

Overview: The main reason for having the Advertising Standards Authority is to make the rules that all advertisements in media should comply with. Anybody can lay a complaint to the Advertising Standards

Complaints Board without cost about “any advertisement in any media which they believe breaches the codes.” After any member of the public has made a complaint their complaint is then listened to by an independent Advertising Standards Complaints Board and there is a “right of appeal” to that board. If a complaint is approved the advertiser, agency and media are asked to remove the advertisement from all media. These requests are always complied with and all decisions are released to the public.

...Code for People in Advertising, Basic Principle 2: Advertisements should not portray people in a manner which is reasonably likely to cause serious or widespread hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule. The principle is in place to ensure the emotional safety of minority groups. This means that advertisers cannot show people in such a way that would hurt or offend them and make them feel mocked. This puts limitations on what advertisers can broadcast and restricts what advertisements can show in the way of portrayals. This means there can be nothing that is insulting towards different groups of people.

Code for People in Advertising, Basic Principle 2 was found relevant because it caused serious offense amongst the transgender community. It is appropriate to the complaint as the complainant felt the advertisement “portrays a negative stereotype of a transgender person.” This advert made the transgender community feel like they were being discriminated against by being shown as fake women.

Although this advert was offensive to drag queens and did portray a negative stereotype, in reality this is how the majority of people see the transgender community and did not find it offensive. However, this does not give advertisers the right to use drag queens in a way that makes drag queens feel offended in their advertising

...Code for People in Advertising, Basic Principle 6: Humour and satire are natural and accepted features of the relationship between individuals and groups within the community. Humorous and satirical treatment of people and groups of people is acceptable, provided that, taking into account generally prevailing community standards, the portrayal is not likely to cause serious or widespread offense, hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule. The intention of this code is to inform advertisers that “humour and satire” is accepted “between individuals and groups within their community” as long as it does not cause people to feel made fun of or upset. This means that advertisers can use humour but not in a way that will upset people and make them feel like they are being mocked. This code exists to ensure that advertisers are not taking humour too far and offending some of their consumers.

Code for People in Advertising, Basic Principle 6 was found relevant because the intention of this advert was to be humorous but to the transgender community this advert was found to be “very insulting, tasteless and, extremely offensive.” This shows that the advertisers had gone too far and had upset some of their consumers.” However, the purpose of this advertisement was to be humorous and memorable so the advertisers could appeal “to the sense of humour” of their target market of “women aged 18-25.” It was not supposed to cause offense to the transgender community.

Discussion: The advert that I have chosen is the Libra ‘Drag it’ ad for tampons. This advert showed a drag queen and a woman in a bathroom “preening themselves in a competitive nature.” They both “applied mascara, lip gloss and adjusted their breasts.” The woman then pulls out her Libra tampon and in response the drag queen leaves the bathroom. ‘Libra gets girls’ then shows up on the screen. The complaints viewpoints are that this “advertisement portrays a negative stereotype of a transgender person” and is “very insulting, tasteless and extremely offensive.” Other complaints also shared a similar view adding the advertisement was “discriminatory while advocating sexism and

transphobia with an underlying ridicule that transgender women are not real women and thus degrading them.” The complaints that were made about the ‘Drag it’ advert were made by several complainants. The Chairman rules four provisions relevant to their complaints. Two of them include the Code for People in Advertising, Basic Principle 2 and Basic Principal 6. Code for Advertising, Basic Principal 2 states that “advertisements should not portray people in a manner which is reasonably likely to cause serious or widespread hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule.” This code was found relevant because there were multiple complainants that felt that this advertisement was discriminatory, advocated transphobia and portrayed the transgender community in a way that showed negative stereotypes. This caused serious and widespread offense amongst the transgender community.

Code for People in Advertising, Basic principal 6 was also found relevant. This code states that “humorous and satirical treatment of people and groups is acceptable” as long as “the portrayal is not likely to cause serious or widespread offense, hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule.” This ad was found relevant to the code because the intention of the code was to be humorous and appeal to Libras target audience by using a drag queen. However, the transgender community found the portrayal degrading as they felt the advert implied that transgender woman are not real woman and thought it was “very insulting, tasteless and, extremely offensive.”

I agree with the complaint made by E. Baker and other complainants stating that the ‘drag it’ advert “portrayed a negative stereotype” and unintentionally implied that transgender woman are not real woman. I think the advert did this by having the cheeky slogan at the end of the advert ‘Libra gets girls.’ I can see how transgender woman would take this the wrong way and take offense to this because they feel that they are women, and this ad is telling them that they are not if they do not menstruate. However, I do not agree that this advert advocated transphobia like some complainants suggested. The advertisers meant for this advert to be humorous and I think that they felt that their consumers would also find this humorous and not see it as “portraying a negative stereotype” or a negative attitude towards the transgender community.

Conclusion: The decision to whether or not to remove the ‘Drag it’ advert from air was made by the Chairman and the complaints board. They considered the advert, and complaints in relation to the codes. The complaints board found that the advert did in fact breach one code of ethics code and three codes for people in advertising codes so the ‘Drag it’ advert was ordered to be withdrawn from the media. This included TV, cinema and “an adaptation of the ad has also been removed from magazines and bathrooms.” The advert was also taken off Facebook and YouTube but there are still some versions available that were not uploaded by SCA. Libra responded to consumer feedback by stating “...we regret having offended anyone that was not our intention” they also made it clear that their catchphrase “Libra gets girls” was intended to be humorous. In the end the judge’s decision was that the complaint had been settled. I think that the Libras “Drag it’ was just a little bit too cheeky. Libra used an openly gay drag queen to appear in their advertisement to “ensure authenticity”. Libra may have thought that because the drag queen in the ad is real then the ad may be more accepted by transgender people, but this was obviously not the case. I think that Libra should have thought more about the effects their advertisement would have on all of their consumers and not just their target audience. The advertiser should have done this before they made the advertisement because it would have saved them a lot of time and money. I think that Libra handled the decision of having their advert removed well, they had withdrawn “all versions of the advertisement published by them (across the various media) and within their control” as soon as they could have. I think that the decision to remove the ad from all media was the right one.