



Case Report

1	Case Number	0196/10
2	Advertiser	Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd
3	Product	House goods/services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	12/05/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The TVC opens on a mum a dad and their twin daughters getting ready for a family portrait in a photography studio. Mum is double checking that everyone looks neat and tidy and whilst she is doing so, she notices that there is a stain on her husband's shirt.

From here the TVC cuts to a shot of the Pink Presenter standing in front of a clock and next to a shot of the ruined family photo. From here a series of clock wipes take places showing the mum doing the laundry process (washing, drying and ironing the shirt). The point of this being to illustrate the time mum could have saved if she'd only used Vanish Napisan in the first place.

The VO then says "this wouldn't have happened if you'd added Vanish Napisan" and is accompanied with the visuals of mum adding a scoop of Vanish to her detergent in the wash. Mum is then shown pulling the now clean shirt out of the wash. The final cut is of mum hanging up the perfect Family Potrait on the wall with her husband's shirt now stain free.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I object to the advertisement as I feel it is not reflective of current shifting gender roles and it reinforces traditional stereotyped gender roles in which women are responsible for washing ironing and ensuring that the family is well-dressed. In the flashback the woman is shown to be carrying out the entire process of the laundry. I think that society is changing and gender roles in relation to housework are more equal- in many families men and women share these responsibilities and I believe that current advertising should reflect this. This particular

advertisement does not and this saddens me because at the same time it subtly reinforces traditional roles. I think her scream in reaction to the presence of a stain is an unrealistic portrayal of a woman's reaction to this situation- any person may be frustrated but not to the point of screaming and ruining a nice family photo. Furthermore I think it subtly reinforces the idea that it is something which only women worry about as the man in the advertisement did not seem worried at all.

I have read through the case report for a similar advertisement for the same product (complainant reference number 79/08) in which the complaint was dismissed. It was determined that the advertisement was not derogatory to women or suggest that men would not consider undertaking such tasks. I do not believe that the advertisement for which I am lodging my complaint differs significantly and as such I do not expect a different outcome to be reached. However I would request that the advertisers design advertisements which actively show both men and women undertaking these tasks. It is a realistic situation for many households so why not design advertising which appeals to these families?

I very much feel that these ads are sexist and are gender stereotyping. The women and young girls that populate these ads give the impression that firstly not only should washing be done solely by women but this is what they should aspire to and if not done adequately then they are to blame. I greatly feel that these ads may limit girls' and womens' aspirations in the future and by advertising in this way these ads are sexist defeatist to women and where they are in modern society and are detrimental to how their role in society should be viewed.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We have carefully reviewed the complaints concerning the Vanish TVC (Complaints) and respond as follows:

1. We take complaints about our advertising seriously, particularly where, as in the present case, the complainants make claims of sexism and gender stereotyping. This raises an issue under section 2.1 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics (Code) which 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 of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability or political belief.

We deny that the Vanish TVC portrays women in a way which discriminates against or vilifies them on account of sex or on any other basis.

2. As detailed in the attached description of the Vanish TVC, the Vanish TVC depicts a family getting ready for a family portrait and the woman noticing a stain on the man's shirt, after which she tries to stop the photograph from being taken. It then shows, including by way of a Vanish Napisan representative, how adding Vanish Napisan Powder (Vanish Product) to the wash can remove stains like the one on the man's shirt.

3. The Complainants state, among other things, that:

i. "The women and young girls that populate these ads give the impression that, firstly, not only should washing be done solely by women, but this is what they should aspire to and if not done adequately then they are to blame"; and

ii. The Vanish TVC "is not reflective of current shifting gender roles" and "reinforces traditional stereotyped gender roles in which women are responsible for washing, ironing and ensuring that the family is well-dressed".

We strongly dispute these claims for the reasons discussed below.

4. In respect of the claims at 3 i, there is nothing either express or implied about the Vanish TVC to suggest that:

i. Washing should only be done by women Washing is done by women and men but in this particular ad it is done by a woman. From this it cannot be logically concluded that the Vanish TVC suggests that washing should only be done by women.

ii. Women should aspire to doing washing and if the washing is not done adequately, women are to blame We believe that these are ridiculous suggestions and unsustainable. The Vanish TVC shows the annoyance and frustration, which many people have experienced, of finding a stain on clothes after going to the effort of washing them. On a special occasion, such as, attending a photographic session for a family portrait, the discovery of a stain is particularly annoying. We do not believe that it is unreasonable to expect removal of stains after washing clothes. The Vanish TVC promotes the stain removing capability of the Vanish Product by highlighting the effort that goes into laundry work and illustrating the improved result, in terms of stain removal, by use of the Vanish Product. It is true that the person who discovers the stain, and who is depicted doing the laundry, is a woman. However, neither this fact, nor the depiction of the woman in the Vanish TVC, renders it discriminatory against women or vilifying of them. Nor does it suggest that women (or men) should aspire to doing the washing or that if a stain is not removed a woman is at fault.

5. In respect of the claims at 3 ii, we believe that the fact that the woman in the ad is shown, among other things, doing laundry work does not mean that this is all she does. She could be a full time paid employee, a business owner, a housewife or a combination of these things. She could do the washing and her husband could do other domestic chores, like washing up or house cleaning. The Vanish TVC shows a very brief slice of a family's life. It does not suggest that laundry tasks are the only thing in the life of the woman depicted in the ad. Nor does it suggest that men would not do such tasks.

6. We appreciate that men do domestic work too and we portray men in this role in our advertising. We have received praise from a viewer about this portrayal in respect of an Easy Off Bam TVC we broadcast in 2005. We attach a copy of a de-identified contact summary of comments made to our staff about this TVC.

7. We had no intention of portraying women negatively or in a discriminatory fashion in the Vanish TVC and we deny that we have done so. The overall impact of the advertisement must be assessed in determining whether it breaches section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics. Also, the view of average members of the community must be considered. We believe that an average person viewing the Vanish TVC is more than likely to understand the frustration of finding a stain on clothes after washing them and to understand the key message conveyed by the Vanish TVC to be that this problem can be avoided by adding the Vanish Product to the wash.

8. We do not believe that an average person would understand the Vanish TVC as conveying an implied or express message which is "sexist, defeatist to women and where they are in modern society" or which "is detrimental to how their role in society should be viewed." We do not accept that this interpretation is reasonable, logical or open on the facts.

We request that the Complaints be dismissed.

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 concern that the advertisement reinforced traditional stereotypical gender roles and was not reflective of current shifting gender roles.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 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 of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability or political belief".

The Board viewed the advertisement and considered that the scenario depicted was not derogatory to woman, nor did it suggest that men would not consider undertaking such tasks. The Board further noted the scenario was one with which most people could relate to, or were familiar with, regardless of their gender.

The Board agreed that the depiction of a woman doing laundry is a stereotype that mums look after the laundry for the family. However the Board considered that this depiction is realistic and that there is no suggestion in the advertisement that there is anything wrong with the role that this woman has taken on. The Board considered that while this may be considered a stereotypical depiction there is no negative connotation of the woman's roles in this advertisement.

The Board also considered that the advertisement did not discriminate against men by not depicting men having a role in the laundry. The Board considered that there is no suggestion in the advertisement that men don't or cannot have such a role and that therefore there is no discrimination against men.

The Board noted that these advertisements depict fairly typical family situations and that there are increasing numbers of varying family situations. The Board considered that this advertisement did not include any material that suggested that the family situations depicted were the ideal situation, nor that other family situations were undesirable. The Board considered that this advertisement did not discriminate against or vilify people who are in a family situation other than a nuclear family and 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.