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Case Study Analysis: Victoria's Secret

If you asked me which fashion shows were accessible to everyone, I would say Victoria's Secret fashion shows. If you weren't physically at the fashion show, you could watch it on tv. I remembered when I was in elementary school my family and I would gather in the living room to watch the Victoria's Secret fashion show. My little sister and I would discuss amongst each other about which lingerie outfit or wings were our favorite based on color and design. As I got older, I became less interested. According to the Victoria Secret Company and Co. website, Victoria Secret is "the world's largest intimate specialty retailer offering a wide assortment, fashion-inspired collections providing the best products to help women express their confidence, sexiness and peace" ("About Us | Victoria's Secret & Co., 2024). Victoria Secret was also a powerhouse in the 90s and '00s thanks to clothing and beauty lines (Segal, 2024). However, that all changed in the 2010s due to two factors.

The first factor was "new brands like Aerie and Skims arose and started gaining market share" (Segal, 2024). Second factor was the appearance of movements like #MeToo Movement and the Body Positivity Movement. The #MeToo Movement was an "awareness movement around the issue of sexual harassment and sexual abuse of women in the workplace that grew to prominence in 2017" (Brittain, 2023). This movement helped uncover some sinister secrets

hidden within the brand. The Body Positivity Movement was a movement that “challenged unrealistic feminine beauty standards and helped people develop a healthy body image” (Cherry, 2020). During this movement, many brands including Victoria’s Secret were criticized for their lack of inclusivity in their products and branding. People pointed out that Victoria’s Secret promoted an unattainable beauty standard to young girls and women. The manner in which the brand handled the issue was careless and insensitive. When asked about inclusivity of transgender models and plus-sized models in 2017, “the chief marketing officer for L Brands - Victoria’s Secret parent company - Ed Rzaek’s response in summary was that transgender and plus-size women couldn’t serve the same fantasy as thin women” (Ramelli, 2021). As a result, “viewership from the following fashion show in 2017 dropped from 5 million viewers to 3.3 million and many of Victoria’s Secret stores began to shut down” (Ramelli, 2021). Since then, Victoria’s Secret has been trying to get back in the graces of the public. Recently, Victoria Secret had a fashion show filled with thin models, plus-sized models, and transgender models. There were four lingerie categories shown in this fashion show: Modern Heritage, Twinkle, Art Studio, and Unwrap the Magic (“The Downfall of Victoria Secret,” 2024). Although, many people thought and felt the fashion show was a bit lackluster. Some people didn’t like how the fashion show wasn’t designed like Victoria’s Secret fashion shows in the past. Many people believed that the show was poorly thought out and cheaply designed (“The Downfall of Victoria Secret,” 2024). The inclusivity message the brand was trying to achieve was “overshadowed by the sub-par fashion” (“The Downfall of Victoria Secret,” 2024). Victoria’s Secret had a threat they could not resolve.

Victoria's Secret's threat was to change its brand image. Since the '90s, Victoria's Secret has built its image on skinny women, giving brands like SavageXFenty and Skims a competitive advantage. They realized that Victoria's Secret catered to skinny women rather than all body types, therefore in order to stand out, they wanted to promote products that were suitable for all body types. I think Victoria's Secret should have seen this as an opportunity to take the brand into a new direction, instead of seeing it as an obstacle. From Razek's response, Victoria's Secret was thinking more about the company's brand than the company's target audience. If they were reluctant to make changes to the brand's image of skinny women, they had the option not to answer any questions about inclusion. However, if they wanted to be honest, they could answer these kinds of questions in a respectful way and discuss how there aren't many plus-size female models or plus-size female modeling agencies in the modeling industry. In my opinion, the actual marketing manager for Victoria's Secret brand should have answered the inclusivity questions instead of Ed Razek who was the chief marketing officer for L Brands. It doesn't make sense for someone who works for another brand to speak for a different brand that has its own chief marketing officer. Also, I found it strange that I couldn't find a single article mentioning Victoria's Secret issuing a public apology for Ed's responses which would have been a great opportunity to save the brand's reputation. If I were in Victoria's Secret position, I would have done a few things differently.

If I were the chief marketing officer for Victoria's Secret, I would have created a poll on social media asking followers when they would like to see the return of Victoria's Secret fashion show before popping out with a fashion show unexpectedly. These few years there was little to no promotion or advertising for Victoria's Secret return. Creating a poll online would have sparked the public's interest and brought attention to the brand. Then, I would make a marketing

objective. The marketing objective would be to organize a fashion show that promotes inclusion for all body types and reflects today's fashion. Keeping this in mind, I would look at a variety of aesthetics that emerged during the pandemic and select ones that matched the brand's fantasy theme as well as the brand's fashion style. Many Victoria's Secret products are vibrant, sexy, and feminine. Barbiecore, mermaidcore, cottagecore, and the baddie aesthetic would be my picks for the fashion show. I would probably make them the actual categories for the show. All four of these aesthetics represent a mix of femininity, sexyness, and color, which makes them perfect for the brand. As for models, I would create posts asking followers to tag the names of plus-size models and make ads persuading those who don't look like the typical woman. Last but not least, I will hold practices for the models to practice their walks before the month of the fashion show.

Even though Victoria's Secret was once a beloved and untouchable brand in the past, the brand still has a lot of growing up to do. If they don't start trying to grow with society and their audience, they will eventually be left behind.

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