



Case Report

1	Case Number	0026/17
2	Advertiser	Machine Zone
3	Product	Toys and Games
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet-Social-FB
5	Date of Determination	08/02/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This Facebook advertisement shows three women walking into the Oval Office. They are wearing heels and underwear which looks like military uniforms. One woman, the Commander in Chief, is being followed by two women in pink uniforms. They hand her a phone with the game Mobile Strike on it, salute and leave the office.

Two other women who are wearing camouflaged leotards are seen heading to the office controlling a small Apache chopper and a tank with their phones. Firing at the Commander in Chief, the Commander blocks the attack and fires back on the chopper and tank destroying them.

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

In sum, the ad clearly contravenes Section 2.2 of the Code: "Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people."

The ad is objectionable because it presents women as silent sex objects. The ad frequently leverages sexual imagery (i.e. sexual appeal) that is exploitative and degrading of women, particularly in the final 'pack-shot' whereby a woman's almost-bare bottom is shown for no

reason.

The ad tagline teases 'You Have to Take a Look', and proceeds to serve a video ad whereby a cast of all female characters, dressed provocatively (for no contextual reason), battle on their phones and never speak a word. The 'content' of the ad is reduced to sexualised video imagery of women, epitomised by the frequent (almost constant) filming of the characters' bottoms.

Worse, in what could be described as an attempt to cast diversity, the ad's depiction of females with realistic body sizes is not at all positive. The ad does not celebrate the fantastically diverse and very real bodies (not to mention their personalities too!) of these incredible women. Instead, it fetishises and sexualises their bodies—creating a thinly veiled plot to somehow justify the repetitive screening of their revealing outfits and bodies.

The portrayal of these female characters is objectionable in any context, but this is worsened by the fact that the product (in this instance a military style mobile game) has absolutely no relevance to the ad's sexualised referencing of women. (Can a product ever be relevant to sexualisation? I hope not...). The proceeding discriminatory comments on the video ad (which seem not to be monitored) are further evidence that the ad is exploitative and degrading towards women. While the ASB cannot hold the company responsible for the posted views of others, it can uphold that advertising should seek not to promote such views, and should not depict women in ways that are sexualised, exploitative and degrading.

It is hoped that Mobile Strike will immediately remove the ad and commit to no further advertising that objectifies women in this way.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

The ad was served on Facebook and Instagram to Australian males aged 18 years of age and older.

This ad was created by a third party but was initially approved by MZ for distribution on various advertising platforms, including Facebook. The intention was to feature real-sized women and reference mythical warrior women like the Amazons and the more modern "Wonder Woman," placing them in positions of power and command. The ad ran on Facebook and Instagram over the holidays and came to the attention of MZ executives who determined that the ad did not appropriately represent MZ. The ads were then stopped prior to receiving the complaint from the Advertising Standards Bureau.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement depicts woman as silent,

sexual objects and focuses on parts of their bodies.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states: "Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people."

The Board noted that in order to be in breach of this section of the Code the image would need to use sexual appeal in a manner that is both exploitative and degrading.

The Board noted that this Facebook advertisement features two groups of woman in military-themed leotard-style lingerie playing Mobile Strike on their mobile phones in a mock-up of the Oval Office.

The Board noted the complainant's concern that the women are silent. The Board noted that the women are playing a game on their phones and considered that there is no requirement under the Code for all actors in an advertisement to speak and in this instance the women are communicating via a game they are playing and there is no suggestion that the woman can't or shouldn't speak.

The Board noted the complainant's concerns over the way the women are dressed and the focus on their bodies. The Board noted the advertiser's response that the women in the advertisement are intended to represent mythical warrior women and the more modern 'wonder woman'. The Board noted that warrior women and wonder woman would not wear military-themed underwear and high heeled shoes and considered that the way in which the women are presented is sexualised and exploitative. The Board noted the behaviour of the women in the advertisement however and considered that the women are clearly empowered, confident, and in control and considered that they are not depicted in a manner that is degrading.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience".

The Board noted that the women in the advertisement are wearing leotard-style underwear/clothing which has been given a military theme. The Board noted that the women's private areas are fully covered and considered that the level of nudity is mild. The Board noted that the advertised product is a war game and considered that while the women's actions in playing the game are relevant to this product, their clothing is not relevant. The Board noted the placement of the advertisement on Facebook and considered that while the women are depicted in a sexualised manner in the Board's view this is not inappropriate in the context of the relevant Facebook audience.

The Board noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement fetishes the women's bodies. The Board noted that the women's bodies might be more attractive to some members of the community because of their physique but considered that there is nothing in the advertisement that points to, or plays on this.

The Board noted that the advertiser had removed the advertisement as a result of the complaint received but considered that the content of the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.