



Case Report

1	Case Number	0179/10
2	Advertiser	Drug and Alcohol Office Western Australia
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	12/05/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Disability

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The ‘Camel Girl’ advertisement depicts a young woman with a misshapen spine undertaking her day to day activities before an outing, including the removal of hair from this “camel-like” feature. She explains that she hasn’t always been comfortable with this thing and supposes a lot of girls have something they are a little uncomfortable with; something they don’t have any control over. She goes on further to explain that it’s not all bad, for instance, I can go to music festivals all summer and party all day and night without worrying about topping up with water - I guess we all have our special talents. End tag: YOU ARE NOT A CAMEL PERSON. SO DRINK PLENTY OF WATER THIS FESTIVAL SEASON. DRUG AWARE alcohol, think again”

THE COMPLAINT

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

This ad is offensive and insensitive to people who have misshapen spines due to diseases such as muscular dystrophy etc. it trivializes conditions such as this. My sister has a misshapen spine almost identical to the one depicted on this ad and she (and others who suffer from scoliosis and kyphosis) have been ridiculed and discriminated against during her childhood and adulthood. she has been called all sorts of names and now is at risk of being labelled camel due to this advertisement. I ask that this ad be removed from TV immediately

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Camel Girl advertisement is one component of a broader strategy of the Night Venues and Entertainment Events Project (NVEEP) which aims to reduce the risk factors that contribute to alcohol and drug-related harm, and increase protective factors that reduce the harm associated with alcohol and drug use in night venues and at entertainment events.

The long-term goals of the NVEEP program are to:

- identify opportunities to prevent alcohol and other drug-related harm through education in night venues and entertainment events;*
- develop and implement venue practices and policies that promote responsible attitudes towards alcohol and drugs; and*
- implement environmental strategies to prevent alcohol and drug-related harm.*

Dehydration and overheating are serious problems at summer music festivals in Western Australia. With events lasting for over 10 hours each day, in hot weather the chance of overheating and dehydration is high. Lack of water consumption plays a part in causing dehydration to those suffering from extreme heat exposure, excess alcohol consumption or drug use. The aim of the Camel Girl advertisement was to raise awareness of the importance of drinking water at festivals, therefore to reduce the risk of patrons becoming dehydrated or overheated.

The intent of the advertisement was to remind patrons that drinking water at music festivals is essential, and something we all need to do regularly. Patrons often put off drinking water at events, prioritizing alcoholic beverages over water. Therefore the aim of the advertisement was to communicate that keeping hydrated is an essential part of life.

Development of the advertisement

The 'camel girl' character was developed as a metaphor, as camels can go for an extended period of time without topping up with water. When the Drug and Alcohol Office agreed to the camel girl concept it was on the provision that the character was portrayed positively, celebrating the uniqueness of the ability to store water and not to be portrayed as a victim. The intent of creating the character was to position her as a representation of the 'ideal'. It was never the intention to vilify someone with a physical disability. Considerable care was taken to communicate to the audience her beneficial feature and communicate to the audience with the message that they are not lucky enough to be a camel person, so they need to drink water throughout the day at a festival.

Considerable time was taken to develop the shape and look of the hump so it did not look like the curvature of the spine. The hump was modeled on the hump of a dromedary camel. A dromedary camel is more rounded and less pointy than a camel with two humps. The placement further down the back and the excessive hair creates the distinctive physiology of a camel hump

Advertisement scheduling

The Camel Girl advertisement was primarily developed as a 'cult' viral video. The video was uploaded in a specially designed YouTube Channel, and then seeded through popular link communities such as Uniquedaily.com, The Presurfer, Likecool, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit and Advertolog/Coloribus. From the positive response to the viral video a 60 second advertisement was produced.

The spot received a 'W' rating from CAD and was scheduled on digital TV channels Seven Two and Go for a three week period from 24 January until the 4 February 2010 in the lead

up to key summer festivals. It is currently off air and now running solely online and can be found at: www.myhump.com.au.

Post-Campaign Evaluation

No formal evaluation has been conducted for the Camel Girl advertisement, as it was a low budget production which did not allow for this.

As at 5 May 2010, the full length video has received over 47 671 unique views on YouTube. The video sparked debate about the availability and supply of water on local and international message forums around the world, including on many popular music and drug culture sites. This includes positive feedback about the importance of this message and its innovative execution. There have been no negative comments received by any of the agencies involved in any element of its development and placement other than this one complaint. Following the launch it was re-posted on over 50 user-generated blogs and received international attention, with the French international advertising program 'Culture Pub' screening it on their TV show as well as on their website. It also received local attention, with the spot receiving a nomination in Campaign Brief WA's Creative Circle in the February-March 2010 issue as the Best Television advertisement.

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 and vilifies someone living with a physical disability.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement was used to reduce the risk factors that contribute to alcohol and drug-related harm and also noted the advertisement was targeted at patrons in night venues and entertainment events who may prioritise drinking alcoholic beverages over water.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account ... disability".

The Board emphathised with the views of the complainant and acknowledged that there may be people in the community who may feel targeted by this advertisement.

A minority of the Board expressed concern at the "camel joke" inferred with the depiction of the young girl removing hair from her camel-like feature. However the majority of the Board noted that although the depiction of the 'camel girl' was tasteless, it was not directed at people with a physical disability, but was clearly a metaphor as camels can go for an extended time without drinking water.

The Board agreed that the depiction of the girl was a fanciful and unrealistic image and considered the depiction as not being presented in a manner that is demeaning. The Board considered that most members of the community would be able to clearly understand the

advertisement's depiction of this fantasy situation and understand that to keep hydrated is an essential part of life. The Board considered that viral marketing was an acceptable medium to convey this message to the intended audience and determined that, in this instance, the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society on account of their disability. 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 other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.