



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	95/08
2. Advertiser	Kimberly-Clark Aust Pty Ltd (Kotex U - beaver)
3. Product	Toiletries
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 9 April 2008
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens on a young woman walking down a street holding a beaver under her arm, and as the camera pans away we see other women also clutching beavers in their arms. The young woman takes her beaver through her everyday activities, at a beauty salon, having her hair and nails done. At the beach the girl and the beaver are admiring two young men who are also admiring them. The girl and the beaver are then seen seated at a cafe where the girl presents the beaver with a gift - a box of U-tampons. A voiceover advises "You've only got one. So for the ultimate care down there, make it U".

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*Most people know that "beaver" is a slang term for vagina and I find this offensive and inappropriate.*

*As an educated and professional woman the fact that the gist of the ad is about a woman taking care of her squirrel is offensive. The last time I heard the vagina referred to as a squirrel was by a serial killer in an american movie. It may be meant to be amusing but frankly it is demeaning, in poor taste especially the inuendo (sic) that the womans vagina gives her to go ahead to pick up one of the guys on the beach. Just how crude do advertising agencies have to get to flog a product? Especially one women have to bloody use whether they want to or not! This ad needs to be pulled. The humour is extremely poor and lost on even a liberal like me.*

*I think it's an appalling portrayal of how women think of their bodies. I'm not sure who it's aimed at but I find the whole idea offensive that they use the word/animal beaver and walks around town with the creature etc. Just sooo wrong! Women menstruate, we dont mind seeing new products, lets call a spade a spade say real words etc.*

*Offensive, disgusting and degrading. What was going through the advertisers heads?*

*I object to this ad because NO WOMAN WOULD EVER USE THE WORD 'BEAVER' to describe her vagina. ONLY MEN DO THAT. And they use it in a DEROGATORY manner. Worse still, this ad makes it sound ok to be derogatory about women's sexual organs. AND it makes out that women are the ones doing it!*

*These feminine hygiene ads are unnecessary and getting more disgustingly graphic. Even my 38 year old wife, 12 and 14 year old daughters were disgusted. How long before we start seeing vaginas portrayed and referred to as 'pussies'? My girls are broad minded, as I am. But we find making 'fun' out of the issue of menstruating vaginas offensive, of exceedingly poor taste, exploitative and unnecessary.*

*I find it so insulting having the women's anatomy compared to some furry little animal. I find it incredibly sexist and derogatory. The menstrual cycle is a natural process, and the term beaver is often used for a female anatomy is generally used by overly sexist men in a derogatory manner and often with insult.*

*The euphemism of 'beaver' for vagina is both offensive and low-brow slang. I believe it originated in the USA to describe brown, furry, and the face and noise guys made when performing oral sex on women. I'm in the target audience for this product and even I find it extremely offensive.*

*The advertisement is purporting to be funny because it uses a term of abuse for the vulva. The word "beaver" is not even in general Australian parlance, it is a shocking word more associated with insult and pornography. It is disgraceful that this is on Australian television, at whatever hour. That these advertisers feel they can insult every woman in this way on the grounds that the shock value will attract more attention, is repugnant.*

*Insulting to women, putting down young women in particular by pretending to be on their side while secretly making fun of them.*

*The use of the term beaver relates in very colloquial, even rough, terms to a woman's vagina. It is a derogatory term, and by using this word and depicting a beaver walking around with a girl who gives it tampons, the advertiser has created an offensive and demeaning advertisement.*

*I object to the fact that the beaver is representative of a woman's PRIVATE parts. What next? A sequel with a pussy or a muffin? Some things should be left PRIVATE.*

*"Beaver" is simply a euphemism for vagina, and not even a disguised one. It seems in bad taste to have men admiring her vagina.*

*The fact that the "pet beaver" turns out to be the girl in the ad's vagina. The fact that, when you reflect back on the ad after the revelation that the pet beaver is her vagina, does that mean that she was showing off her vagina while on the beach? What was the knowing nod (sic) between the two guys and the girl & the beaver? Uuuggghhhh!!! The fact that "beaver" is such an American euphemism for a vagina. We don't have beavers in this country. It is non-relatable.*

