

STEP ONE

Analysis of a Marketing Campaign

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Introducing STEP ONE

Step One is an Australian brand of men's underwear, made from bamboo and designed for comfort. The brand was founded by Greg Taylor in 2016 and through online sales in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, he has "built a company with annual revenue of more than \$35 million only four years after starting it" (Evans, 2021).

Figure 1

Communications piece: television commercial (storyboard)



My legs are like tree trunks ...



And when tree trunks walk together, they chafe!



But Step One has got you covered.



We've put these lycra panels between the legs ...



It glides ... when you walk.



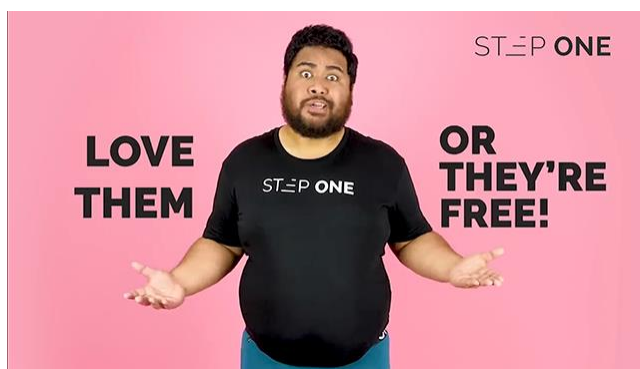
Step One is made from bamboo ...



Bamboo wicks away your sweat ... to let you breathe.



We've got free shipping, thousands of five star reviews and a first pair guarantee.



Love 'em or they're free!



So if you want underwear that won't ride up, won't trap sweat and won't chafe ...



You can buy them online at StepOne.life .



Step One. Get some.

Note. Storyboard images and dialogue adapted from Step One (2020, May 19). *Discover the most well rated underwear in Australia* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/EpFTpGeoCDY>

Critique

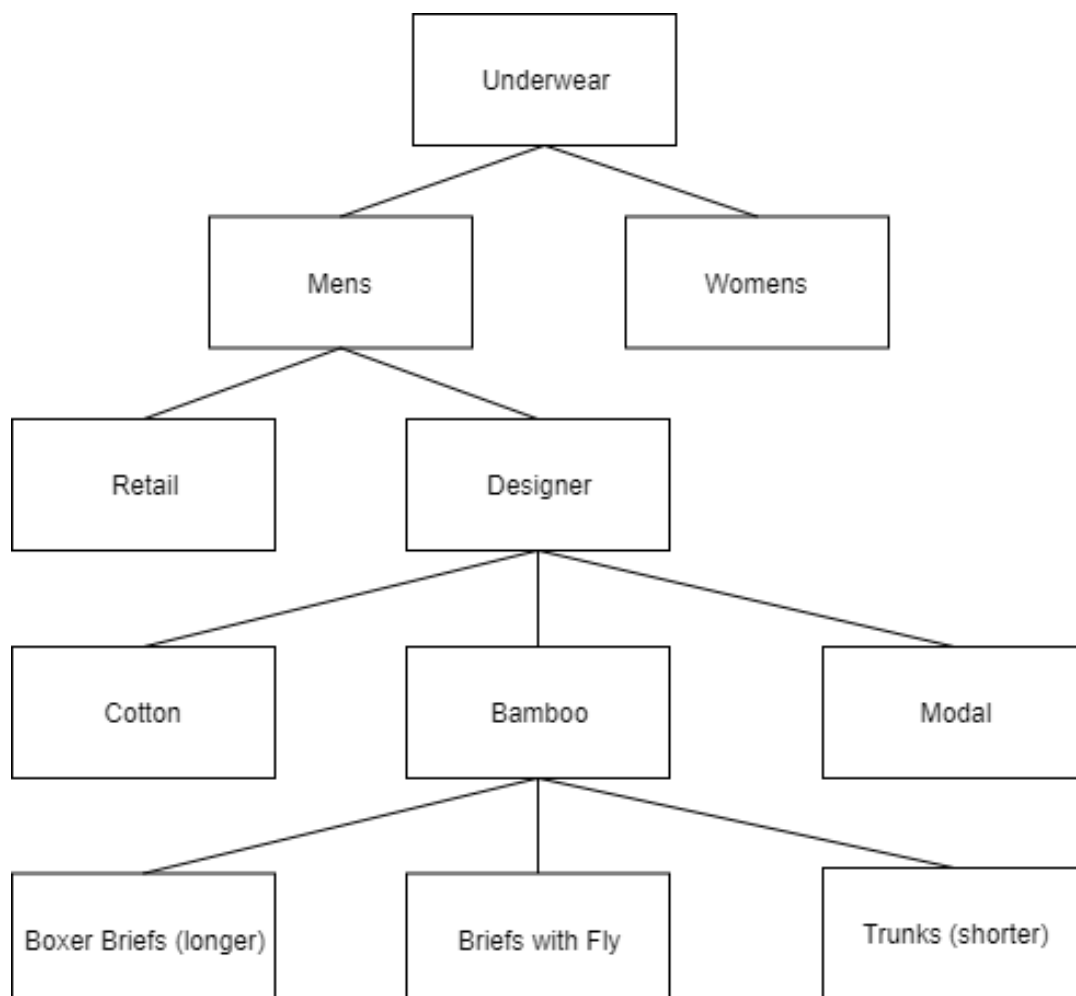
“Buying underwear sucks. You know. We know it. Guys simply don’t care about it. It’s an afterthought. We've changed the game.” (Step One UK, 2021)

