

Pinnacle Whipped Vodka

This ad is for Pinnacle whipped cream-flavored vodka made by White Rock Distilleries. It ran in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue in February of 2011, among other publications. The top half of the ad features a very slender, presumably white woman kneeling with her legs spread apart in shallow, crystal clear ocean water wearing a whipped cream “bikini,” as the wind blows her long brown hair. In the background, we see ocean water and blue sky meeting the sandy horizon, with a hint of lush green land to the side.

The middle of the ad reveals a bottle of Pinnacle vodka turned sideways, seemingly dividing the top and bottom half of the ad. On the bottom of the ad, we see a close up of three mounds of whipped cream with a blue background with the words in white text: “Been whipped lately?”

Pinnacle uses several techniques of persuasion to lure us in to the brand, and thus, connect our emotions with their product. Some techniques of persuasion are symbols, humor, timing, and new. Some of the symbols are whipped cream on a female’s body that represents sex, and blue sky, clear water, and land representing a tropical island getaway. Humor is illustrated by the words “been whipped lately” as some, but not all, people will see the play on words as funny (“whipped” referring to the whipped cream flavor as well as sexual play.). Timing comes into play because this ad ran in February when it is still cold in most of the US, and we’re longing for warm weather like we see in this ad. The “new” technique is being used because Pinnacle vodka is a new product.

This ad is a bad ad for several reasons: Like many alcohol ads featuring women, this ad is not creative or original in its approach. It is one more tired example of how alcohol companies sexualize and commodify women in the marketing of their products while reinforcing the stereotype that women are merely objects. Furthermore, the phrase “been whipped lately?” invalidates and normalizes the serious issue of violence towards women.

There are others reasons this is a bad ad: In small print at the bottom of the ad are the words “please drink responsibly.” While this phrase may allude to the fact that White Rock Distilleries cares about its customers, their website reveals something different: Some of the flavors of their vodka include cotton candy, cake, orange cream, marshmallow, cookie dough, and gummy. A press release on the website mentions that “...even straight shots of Pinnacle vodka go down smoothly and taste like candy.” If we think about who likes the taste of candy, this reference to candy is evidence that young people, including those under 21, are likely the target audience for this product.

What this ad doesn’t tell us is how much of this ad was digitally altered, how much money Pinnacle pockets from underage drinkers, and what happens when people don’t drink responsibly. Furthermore, Pinnacle doesn’t share any of the connections between drinking alcohol and increased violence toward women.

This ad could be more truthful if we saw what the alcohol in the bottle really looks like. Contrary to the images, it doesn’t not come out of the bottle looking like whipped cream. Because this vodka is touted as a “party” drink on Pinnacle’s website, this ad would be more truthful if it showed us a group of hung

over young people instead of a woman stereotyped as an object of sexual desire. All in all, the imagery, techniques of persuasion, and the language in this ad combine to form an offensive, misleading, and all out bad ad.