



Case Report

1	Case Number	0238/10
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 unisex vestibule of a nightclub's bathrooms where men and women come out of their respective bathrooms and wash their hands. A woman turns on the tap and the water comes gushing out of the tap with much more force than she was expecting. The water ricochets off the inside of the basin and directly onto her top. A young man is standing at the next basin. He gives her a big, flirtatious smile. His hand is up against the wall 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.

THE COMPLAINT

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

It is as if the woman is just there to turn the man on- that the only thing she has to offer is her sex appeal. I am pretty open minded and lynx ads which portray women in these ways offend me to the point where I will now avoid buying any lynx products. I know it is targeting the demographic but surely there is a more intelligent way of using sex appeal to sell to young men? One which doesn't portray the object of their desires as thoughtless and only useful for one thing. Maybe you could consider targeting the "girlfriends" of your demographic- who probably know what they want their men to use? Cheers.

The ad may or may not be a reference to female genitalia becoming lubricated during sexual interaction i.e. 'wet'. Aside from this the ad blatantly implies the enjoyment some members of society get out of wet T-shirt competitions and states that this behaviour is found to be 'hot' in a matter-of-fact way aside from the opinion of many in society that such behaviour is abhorrent. I find this to be blatant sexualisation of women by a group of men who are of the

opinion that women's breasts which actually exist for the purpose of breast feeding an infant are sexual objects that should be wet with water and flashed in public for their enjoyment. I also feel that this ad implies an important factor of a human being's existence is to look 'hot' and that if you don't look 'hot' say by exhibiting signs of sweat glands that work the way they're supposed to then you should do something to change yourself. I find this offensive on behalf of both male and females on the basis that it perpetuates superficiality.

I feel that both of the advertisements were degrading as a woman I was insulted by the sexualisation of the women in the ad. The woman in one ad was wearing an extremely short dress with excessive cleavage and the woman in the second ad was shown in office wear but her top was white and transparent as a result of the rain. I feel that it was discriminatory to women and depicted women as objects for the sexual viewing of men. I felt insulted and embarrassed by the advertisement and the website attached to the ad continued this degradation of women with an accompanying game which was also demeaning of women and cause the woman to be viewed as a sexual object. I believe that it is the attitudes projected in this advertisement that contribute to the rise in the discrimination against women and the resurgence in sexist attitudes.

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. The TVC is not sexist or sexual and woman in the TVC is not portrayed as a sexual object.

The TVC plays in a unisex vestibule of a nightclub's bathrooms where men and women come out of their respective bathrooms and wash their hands. A woman turns on the tap and the water comes gushing out of the tap with much more force than she was expecting. The water ricochets off the inside of the basin and directly onto her top. A young man is standing at the next basin.

He gives her a big, flirtatious smile. His hand is up against the wall 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 got wet when she tried to wash her hands. 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 woman is just there to turn the man on and that the only thing she has to offer is her sex appeal 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 tap in the bathroom, 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 dress 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.