While it can be argued to what degree Step One has changed the game, when their television commercial fronted by Lawrence Ola (figure 1) is evaluated as a communications piece, understanding the managerial decisions that have been made with respect to marketing strategy and the use of creative tactics to effectively communicate a message to a target audience, the brand has evidently played it well.

In building a profile of their target audience, Step One has considered gender and purchase facilitation in its market segmentation, along with selecting fit and fabric as the consideration set used by the target customer to differentiate the brand within their mental partitioning of the product category.

Figure 2

Competitive Frame (Partitioning)

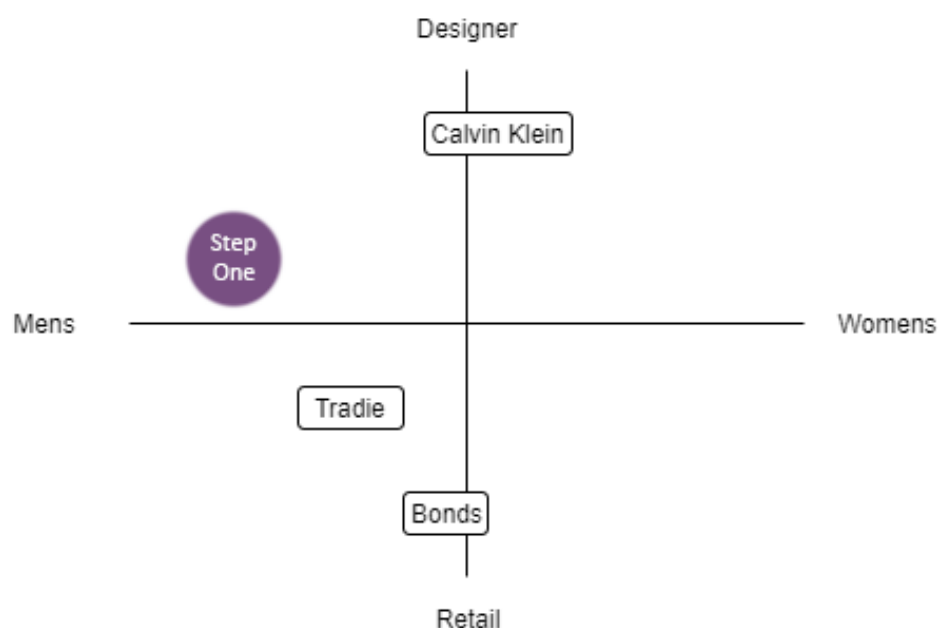


The partitioning tree (figure 2) is used to illustrate Step One's understanding of their customer and the sequence in which the attributes are evaluated by their customer when deciding what underwear to purchase. For men specifically, he first considers if his need will be best served by simply selecting from a range of underwear readily available in a 'retail' store or by seeking out a 'designer' solution that might be offered online or available exclusively in a specialty store. If he opts for a 'designer' product, he will then consider the properties of the fabric and the style options for fit when choosing a brand, along with any pre-existing attitudes toward underwear that can influence his decision.

This mental partitioning of the product within the category can then be applied to a perceptual map (figure 3) as a visual representation of some of the alternative brands that might be included within the customer's consideration set and where Step One would be positioned among those competitors.

