



Case Report

1	Case Number	0127/13
2	Advertiser	Philips Electronics Aust Ltd
3	Product	Toiletries
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	01/05/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Race

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement opens with a man who looks like a caveman and a voiceover asking, "Does your everyday shave feel like this?" whilst the man attacks his unruly beard with a blade.

We then see the man using the Philips AquaTouch and when he is finished he is clean shaven with neat hair and his skin is lighter than when he had a caveman appearance.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I felt that this advertisement resorted to racist stereotyping in making its claims that Philips electric shaver was advanced technology. In the first section of the advertisement, the actor playing the bearded man unsuccessfully shaving his beard off has visibly darker skin than in the second half, where he is shown using the Philips shaver. The advertisement draws parallels between having darker skin and being "less advanced" or "more primitive" in the use and development of technology, while adopting modern electrical appliances, which the advertisement is obviously encouraging, is aligned with whiteness. I therefore feel that this advertisement perpetuates racist ideas and values which are harmful and contravene numerous legislative measures to eliminate racism and discrimination.

The advert perpetuates unfair racist stereotypes.

The "caveman" is a dark skinned, ethnic looking person who transforms into an ideal white "modern" man. I think that this is racist. It implies that people of colour are backwards and that the ideal "modern man" is white. I can't see why they could not just have used the same person to depict both of the types of men. It would make the advert more effective too.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We take your viewers letter of concern very seriously. We also welcome the opportunity to explain our TVC in more detail.

Philips is open in its global mission to improve people's lives through meaningful innovations. For our Australian AquaTouch campaign we are communicating this mission by bringing across the idea that there is a better way to shave and that viewers don't have to put up with old-fashioned, painful and primitive ways of shaving. We hope that by demonstrating the benefits of this modern product, your viewers will be able to improve their shaving experience and overall quality of life.

The Philips AquaTouch Shaver TVC is showing the transformation of a man, from a primitive caveman to a modern man. The man is able to achieve that transformation with the help of the Philips AquaTouch product.

The reason the actor has long, messy hair and beard in the beginning is to better illustrate to your viewers that he is a caveman. As a caveman, he only has primitive tools to shave and these tools are not very effective, hence he has long beard. We are trying to show that there is a better and more effective product – the Philips AquaTouch shaver. The TVC shows that with a modern product from Philips, he is able to transform himself into a modern man.

The actor who plays the caveman is the same actor who plays the modern man. For the caveman scene, makeup has been applied and his hair arranged in a way that shows him as more dirty and scruffy, like a caveman. Due to more primitive hygiene routines, we interpreted that a caveman would appear more dirty and scruffy than a modern day man.

There is absolutely no intention to present the caveman as being of different ethnicity to the modern man or to position whiteness as more modern. We clearly take your viewers concern very seriously and offer a sincere personal apology for any misinterpretation.

Please be aware that this was not a campaign developed exclusively for the Australian market. We have also run this same TVC in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. In Singapore & Indonesia this started on 3rd November 2012. In Malaysia the campaign started on 18th December 2012. I can confirm that in none of these Countries did we receive any viewer complaints in relation to racism.

I remain available to supply any further information should it be required in advance of your meeting.

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 is offensive in its insinuation that people with darker skin are 'less advanced'.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the Code which requires that 'advertisements shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.'

The Board noted that the advertisement features a man who is likened to a caveman with an unruly beard and tousled hair attempting to shave with a blade shaped stone. The man then uses the electric Aqua Touch razor and the next images of the man are seen as clean shaven, with neat hair and slightly lighter in skin tone as he is clean.

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement perpetuates racist stereotypes and portrays dark skinned people as primitive.

The Board reviewed the advertisement and noted that the initial scenes of the man with a scruffy appearance are reinforced by his use of a stone-age looking device to try and shave with. The Board considered that most reasonable members of the community would recognise the portrayal as a reflection of an era that people have long since moved forward from.

The Board noted that advertisement is intended to highlight the progression in shaving equipment and in doing so shows the transition from a primitive man to a modern man and how this can simply be achieved by using a better and more effective shaving product.

The Board noted that the actor's appearance included a change from having darker looking skin to much fairer skin after the use of the advertised product. The Board felt that it was evident that this change in skin colour was clearly part of the transition from a scruffy and dirty caveman to a neater and cleaner modern man and was not a change in ethnicity.

The Board determined that, in this instance, that the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society. The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

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