



Case Report

1	Case Number	0061/12
2	Advertiser	Mitsubishi Motors Aust Ltd
3	Product	Vehicles
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	14/03/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - men

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Television commercial introduces three Mitsubishi 'Platinum Edition' vehicles. It then goes on the show individual features such as leather seats, reversing camera and Bluetooth as specific features of the Platinum range.

In one scene we see a woman parking her Lancer outside an inner city café. She is admiring a good-looking guy who is walking down the pavement towards her. As he passes the Lancer, we see her subtly engage reverse gear activating the rear vision mirror so she can continue to admire his other side as she reverses.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The advertisement depicts an attractive young lady seated in the new Lancer and uses the car reversing camera to perve on a young male who walks behind the car she is seated in. This deeply offends me. If the roles were reversed and a young male was using the camera to perve on an attractive female there would be an outcry from all the equal rights groups. I would like this segment of the advertisement removed as it is demeaning to men and I am deeply offended.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) writes in response to the above complaint, which was referred to us on 10 February 2012.

The complaint relates to a television commercial promoting the Limited Edition Mitsubishi Platinum Range (TVC).

1. THE COMPLAINT

The complaint to which we are responding was made by an unidentified person. The complainant describes the TVC in the following terms:

'Mitsubishi are advertising their new model Lancer motor car.'

The complainant describes the cause for concern as:

'The advertisement depicts an attractive young lady seated in the new Lancer and uses the car reversing camera to peve on a young male who walks behind the car she is seated in. This deeply offends me. If the roles were reversed and a young male was using the camera to peve on an attractive female, there would be an outcry from all the equal rights groups. I would like this segment of the advertisement removed as it is demeaning to men and I am deeply offended.'

The complaint is said to raise issues under section 2.2 of the Australian Association National Advertisers Code of Ethics (AANA Code) which provides:

'Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.'

1. RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT

1.1 General Observations

Doing the best we can to understand the complaint and having regard to the AANA Code, the essence of it appears to be that the TVC:

- depicts a young woman who sees a young man;*
- the woman then seeks to continue to look at the young man by using the Lancer's reversing camera*
- that by looking at the young man, the woman is "perving";*
- that such "perving" by the young woman exploits men as sexual objects; and*
- by reason of the "perving" the TVC employs the young man's sexual appeal in a way that is exploitative and degrading for him.*

We contend that on any reasonable consideration of the TVC, these are unrealistic propositions that would not be shared by the broader community.

To adopt the line of reasoning and advance the conclusions that the complainant has, the complainant has made assumptions about the state of events and the players in the TVC that are neither expressed nor reasonably implied by it or them. Indeed, there are a number of reasonable interpretations open regarding the interaction between the young man and woman in the TVC, but none of these are intended to, none in fact do and none can reasonably be implied to portray a state of affairs in which a young man is exploited or degraded as a result of his gender or his sexual appeal.

Rather than view the TVC as depicting the only obvious and reasonable use of the reversing camera – i.e. for its legitimate purpose of checking behind the car prior to reversing, it is the complainant that has inferred some sinister motive on behalf of the driver of the vehicle.

However, far from sinister, it is clear that by using this feature, the young woman has in fact ensured that she will not run over the young man.

The use of the young man in this scene of the TVC provides an interesting and believable segue in which the reverse camera feature can be presented to viewers. In fact, the reversing camera will automatically engage when the vehicle is put into its reverse gear (which is the action that was depicted in the TVC).

Further, while it is open to viewers to assume that the characters have engaged in a little innocent flirting, it is in our view an extraordinary stretch to suggest that the young woman was objectifying or "perving" on the man. This would perhaps be a more legitimate suggestion if the man were shirtless, or wearing revealing clothing, as that would be unnecessary in the city setting. The young man is, in fact, dressed modestly in respectable, fashionable clothing. He is carrying a cup of coffee, which suggests he has a purpose and a place in the scene over and above looking good, or submitting himself for her approval.

Further, the particular moment in the scene which appears to have caused offence, does not unduly focus on any individual part of the man's body.

The TVC, when viewed as a whole, depicts a succession of ordinary incidents. This particular scene is set amongst a series of other images, including visual depictions of a happy family in their Outlander, and a young couple getting out and about in their ASX. The innocuous, flirtatious exchange between the young man and the young woman is no less a common, everyday occurrence than two children complaining to their parents that the journey is taking too long. In context, the scene serves to illustrate just how wide the demographic appeal of a Mitsubishi vehicle is.

We suggest that any reasonable person viewing the TVC could not possibly understand it to suggest that men are sexual objects, existing for the purpose of being perverted through women's strategic use of reversing cameras.

1.2 Application of the AANA Code

For all of the above reasons, MMAL and Clemenger BBDO contend that the TVC does not "employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people". For completeness, the TVC does not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community [men] on account of their gender or treat sex insensitively.

For the above reasons, the TVC does not breach section 2.2 (or any other section) of the AANA Code. To the contrary (and for the sake of completeness) MMAL and Clemenger BBDO contend that the TVC is compliant with all aspects of the AANA Code and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries Advertising Code (FCAI Code).

2. SUMMARY

In producing the TVC MMAL and its agency, Clemenger BBDO, have taken every care to ensure that it complies strictly with the AANA and FCAI Codes.

We ensure that all of our advertisements are respectful of the community and all the people in it, particularly given that ultimately they are our customers.

There is no breach of the AANA or FCAI Codes and we request that the complaint be dismissed.

Please let us know if you require anything further.

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 complainants' concerns that the advertisement is offensive and demeaning to men.

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

The Board 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 the advertisement features the particular vehicle being driven in different scenarios while highlighting the features of the car. A female driver is in the car and is seemingly looking at a man through the use of reversing cameras.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement was tailored to appeal to the section of the community most likely to be buying and driving cars and that the scenarios used in the advertisement were chosen to portray real life situations and more so to highlight the features that are part of the vehicles shown.

The Board noted that the scenes portrayed in the advertisement are ordinary, everyday scenarios and the exchange between the young female driver and the young man is both realistic and mildly flirtatious at best.

The Board considered that the use of the reversing cameras is a legitimate and automated action when the reverse gear is selected and although the girl checks the camera and sees the man, there are not any inappropriate, prolonged images of him.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading to men and that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

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