



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 214/07 |
| 2. Advertiser | Roads & Traffic Authority NSW |
| 3. Product | Community Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1 |
| 6. Date of determination | Tuesday, 10 July 2007 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement begins with a young male driver in a yellow car roaring off from traffic lights at speed in a cloud of smoke, to impress two young women standing nearby. The young women show their opinion of this behaviour by bending their "pinkie" fingers derisively. Another woman is nearly run down by another driver in a red car who ignores the fact that she is on a pedestrian crossing. Across the road, an elderly woman sitting on a bench makes the "pinkie" gesture. Another young man in a blue car swerves at speed around a corner to impress his mates in the back seat, almost losing control of the car and alarming his passengers. As he glances in his rear vision mirror to assess their reaction he sees one of his mates showing the other the "pinkie" sign.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The underlying and official assumption of the campaign is as insulting as the gesture itself- that a man, even a young man, measures his manhood on the size of his penis. The ad. violates the code because it encourages and advocates a form of sexual denigration. This sexual denigration targets a specific age group and a specific gender; males, and only males, in our society. It encourages a form of sexual denigration that is denigrating exclusively to males. The ad. is offensive because it is reasonable to assume to a lot of men would feel uncomfortable having their genitalia used as a means of degradation. And it is reasonable to assume they would feel demeaned seeing a reference to their genitalia as a means of demeaning and reprimanding a young man. It is degrading because it suggests that the penis is a thing of shame and disgust, a thing with which we insult people. The intent of the gesture is to demean a man. Is it really the kind of "high impact" message we want boys to be seeing, a message of leering and denigration and all about their penis. The ad. violates the code because it creates a negative stereotype of a specific age group and gender. It associates a particular way of behaving that is antisocial and irresponsible on the basis of age and gender. The ad. campaign creates a negative stereotype of young men generally, and associates them with speeding and irresponsible driving. The ad is actually designed to vilify young male drivers by portraying them as irresponsible and dangerous drivers, and then advocating sexually (sic) humiliation as an appropriate reprimand for these people, and these people only: young male drivers.

It is sexist - it demeans men and embarrasses them.

The advertisement is gender-biased; while statistically it is quite clear that injury is far more common in younger males (with respect to motor vehicle accidents) than other age cohorts, or by gender, young men are not the only 17-25 year olds that one notices speeding every day. Should this ad be targeted at females, using a similar gender stereotype, it is unlikely that this ad would be viewed favourably by a female audience. Thus, the RTA is using a very demeaning and inappropriate form of sexuality-based reverse discrimination in order to make their point-

inappropriate.

Genitals of young man have nothing to do with bad driving. The add is designed to be sexist and humiliating to men. The add encourages and sanctions from a government body the sexual harassment of young men with these crude, sexist and offence behaviours.

This ad resorts to sexual discrimination in a number of ways. The poses that 'hoons' are exclusively male. The use of the 'pinkie' finger is commonly used to indicate that that a person in question has a small penis. In this day and age of severe psychological issues stemming from personal inadequacies and where society is actively encouraging young women to be comfortable with their bodies, it seems grossly inappropriate to identify the vulnerability of males, and exploit it in advertising.

I find this as offensive because it is sexist. It portrays all of its dangerous/reckless drivers as Males even though female drivers are also responsible for reckless/dangerous driving on the roads. The accusation that MALES who break road rules have small penises is sexually discriminatory because if there were female drivers in the advertisement, the hand gestures and innuendo of the ad's final statement wouldn't apply for anatomical reasons.

With youth suicide among young males in Australia at such high rates I find it alarming in the extreme that an advertising campaign of this nature propogating false stereotypes should find its way onto our screens.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

The new RTA anti speeding campaign 'Speeding. No one thinks big of you.' is designed to act as an awareness campaign to get speeding back onto the social agenda. It adopts a new approach to increase the social unacceptability of speeding within the wider community. It is the first step in a multi-phased approach to change the attitudes and behaviours of all speeding drivers.

The concept for the campaign was extensively researched, not only against the target audience (males 17-25 years of age) but also across the wider community (males 30-55 plus years of age and females 17-55 plus years of age) in both Sydney and country areas. Over 30 percent of the focus group participants had been booked for speeding in the past three years.

The response to the campaign by the focus groups was overwhelmingly positive. Most people involved in the groups knew about the Pinkie gesture. The groups recommended that the RTA proceed with the campaign because:

- It had the potential to change the behaviour of the target audience;*
- It is powerful, it is different and it effectively utilizes social disapproval of poor driving behaviour by peers and the wider community;*
- It puts the issue back in to the hands of the community; and*
- The campaign is preventative*

Although the commercial has a P classification and could have been scheduled on television from 7pm, it has only been scheduled for 8.30pm plus timeslots. This was a deliberate decision.

We reject the suggestion the advertisement is sexist. It is evidenced based as discussed above.

We reject the suggestion the advertisement demeans young men. It does not. It does however demean certain types of behaviour.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board considered the complainants' concerns that the advertisement demeans men in a number of ways, in particular portraying only young men as being responsible for poor and dangerous driving, and by using the 'pinkie' finger sign to insinuate that the young men have a small penis.

The Board noted that young people, predominantly young men, are more likely to speed or drive more dangerously. The Board accepted that it is legitimate for the campaign to focus on young men. The Board considered that this was not a depiction that was discriminatory or vilifying of young men.

The Board also noted the use of the 'pinkie' finger sign in the advertisement. The Board considered that most people would understand this to mean, not that the person has a small penis per se, but rather that the person is less of a man or is demonstrating behaviour that is not considered acceptable by the person using the sign. The Board considered that the use of the sign in this advertisement was consistent with the message that the driving behaviour demonstrated is not 'cool' or desirable. The sign is not demeaning to men generally.

On these bases the Board determined that the advertisement did not discriminate against or vilify men, or young men, 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.