

TechNews

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Sex Week ads: up close and personal

By Anonymous
TECHNEWS WRITER

It's not always an easy task to get a person out of their clothes, but when the opportunity arose to do so for an event as positive as Sex Week, I happily peeled off a couple of layers. I knew it would get some looks. I expected to hear some talk. This is why I elected for my participation to be anonymous. That is, the ads were posted without my face visible in them.

What I did not expect was for that talk to be so centered on my body, rather than the event itself.

Within a day of the ads being posted in the MTCC, mine had been vandalized, and the male counterpart was missing. Since then, the Sex Week blog addressed the accusations of sexism, but the criticism has not stopped.

After days of listening to and reading comments by students on behalf of "the girl in the photo," I've decided it's time that girl address those concerns herself. Here I go.

Concern #1: These ads are sexist.

I cannot disagree more. As stated in the blog, there are two versions (male and female) specifically to avoid sexism.

Concern #2: It is important to validate other opinions in the feminist movement, so you shouldn't shoot down opinions, and you should apologize.

I wholeheartedly agree with the first part of this comment. In the very first meeting Feminists United ever had, members learned about different schools of feminism and their differing viewpoints. Almost every meeting since then has been in discussion form, allowing students to hear opposing viewpoints on current topics through the lens of feminism. I don't believe this is an organization that looks to "shoot down" other opinions. Of course, it's important to validate other opinions, but it is also important to fully understand our own, and to stand up for our convictions without apology. What social justice movement could

survive if its members did not feel strongly enough to answer to criticism?

Concern #3: These ads exploit the people in them.

Neither of us feels exploited and we both agreed to be involved, knowing exactly what these photos were going to be used for. There was no coercion, no incentive, no peer pressure involved. We volunteered.

Concern #4: These ads are harmful because they imply that the ideal "sexy" person is physically attractive.

Nowhere on anything related to Sex Week does it say that either of these bodies is ideal in any way. If you think they are physically attractive, good for you! But everyone has different tastes, and a big part of feminism is rejecting the idea of an "ideal body." Just looking at the event topics for Sex Week - communication, safety, consent - you don't see a thing about physical ideals, just healthy attitudes toward sex and sexuality.

Concern #5: These ads objectify the people involved.

So far, I gather that people believe this because there are no faces, and also because the images are being used to "sell" something. My face is not there because I wanted to remain anonymous. It's for protection, not because Sex Week wants you to think people are nothing more than their bodies. And, to address one commenter's concern that the advertisers were choosing "sexy" people because they sell better, this just isn't the case. They chose us out of sheer convenience. A wide array of bodies would have been wonderful, but it is difficult to find willing students. It would have been just as sexy and would have grabbed just as much attention with other bodies. I truly believe this.

Concern #6: The ads offend some, and impose your moral ambiguity on others.

Of course the ads offend some. But they don't impose anything on anyone. First off, we aren't "morally ambiguous." We know what our stance is about the poster, and that is that

the posters are appropriate for the topic and do not objectify those involved. I'm sticking to my guns on this stance, while acknowledging that some people don't like them. That's fine. It is totally okay to have differing opinions, but I am not ambiguous about my viewpoint, so the posters stayed, and those that disagree with us are still welcome to participate in the week or protest (as some have).

I hope that these arguments answer some questions and make our intentions more clear. I'd also like to add that the sexiness is not synonymous with objectification. Objectification would lie in the intent of the advertiser and the mindset of the viewer. I think it's clear that the commenters did NOT believe "the girl in the photo" was just a body, nor did Feminists United intend to imply as much. It is okay to post attractive images and to be attracted to them, too, so long as we recognize there is more to the people involved. We recognized that with these comments, and despite the controversy, that, at least, is something to celebrate.

As a side note, I also want to say that I don't appreciate being spoken for, and frankly, I find it infuriating when people put words in my mouth. Next time you see a girl or a guy on a similar poster, consider that he/she has a mind of his/her own, and made an informed decision in agreeing to participate in the advertising.

As we look back at Sex Week, let's remember not to judge each other. When we are so surrounded and so concerned by sexism, it is easy to forget that militant modesty does not necessarily combat it (sometimes, it can even be a symptom). Let's stop slut-shaming and remember that a person who is proud of his/her body and his/her sexuality is something to aspire to, not something to be ashamed of.

Happy Sex Week, IIT!

Love,

The Girl From the Sex Week Poster

Sponsored by IIT Feminists United and SA

March 28- April 3

IITSexWeek.blogspot.com
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