



Case Report

1	Case Number	0197/10
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 two girls playing “dress up” in front of a mirror. One of the girls has dressed up in her mother’s blouse and both of the girls are wearing high heels which are too big for them. The girls begin to apply makeup to their faces. One of the girls picks up mascara and as she goes to apply it to her friends face she accidentally wipes it across the blouse.

Mum then enters and the girls turn round to show off their handy work. Mum immediately notices the stain. She is not angry with what the girls have done but is more concerned that her shirt may be ruined and that she may not be able to get the stain out.

Suddenly the Pink Presenter enters and presents the new Vanish Napisan Liquid Gel. She pours some of it into the wash. A demo sequence follows and the Pink Presenter explains how the Vanish Liquid targets and seeks out tough stains.

We then cut to a shot of the now clean shirt and the girls are a shocked that the stains have come out. The mum is also a little shocked at how just easily the stains have come out. Cut to the final shot of the mum and Pink Presenter standing together with the girl cheekily asking if she can use mum’s blusher next time considering just how easily the mascara stain came out.

THE COMPLAINT

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

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 complaint concerning the Vanish TVC (Complaint) and respond as follows:

1. We take complaints about our advertising seriously, particularly where, as in the present case, the complainant makes a claim 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, it depicts children dressing up in their mother's clothes and, by utilising this scenario, it enables the subject of "tough stains" to be introduced via the marking of the one of the "dress up" clothes with mascara, which can be difficult to remove from clothes. The mother good naturedly asks the children how she can easily remove the stain and is answered by the Vanish Napisan representative who offers her Vanish Napisan Liquid Gel (Vanish Product). The Vanish TVC then depicts the Vanish Product removing the stain.

3. The Complainant states that "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." We strongly dispute this. There is nothing either express or implied about the Vanish TVC to suggest that:

a. 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 washing should only be done by women.

b. 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 illustrates that the Vanish Product makes an annoying job, that most people come across (that is, trying to remove stains from clothes), easier. It does not suggest that women or men should aspire to this or that if a stain is not removed a woman is at fault. 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 illustrating the ease with which the product can remove difficult stains, such as, make up. Neither the facts that the parent and Vanish Napisan representative in the Vanish TVC are women and the children

playing with the makeup are girls, nor the depiction of the female characters in the Vanish TVC, render it discriminatory or vilifying in our view.

The fact that the woman in the ad is doing washing does not mean that this is all she does. She could be a full time paid employee, a business owner, a housewife or combination of these things. The Vanish TVC shows a very brief slice of a person's life involving washing and getting rid of stains. It does not suggest that this is the only thing in that person's life.

4. 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.

5. 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, either overtly or subtly. 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 key message to be that the Vanish Product removes difficult stains, like makeup, with ease .

6. 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 Complaint 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 a similar premise as for Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd Case Number 196/10 Case Number and 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.