



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 370/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | Coca-Cola South Pacific Pty Ltd |
| 3. Product | Food & Beverages |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 26 August 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement shows a young man walking down the street, reflecting upon the things that would make his life better. As he is thinking - his thoughts are verbalised by the voice over, which wonders why all of the good things in life cannot come without a down side. He considers that it would be great to have a girlfriend without the five year plan, work friends without work and holidays with having to come back to work.

THE COMPLAINT

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

During the advertisement, it implied that having a girlfriend was something that was not desirable, something to be avoided, which struck me immediately as inappropriate and demeaning. Also, there were no women in the large group of people who were "rallying" for life to be "better".

As this ad is aimed at a demographic of young, impressionable boys, I do not think it would be wise to convey the message of women being somewhat of a nag, not important in the lives of men or ANY relationship at all, and that women are simply happy with the lives they have now, almost putting them back into a position of "house wife" back in the 50's, were they were not expected to complain about anything. They were not with the men, walking or rallying for a better life.

I find it, all in all, an extremely sexist advertisement and gives the impression that women are ok with being insulted, forgotten and that they do not need to protest for a better life.

There is a line in it, 'you can have a girlfriend and not have to put up with the five year plan'. I find this stereotypical and demeaning to women. It is an image of women that we have to fight hard to get away from. Having a young, good looking, cool young man espouse this view does nothing for the esteem of young females. It also makes young males form the opinion that girlfriends want nothing more than husbands. It demeans the self esteem and self worth of women and makes them out to be less than they are.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In essence, the complainants contend that the ad is demeaning to women. We respectfully disagree that the ad communicates or endorses any such attitude, and submit that it does not violate section 2.1 of the code. The spot is simply a light-hearted fantasy, in which the narrator - inspired by being able to have "real Coke taste without the sugar" in Coke Zero - riffs on various other "no downside" scenarios, clearly imagined from a young male point of view (the primary target for our

brand). Among the topics he covers are "work mates without the work," cell phones that don't need charging" and girlfriends "without a five-year plan ." The "five-year plan" reference is not intended to disparage marriage or women, but simply reflects the fact that many young men in their late teens and early 20s, by their own admission, are not ready for commitment - a topic that has been covered extensively and often humorously in movies, TV and other forms of popular culture for years. The ad is simply having a little tongue-and-cheek fun with that age-old axiom, and certainly does not intend to cause offense.

We'd also like to emphasize that, contrary to a statement included in one of the complaints, women are indeed included among the "protesters" in the ad, reinforcing the notion that the narrator's sentiments can be shared by young men and women alike. We should also point out that the ad concluded its run on July 5 and is no longer airing on television. Nevertheless, we maintain that nothing in this ad is inherently offensive or is in violation of community standards.

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 complainants concerns that the advertisement was demeaning to women and promoting a negative portrayal of women.

The Board viewed the advertisement and considered whether it was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states:

"Advertisements 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 noted the advertiser's response and observed that the advertisement was removed from the air on 5 July 2009.

The Board noted that the advertisement expressly states that it is talking about 'good things' in life. In this context the notion of having a girlfriend is clearly stated to be a good thing. The only 'downside' of a girlfriend is that she might have a 'five year plan'. The Board considered that this advertisement depicts women/girlfriends as a good thing, and that a comment that a girlfriend with five year plan is a 'downside' is not a comment that is demeaning to women. In the Board's view this comment is depicted as a reflection of this particular young man and is a relatively minor part of the overall advertisement. The Board considered that the advertisement does not depict women in a negative light nor does it suggest that women are nags. The Board considered that this advertisement did not breach section 2.1 of the Code as it did not discriminate against or vilify women.

The Board also considered that this advertisement, by depicting a young man as not caring about his future or work, did not depict young men in a manner that would be considered discriminatory.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.