*I find the advert offensive in its use of a beaver to symbolise the vagina. Beaver, used in this way is not acceptable, in much the same way as if an advert featuring a male pampering a rather large rooster in a similar manner. The fact that it made me cringe.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*I refer to your email dated 11 March 2008 and subsequent emails regarding complaints which the Advertising Standards Bureau has received concerning a TVC for U by Kotex® Products.*

*The only words spoken in the TVC are in the voice over at the end of the TVC which reads: "You've only got one. So for the ultimate care down there, make it U." Also at the end of the TVC the following Super appears: "The ultimate care down there." At no time is the word "Beaver" spoken. At no time does the word "Beaver" appear. Given these facts we submit that complaints based on the alleged use of the term or word "Beaver" in the TVC are without foundation and should be dismissed.*

*Undeniably the TVC is playful and cheeky and is seen as such by the target audience which comprises young women between the ages of 18 and 24. The reaction of the viewer to the TVC is very much the result of the mindset, including in some cases prejudices, the viewer has to the advertising of feminine care products, menstruation and related matters. This is apparent from the various issues which complainants have specified in their complaints.*

*For instance many complainants have stated that in the beach scene the young males are "peeping" at the young woman's vagina. On any objective viewing of that scene this is not the case, the woman is sitting in such a way that the relevant area of her anatomy is not exposed to view.*

*Any TVC which breaks new ground such as the current TVC is likely to generate complaints particularly when it advertises a product that a small minority of people feel should never be advertised. At the end of the day interested viewers assess each advertisement according to their attitudes and prejudices which vary significantly across the community. The fact that a very small number of people have complained does not mean that their views are generally shared or that their complaints are soundly based.*

*Considering the TVC with reference to the various Sections of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics we submit as follows:*

*There is no portrayal of people or depiction of material which discriminates against a section of the community (women) on account of sex. The TVC shows a woman in her early to mid twenties engaging in everyday activities that are usual for such a person. She is very much in control of the situation depicted in each scene in which she appears.*

*There is no violence portrayed in the TVC.*

*The TVC does not deal with sex, sexuality or nudity. If menstruation/vaginal care is regarded by some as sexuality, which we dispute, we submit the TVC is sensitive to the relevant audience and given the classification of the TVC, M, to the relevant time zone.*

*The TVC is not directed to children aged 14 years or younger.*

*As discussed above there is minimal language in the TVC and that language is neither strong nor obscene.*

*The TVC does not depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety. The TVC deals with neither health nor safety.*

*The TVC does not advertise motor vehicles.*

*The TVC does not advertise food or beverage product.*

*We believe that the TVC complies with the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.*

## **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 and considered the advertisement under Section 2.1 of the Code which deals with discrimination and Section 2.3 of the Code which relates to sex, sexuality and nudity.

The Board viewed the television commercial and noted that while a beaver appeared in the advertisement the word *beaver* was not used at any time during the commercial.

The Board considered that it was irrelevant that the word *beaver* was not actually used as it was clearly implied throughout the commercial with the image of the beaver.

The Board referred to the Australian Macquarie Dictionary (4th Edition) for the definition of the word *beaver*. The dictionary states: *Chiefly US Colloquial: the vagina and external female genitalia.*

The Board noted that the dictionary did not define *beaver* as a derogatory term. They further noted their belief that the word *beaver* was not a derogatory term and agreed that this belief would also be held by the majority of the Australian community.

The Board further considered that the use of *beaver* in the commercial was playful and that it was an acceptable euphemism as it was relevant to the target audience.

The Board did not consider that it was a term that would be understood or attractive to those outside the target audience as it required pre-existing knowledge of the term to understand the joke contained in the advertisement.

While Board members acknowledged that some viewers may be offended by the implied connection between a beaver and female genitalia they did not believe that the majority of viewers watching in the M time zone or the intended audience would find this offensive.

The Board noted that this was a progressive way to advertise fem-care products. They considered that this is a difficult product to advertise as the advertiser can not show the use of the product in a realistic way. The Board further noted its belief that this advertisement was a very sensitive approach to women's needs and its aim was to promote brand loyalty in the target audience through a sense of fun.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 and 2.3 of the Code.

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