrast to the decreasing prevalence of wet shaving, may present itself as an opportunity for DSC to explore other targets, such as the female segment, by releasing

2. How do you define DSC segmentation, target and positioning?

a. Position DSC in a Perceptual Map against Gillette and Schick.



Segmentation**Criteria****Target**

Demographic	AGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• From 18 to 50 years old• Generations X and Y
	GENDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male
	INCOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low and medium incomes
Geographic	REGION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• U.S.A., Canada or Australia
	URBAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Metropolitan and urban areas with a higher density of population

Segmentation**Criteria****Target**

Behavioral	BENEFIT EXPECTATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoys taking care of himself and to look good. He intends to have good and reliable razor blades at a fair and cheaper price and without the trouble of having to go to a shopping mall to get it.
	BRAND LOYALTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He likes to experiment, but he knows what he wants and what his best for him, remaining with the brand that most fulfill his needs
	VOLUME USAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men that only need one good razor blade per week
	END USAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses razor blades in all kind of occasions independent of the seasons. A man that likes to have a clean and good look
	PRICE SENSIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A man who wants to save money

Positioning

IDENTIFICATION

Dollar Shave Club is a player in the shaving market, being the razor blades its biggest sector.

DIFFERENTIATION

Dollar Shave Club positions its products in a “more for less” category. Consumers pay a fair price for what they need.

Golden Triangle of Positioning

CONSUMER'S EXPECTATIONS

- ⊗ Reliable and quality products
- ⊗ Save Time and Money
- ⊗ To look good

POSITIONING OF COMPETING PRODUCTS

- ⊗ Higher prices
- ⊗ Global Brands
- ⊗ Mass media promotion



POTENCIAL TRUMPS OF THE PRODUCT

- ⊗ Cheap and fair prices
- ⊗ Delivery each month

**3. Reflect about DSC
positioning and strategy.
Where should it go next?
Give practical examples, using
the Ansoff Matrix to explain
your rationale.**





Ansoff Matrix

Market Penetration

Product Development

PRODUCT PORTFOLIO
EXPANSION

Market Development

Diversification

DOLLAR SHAVE CLUB
FOR LADIES

EURO SHAVE CLUB

However ...

In 2015 Dollar Shave Club launched a new line of products: *Boogie's*



A hair styling line for men that clearly sets the tone for what are the next objectives for DSC: a complete and undisputed takeover of men's bathroom, by offering simple and fairly priced solutions for men to look as good as they can.

DSC's Goals

- ⊗ Rule all of men grooming market
- ⊗ Become a reference lifestyle brand for men

**But how is DSC
any different
from other brands ?**



Help decode what products do and which are the most appropriate for each man by using its straightforward tone of voice



4. DSC entered a broader market with the launch of butt wipes for men.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new product in DSC portfolio.



Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a significantly portion of their customers trying One Wipe Charlies, it will definitely result in a growth of DSC's sales/revenues; • Investing in a new product will result in an increase of DSC's levels of awareness; • Introducing One Wipe Charlies may result in the retention of new clients; • The launch of this product will help Dollar Shave Club understand if they really can bet on other “bathroom products” that are not related with shaving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching a product that doesn't belong to DSC's core business may result in a failure; • Buttwipes are a non-essential good; Toilet paper is significantly cheaper; • Possible loss of the focus with shaving related products; • Buttwipes' popularity is still yet to be proved (according to a DSC study only 16% of men use buttwipes instead of toilet paper).

5. Can DSC be considered a tribal brand?

Justify your answer in 3 main points.



YES !

TRIBAL BRAND a brand that is able to gather a network of people who are linked by a shared belief. Not only are those people consumers, as they are also believers and promoters of the brand.

⊗ Perceived brand authenticity

Customers got the insight about the main message: "Shaving should be simple.". Men realized that they do not really need such advanced tools only to shave themselves in their daily life;

⊗ Experiences felt through interaction with the brand

There is an active interaction between the DSC and its consumers, improved by the social media tools;

⊗ Collective sense of belonging within a group

Members feel the main message of the Brand, thinking that the DSC really perceived what is missing in the market, and what men really want: cheaper blades with quality, with the advantage of having the product delivered at home.





**Thank you
for your
attention!**

2.8 Main Takeaways for Marketeers

Dollar Shave Club (DSC) has proved to be a benchmark for Marketeers. In these takeaways from this case study you will find the three main reasons that made it so interesting to study and to be considered an historic brand by the way it shook things up.

DSC proved that startups can really pose a threat to big corporate companies. The way they made Gillette reconsider its own business model, pricing strategy and communication showed that some market leaders create a stable position where they stand without being questioned, but that doesn't last forever. When the "David" comes and fights off the "Goliath" things get pretty ugly: and it enables the audience to see weaknesses that before it hasn't been identified on the giant player. This will make the customers question what made them start this relationship in the first place. Also, the right tone of voice can take the brand way farther than it would be expected. Off course, Michael Dubin expected some success from DSC's first video, but never the virality level that it achieved. Despite putting its servers down, it also boosted immensely their business and gave them the strength they need in their fight against the big players in their market. Talking to your audience's heart and solving their main concerns is key to a great tone of voice. The way this develops throughout all of communication and social media strategy will enable a lasting win-win relationship with the audience, where they will want more from the brand and are willing to "die" for the brand that really knows how to connect with them and can relate to their problems.

And the last thing, is that online markets have proven to grow exponentially faster than traditional markets. DSC has showed that in the growth that has demonstrated in merely three years of activity, compared to the saturated traditional men's razors market. Much like in the music industry, where iTunes appeared to set a new standard of prices of 0,99\$ per song and 9,99\$ per album, DSC appeared to show a better way. Selling cheap commodities online has proven to be very successfully, even better when it gets a proper physical packaging and engaging and disruptive communication.

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