



## Case Report

|   |                               |                      |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Case Number                   | 0218/10              |
| 2 | Advertiser                    | Unilever Australasia |
| 3 | Product                       | Toiletries           |
| 4 | Type of Advertisement / media | TV                   |
| 5 | Date of Determination         | 09/06/2010           |
| 6 | DETERMINATION                 | Dismissed            |

### ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The TVC plays in a public bus. A young woman enters the bus, she is wet from the rain. Her white business shirt is wet and is stuck to her chest. Her dark coloured bra is visible through her wet shirt. A young man is standing in the aisle and smiles at her. His arm is raised holding on to one of the poles in the bus and we can see that there are big wet perspiration patches on his shirt under his armpits. The young woman first smiles at him but when she sees the sweaty armpits her smile drops. The voice over says "girls look good wet, guys don't".

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*Blatant sexualization of women. These ads are derogatory to women showing them as nothing but sex objects.*

*You might as well show a strip show on television. It is offensive degrading advertisements like this that depict women in a negative light. This sort of advertising is not acceptable and the Advertising Standards Board should not allow it to continue being broadcast. Young women are not purely sex objects and we need to show our young men that this is the case. Broadcasting ads like this give our young people the wrong idea of how women should be treated.*

*These sexist ads are played constantly. Young boys who view them are growing up believing that women are nothing more than a sex object. This type of ad does not acknowledge that this woman has any intellect personality education etc. etc. etc. Myself and MANY woman are tired of being discriminated against. We are not tools for advertisers to use in order to sell products. Please whoever is reading this ask yourself how many ads are there on tv that*

*depict a man as an entirely sexual object for the enjoyment of a woman? I know that whoever reads this will probably dismiss this complaint as Lynx have a "proud history of achievements in advertising use cheeky ads etc etc have won many awards etc etc." All of this is irrelevant and myself and many other women like me will not stop fighting for our rights to be treated as equal human beings to men and not thought of as simply a piece of meat to look at and aspire to sleep with. Enough is enough.*

*To further my argument not only does this advertising occur on tv. The website [www.lynxeffect.com.au](http://www.lynxeffect.com.au) is a disgrace. The mostly naked women on that website do not even have faces. There are many photos showing only the women's torso. What kind of statement is this to young boys everywhere that it doesn't matter what a woman's face looks like because it's only the rest of her body that is of any use? You don't need a woman to have a head and a BRAIN for that matter. Just a body. In fact not just a body an unrealistic tanned greasy looking body.*

*I'm sure that the reason this type of advertising is used to make money. So I know that this complaint will be thrown away like every other of its kind. Because to advertisers money is much more important than morals. Doing the right thing.*

*Finally I will not stop this campaign for women's rights and neither will thousands of women like me. Also I will disregard any response to this that is not written by a self-respecting woman on the highest Lynx board of Advertising. I doubt that such a woman exists. I am offended at the blatant sexualisation of women and the perpetuation of this in mainstream media.*

*It makes me angry and sad to know that young girls and boys are watching this ad and possibly thinking that they should aspire to either objectify or be objectified.*

*I feel that this ad would have a negative impact on people who watch it and perpetuate sad stereotypes in our society about men and the way they view women and also continue to objectify and reduce women to merely 'things' to look at who are only beautiful if they are tall and slim.*

*This ad is highly offensive as its main purpose is to sexualise women. It is sexist and re-affirms traditional values that women are sex objects for men.*

*The women in the ad have been soaked with water to make them look "hot". To speak of women like this is highly offensive sexist heterosexist and misogynist.*

*It saddens me to think that Lynx needs to stoop to this all time low - just to sell deodorant.*

*Surely we media and commercialism has evolved past this? Surely there are smarter ways to advertise.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Lynx is a brand with a history of fun, tongue-in-cheek, playful advertising. Lynx also has a proud history of award winning commercials which both entertain and surprise its*

consumers. We submit that the TVC continues this tradition of tongue in cheek entertainment and that the intended young adult male audience understands the playful and hyperbolic nature of the TVC and its distinction between fact and fiction. CAD provided both TVCs with a "C" (General Unrestricted) rating whereby the TVCs may be broadcast at any time, except during P (Preschool) programs. Unilever has taken great care to ensure that the TVCs have been placed in C rated programming. The TV media buying is targeted at the young adult male audience and as such the spot placements are amongst programming that is targeted at its intended audience. The humour and content of the TVCs is consistent within the context of this programming. We submit that the TVC does not portray women in a way that discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of sex. In particular, the TVC is not sexist or sexual and woman in the TVC is not portrayed as a sexual object.

The TVC plays in a public bus. A young woman enters the bus, she is wet from the rain. Her white business shirt is wet and is stuck to her chest. Her bra is visible through her wet shirt. A young man is standing in the aisle and smiles at her. His hand is up holding on in the bus and we can see that there are big wet sweat patches on his shirt under his armpits. The young woman first smiles at him but when she sees the sweaty armpits her smile drops.

At no point in time does the TVC give the impression that the young man is seeing the young woman as a sex object. The man smiles at the young woman because she is wet from the rain outside and because she looks attractive. The TVC is created in a way that both entertains and surprises the consumer and is in no way discriminating against women. The voice over "Girls look hot wet. Guys don't." also does not discriminate against women. The complaint that the TVC degrades women and shows them as sex objects is based on a misunderstanding of the TVC's main premise. The TVC promotes the Lynx product in a playful and hyperbolic way. The young man finds the woman attractive in her wet shirt but because the young man is not using Lynx Dry products the woman is not attracted to him. The woman is shown as the dominant figure in the TVC. It is obvious that she does not like the wet sweat patches on the man's shirt and is not attracted to him. Therefore the woman can not be seen as a sexual object but rather as a strong and independent person.

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Board noted complainant's concerns that the advertisement is sexist and objectifies women. The Board agreed that the advertisements for this product are aimed at men and are intended to highlight men's attraction to women. The Board considered that many people in society consider that the use of attractive women in an objectifying manner to sell products is not appropriate and noted concern that this sends an inappropriate message to young people about how to treat members of the opposite sex. The Board expressed some sympathy for this view but noted that the requirement of the Code is whether or not the advertisement 'discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of society on account of ...sex.'

The Board considered that in this particular advertisement, while the woman's shirt becomes see through, she is not wearing clothes that are particularly revealing. The woman enjoys being wet and initially smiles at the man. The Board considered that there is an exchange between the man and woman that shows that the woman doesn't like the look of the man with wet underarms. The majority of the Board considered that the woman is not depicted as a

mere object. The Board considered that in this particular advertisement the depiction of the woman did not amount to objectification that would discriminate against women.

The Board noted the inclusion of the voice-over – ‘women look hot wet, men don’t’. The Board considered that this language is intended to be understood literally. The Board considered that this tag line did not make the advertisement discriminatory against women – rather it pointed to the obvious depiction in the advertisement of a young woman looking happy and nice after getting wet from the rain, and that the image of a man with wet underarms is not attractive. The Board also considered that this tag line was not inappropriate language and did not breach section 2.5 of the Code.

The Board also considered that the depiction of the young man in a manner that made him appear unattractive to women did not amount to discrimination against or vilification of men.

The Board considered that the depiction of the woman in a see through shirt did not amount to nudity and was not a sexualised depiction. The Board considered that the advertisement complied with section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds the Board dismissed the complaints.