

Libra Backs Down In Face of Trans Outrage

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Abstract

Following worldwide outrage, an ad campaign for Libra feminine hygiene products, which had been circulating in Australia and New Zealand, has now been put on hold. The campaign had attracted widespread condemnation as offensive to women and hurtful to the transgender community, and it is likely that if it does re-surface, it will be significantly [...]

Article

Following worldwide outrage, an ad campaign for Libra feminine hygiene products, which had been circulating in Australia and New Zealand, has now been put on hold. The campaign had attracted widespread condemnation as offensive to women and hurtful to the transgender community, and it is likely that if it does re-surface, it will be significantly amended from its original version.

A spokeswoman for Libra product, which is the leading brand of feminine hygiene product in the Australasia region, said today that they were completely taken by surprise by the strength and ferocity of the reaction. They had tested the ad and achieved a positive reaction from their core audience.

She said:

“it was never our intention to hurt or to offend. The ad was intended as a piece of humour designed to promote a positive image of women. We were shocked by the reaction from the trans community - although now that we have had a chance to reflect on comments made, we can understand better their perspective. We are aware that trans women make use of feminine hygiene products”.

She went on.

“It is the summer holiday period in Australia now, which means many of the marketing team are not available. However, we will be putting this campaign on hold - and when the marketing team are back next week, we will be re-evaluating this campaign. It is very unlikely that it will ever air again in its present format.”

The 30-second commercial, for Libra tampons, is set in a women’s rest room and features a “competition” between a woman and a trans individual, played by well-known Australian drag queen. Each, in turn, adjusts specific elements of their make-up: but Sandee “loses”, when her rival opens her purse and takes out a tampon.

Criticism of this ad focused on two aspects of the narrative. Many objected that it depicted women as

a whole as “bitchy” and “competitive”. From a trans perspective, objections cited the narrowness of view - defining women solely according to whether they had periods: several trans women also expressed personal hurt at the emotions that this ad triggered.

Typical was a comment aired on a discussion board yesterday, as one trans woman explained how, for years, she lay awake at night in tears over the fact she would never be a mother - and that this campaign had caused that grief to resurface.

Libra’s Facebook and Twitter pages were inundated with comment - and some very heated debate took place. An online petition asking that Libra withdraw this campaign gained over 1,000 signatures in the first few hours of going up.

Representatives from Trans Media Watch Australia also spoke with the company about the issues involved.

Against that, a number of women, both trans and non-trans, echoed the official view that this was merely a humorous treatment of a sensitive subject and argued that critics should “lighten up”.

cross-posted from Jane Fae’s Blog

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