Figure 3

Perceptual Mapping

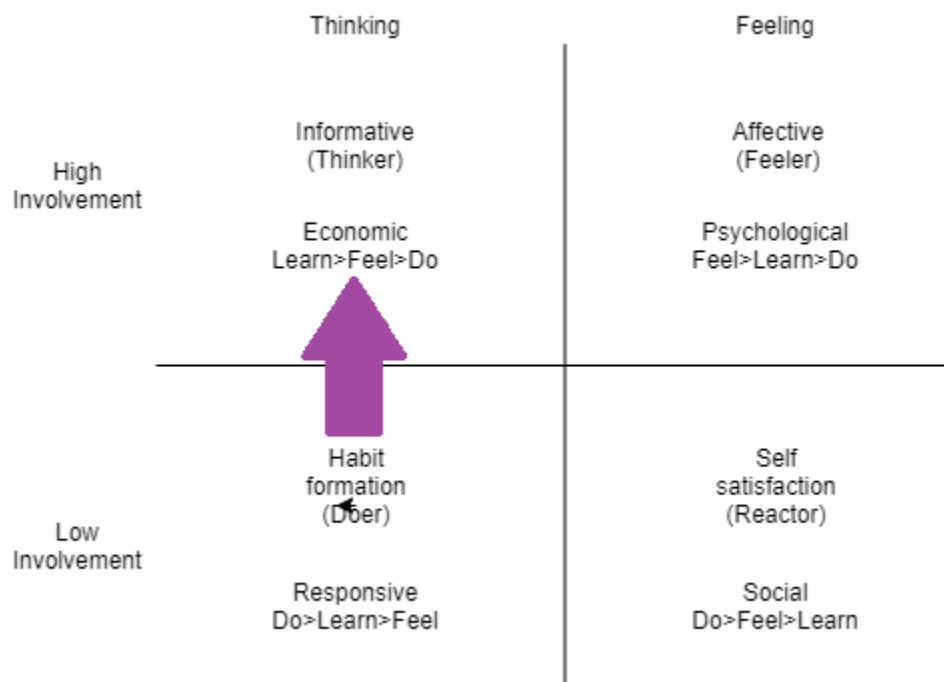


The Foote Cone & Belding (FCB) planning model or 'involvement by motivation' grid (figure 4) conceived by Vaughan (1980) is comprised of four quadrants that "identify particular types of decision-making and each requires different advertising approaches" (Fill & Turnbull, 2019, p. 431-432). While in this evolving response network "underwear is essentially a low-interest, low involvement purchase" (Hale & Hodges, 2013), Step One would likely argue that the "consumer who typically purchases their undergarments from higher end retailers differs from the consumer who purchases the product as mass merchandisers" (Hale & Hodges). Being new to the market, Step One's marketing objective is

customer acquisition of New Category Users, Brands Switchers and habitual Other Brand Loyals, indicative of a higher involvement purchasing decision by “the low involvement consumer who makes men's underwear purchasing decisions primarily out of habit” (Hale & Hodges).

Figure 4

A Simplified FCB Planning Model or ‘Involvement by Motivation’ Grid

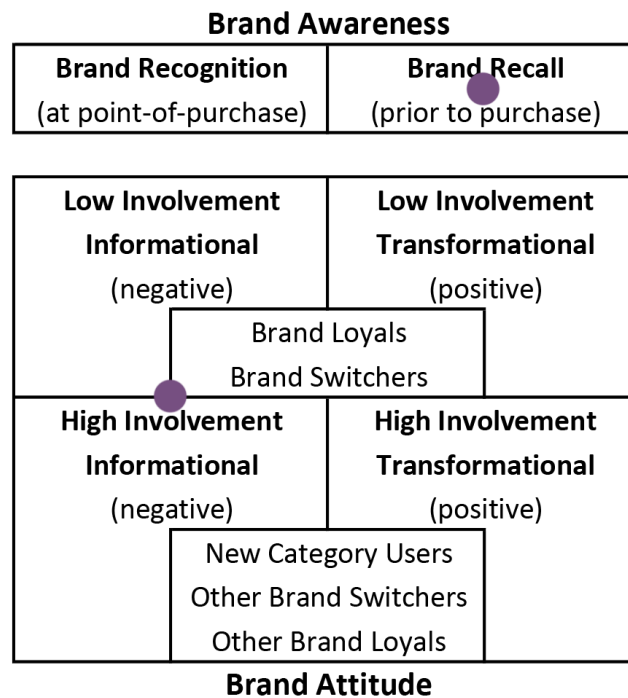


Note. Grid adapted from Vaughn, R. (1980). How Advertising Works: A Planning Model. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 20 (4), 31.

Understanding that marketing communications can have a number of communication effects on brand choice, to Rositer, Percy and Donovan (1991, p.14), it was “obvious that a consumer who has never heard of the brand must acquire more communication effects and become more involved in the choice”. The Rossiter-Percy Grid (figure 5) adds brand awareness to brand attitude as another dimension for planning consideration, making the distinction between brand recognition and brand recall. The planning grid defines involvement in terms of the risk perceived by the consumer when making a purchasing decision, portrays motivation as a positive or negative emotional state and identifies what creative tactics to use, dependent on where a brand fits in both the brand awareness and brand attitude cells (tables 1 – 3). By analysing the television commercial for the creative execution of these tactics, the success of Step One in reaching their communication objectives is easily evaluated.

Figure 5

The Rossiter-Percy Grid



Note. Grid adapted from Rossiter, J. R., Percy, L., & Donovan, R. J. (1991). A better advertising planning grid. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 31 (5), 13.

Table 1

Brand Awareness Tactics with Specific Tactics for Brand Recall

Brand recall tactics
Associate the category need and the brand in the main copy line
Keep the main copy line short
Use repetition of the main copy line for brand recall
Include a personal reference (unless it is already strongly implied)
Use a bizarre execution (as long as it is appropriate to brand attitude)
(For broadcast ads) a jingle may increase brand recall
Requires high media frequency relative to competitors

Table 2

Typical Emotions that Might be Used to Portray Each Motivation

Informational motives	Typical emotional states
Problem removal	Anger > relief
Problem avoidance	Fear > relaxation
Incomplete satisfaction	Disappointment > optimism
Mixed-approach avoidance	Guilt > peace of mind
Normal depletion	Mild annoyance > convenience

Table 3*Advertising Tactics for the Low Involvement / Informational Brand Attitude Strategy*

Consideration (benefit – claim support for perceived brand delivery)
Include only one or two benefits or a single group of benefits
Benefit claims should be stated extremely
The benefits should be easily learned in one or two exposures (repetition serves mainly as a reminder function)

Table 4*Advertising Tactics for the High Involvement / Informational Brand Attitude Strategy*

Consideration (benefit – claim support for perceived brand delivery)
The target audience's "initial attitude" toward the brand is the overriding consideration that must be taken into account
Benefit claims must be pitched at an acceptable upper level of brand attitude (don't inadvertently underclaim)
For target audiences who have objections to the brand, consider a <i>refutational</i> approach
If there is a well-entrenched competitor and your brand has equivalence or advantages on important benefits, consider a <i>comparative</i> approach

Note. Tables adapted from Rossiter, J. R., Percy, L., & Donovan, R. J. (1991). A better advertising planning grid. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 31 (5), 14-18.

In the television commercial, the category need is presented first, prior to introducing the brand, in line with the category need objective and brand awareness tactics. It uses a somewhat unusual execution in that the concept is fronted by an overweight Kiwi using limited dialogue to express personal experience. Using only a couple of cactus plants and a mannequin torso as props against a bold pink background, the commercial effectively encourages brand recall. The presenter portrays the informational motives of problem removal and incomplete satisfaction using the typical emotional states recommended for each, creating brand attitude. The benefits of the lycra panels in the design and the sweat wicking properties of the bamboo fabric are stated extremely, as low involvement tactics that can be learned in one or two exposures, while any additional benefit claims have been grouped together and pitched at the appropriate level to motivate higher involvement buyer groups as well. Brand action has been assumed and is kept simple for low-involvement decision making, yet still incorporates brand facilitation by directing the audience to the website to buy.

Recommendation

The managerial decisions made by Step One in creating this communications piece are appreciated when evaluated in terms of marketing strategy and established creative techniques. However, if one criticism is to be drawn, the brand has not identified its country of origin. If Step One were to use an Australian as a brand ambassador, this would likely have a positive impact on customer acquisition within the Australian market due to pre-existing consumer attitudes around patriotic nationality.

References

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